



ENSP FACT SHEET ON HEATED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Main requirements for heated tobacco products to be adopted by countries should include the prohibition of indoor use, ban on direct and indirect advertisement, promotion and sponsorship, taxation at the same level as conventional cigarettes and strict standards of packaging and labeling (incl. health warnings on packaging of tobacco sticks and the device itself).

According to WHO, heated tobacco products should be subject to policy and regulatory measures applied to all other tobacco products, in line with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.¹²

References

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What is heated tobacco?

Heated tobacco products (alternatively called heat-not-burn or hybrid tobacco products) are specific tobacco products specifically produced to be heated at temperatures below combustion levels, causing nicotine and other compounds to aerosolise (“cold smoke”). Heated tobacco products are a hybrid between electronic and conventional cigarettes: they are equipped with a battery-powered device that heats while the product used inside is not a liquid containing nicotine, but “real cut tobacco” (e.g. disposable tobacco sticks).¹

Background market information

Examples of heated tobacco products include brands like IQOS from Philip Morris International (PMI), Ploom TECH from Japan Tobacco International, Glo from British American Tobacco, and PAX from PAX Labs.

In 2014, IQOS was launched in 2 countries to assess markets: one in Europe (Italy) and another in Asia (Japan). The tobacco industry’s aggressive media campaign resulted in 3.1 million users of IQOS in Japan by 2017.² Respectively in Italy the annual sales of IQOS rapidly grew from 11 tonnes in 2015 up to 519 tonnes in 2017.¹ At the moment IQOS is available in 39 countries, including 29 from the WHO European region. Within the EU, IQOS is present in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Foundation for Smoke-Free World (funded by Philip Morris International)

In September 2017 PMI announced the establishment of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, with funding of \$80 million per year over 12 years. This foundation is part of the company’s campaign to portray itself as part of the solution to the global tobacco epidemic, which kills more than 7 million people worldwide each year.³ Part of their aggressive marketing and business development strategies, the foundation is great commercial opportunity for the tobacco industry to develop and sell novel smokeless tobacco products. Their main priority is to maintain profits and ensure the market switch from conventional cigarettes to non-combustible nicotine products (IQOS).

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Position of WHO and the tobacco control community

The WHO FCTC Secretariat warns that "the tobacco industry is introducing new products in the pursuit of profit rather than public health" and that the PMI Smoke-Free World initiative is "a clear attempt to breach the WHO FCTC (article 5.3) by interfering in public policy." WHO called on governments and the public health community not to partner with the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World.⁴

In March 2018, the global tobacco control community (163 organisation and 54 individuals) endorsed the Cape Town Declaration on Human Rights and a Tobacco-free World proposed by ASH US, which calls for "firm action against the tobacco industry". The declaration exposes the Foundation for Smoke-Free World as marketing and PR ploys to advance their corporate interests contrary to the human rights of the public; and urges governments, scientists, research entities, foundations, and civil society organizations to reject or cease collaboration with the Foundation for Smoke-Free World funded by PMI.⁵

Health risks of heated tobacco use

Despite claims from the tobacco industry that those new products can reduce harm up to 90-95% compared to conventional cigarettes, independent research has confirmed high levels of carcinogenic substances⁶ and similar levels of nicotine and tar compared to conventional cigarettes.⁷ For example, brief exposure to IQOS aerosol causes cardiovascular risk to the same extent as cigarette smoke.⁸ Thus, IQOS use does not avoid the adverse effects of smoking cigarettes. IQOS and similar devices are novel tobacco products and further independent studies are required to establish the level of harm to active users and risks caused by exposure to secondhand heated tobacco aerosol. In addition, dual-use is an essential issue to address in the context of heated tobacco products. In this case the health risks are higher in comparison to cigarette smoke or e-cigarette vapor alone.

Heated tobacco contribution to global tobacco epidemic

With this current scientific evidence, national and international organisations including the European Respiratory Society⁹ or the French Alliance Against Tobacco¹⁰ have demonstrated that heated tobacco products are shown to:

- 1) be harmful and addictive;
- 2) undermine smokers' wish to quit;
- 3) undermine ex-smokers' wish to stay smoke-free;
- 4) be a temptation for non-smokers, in particular adolescents and young people;
- 5) pose a risk of re-normalisation of smoking;
- 6) pose a risk of dual use with conventional cigarettes.

Using loopholes in existing tobacco control legislation

Many countries in the EU and globally achieved great success adopting comprehensive tobacco control legislation, in particular smoking bans in public and work places. This great effort is undermined by the tobacco industry advocating for the use of novel products in public and workplaces, as they do not produce smoke but vapour.

Furthermore, in spite of being tobacco products, IQOS and similar systems currently enjoy the possibility of advertisement and marketing due to the loopholes in the existing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, including indirect advertisement (industry claims to advertise only the device and not the tobacco), free testing, promotions and discounts at the point of sale, aggressive social media marketing targeting the youth etc

In order to protect European citizens' health as well as preserving the vital progress achieved through the adoption of comprehensive tobacco control legislations, the European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP) and its 60 members sent a request to the European Commission urging for a European Union Directive for a total ban of the use of tobacco and related products in public and work places, with clear indication for heated tobacco products and electronic cigarettes to be treated as conventional cigarettes.¹⁰

Heated products clearly oppose to the emergence of tobacco-free generations and appear to be a problem and not a solution, in terms of cessation outcomes.¹¹

Legal Regulation

To the date, very few countries introduced product-specific regulation of IQOS and other similar products. For instance:

- Some countries including Australia, Singapore, Thailand and Brazil have an effective ban of heated tobacco products.
- Israel introduced the same tax rate for heated tobacco products as the one applicable to traditional combustible cigarettes.
- South Korea regulates heated tobacco as electronic cigarettes, which results in lower tax rate compared to conventional cigarettes.
- In Italy various tobacco control regulations are only minimally adopted for heated tobacco products (only 30% health warning without pictorial images, no smoking ban in public spaces, no ban on promotion and advertisement, taxed as e-cigarettes).¹