WHO must embrace harm reduction at COP11 to truly drive down global smoking rates

Thursday 9 October, 2025

Brussels - As the **11th Conference of the Parties (COP11)** to the **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)** approaches (17–22 November 2025, Geneva), the **Independent European Vape Alliance (IEVA)** calls on the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and its member states to finally place **harm reduction** at the centre of the global tobacco control debate.

IEVA welcomes the global ambition to reduce smoking but warns that **ignoring scientific evidence on vaping and harm reduction risks undermining decades of progress**. Millions of smokers could be left without effective, less harmful alternatives if WHO continues to treat all nicotine products as the same.

"*COP11 is an opportunity to bring scientific balance and evidence-based thinking into the global debate*," said **Dustin Dahlmann, President of IEVA**. "*If WHO and governments continue to overlook harm reduction, the decline in smoking rates could stall — or even reverse*."

Smoking prevalence in the EU has stalled

The WHO recently stated that global smoking rates are declining sharply. However, this is not reflected in the data from EU member states. In Germany — the most populous EU country — smoking prevalence has actually increased over the past decade and now stands at **34.1%**, compared with an **EU average of around 24%**. Even this EU average remains high when compared with the **United Kingdom, where smoking prevalence has fallen to about 12%**, thanks to a government strategy that actively supports smokers in switching to e-cigarettes. [1]

E-cigarettes help adult smokers – youth protection remains essential

E-cigarettes, on the other hand, are used primarily by adult smokers seeking to quit tobacco. In Germany, only 1.5% of adolescents use e-cigarettes — four times fewer than those who smoke. [2] [3]

Protecting youth is essential — no young person should smoke or vape. But adult smokers must have access to attractive alternatives, with flavours and at a lower price than cigarettes, to enable real reductions in smoking rates.

IEVA's Key Recommendations

1. **Recognize harm reduction as part of the solution**

   WHO should clearly acknowledge that **vaping products**, when responsibly regulated, are far less harmful than smoking and have been proven effective in helping smokers quit.

2. **Ensure balanced, evidence-based communication**

   COP discussions and WHO communications must include **independent scientific voices** and **peer-reviewed research**, ensuring that global audiences receive the full picture, not just one-sided narratives.

3. **Promote proportionate and pragmatic regulation**

   Policymakers should develop frameworks that **protect youth and non-smokers**, while **preserving access for adult smokers** who wish to switch to safer alternatives.

Related Sectors:

Health ::

Related Keywords:

Smoking :: WHO :: Conference :: Vaping :: Health ::

Scan Me:

4. **Recognize the crucial role of flavours**

   Evidence from several studies shows that **flavours play a key role in helping adult smokers transition away from cigarettes**. Where flavour bans were implemented, markets collapsed and **illicit trade increased sharply**, undermining public health goals.

"*Flavours are one of the strongest tools to help smokers move away from tobacco*," added **Dustin Dahlmann**. "*If adults lose access to flavoured alternatives, many will simply return to cigarettes. That cannot be in anyone's health interest.A flavour ban would amount to a de facto ban on e-cigarettes.*"

1. **Support national harm reduction strategies**

   WHO and FCTC delegates should encourage member states to **integrate harm reduction into their national public health approaches**, rather than imposing restrictive measures that drive consumers back to smoking or to illegal markets.

The Scientific Case

- **Cochrane Review (2025):** Vaping is more effective for smoking cessation than traditional nicotine replacement therapies. [4]
- **UK Office for Health Improvement and Disparities:** Vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking. [5]
- **Flavour studies:** Flavours and product diversity are decisive for adult smokers to switch successfully. [6] [7]
- **Vaping studies**: List of more than 100 studies on electronic cigarettes. [8]

"*We must move beyond ideology and focus on outcomes*," concluded **Dustin Dahlmann**. "*Science shows that vaping helps smokers quit and reduces harm. A smoke-free future is only achievable if harm reduction and the availability of vaping flavours are recognised as central pillars of tobacco control*."

Sources:

[1] Smokers urged to swap cigarettes for vapes in world first scheme 2023. Link

[2] German Study on Tobacco Use (DEBRA) 2025. Link

[3] Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and related products 2024. Link

[4] Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2025. Link

[5] Nicotine vaping in England. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities 2022. Link

[6] The impact of non-tobacco e-cigarette flavoring on e-cigarette uptake, cigarette smoking reduction, and cessation. Addictive Behaviors Volume 163, April 2025, Link

[7] State E-Cigarette Flavor Restrictions and Tobacco Product Use in Youths and Adults. JAMA Network 2025. Link

[8] List of vaping studies. IEVA 2025. Link

About IEVA

The Independent European Vape Alliance (IEVA) is the only pan-European association aimed at uniting national associations, companies, manufacturers and wholesalers in the vaping industry and providing them with responsible representation at the European level.

IEVA's founding principle is to contribute to harm reduction and public health. E-cigarettes have a significant positive impact and should be recognized as a harm reduction tool because vaping is not smoking.

Press contact:

Independent European Vape Alliance (IEVA)

President: Dustin Dahlmann

Press coordinator: Philip Drögemüller

Phone: +32 (2) 791 7759

E-Mail: p.droegemueller@eurovape.eu

Web: www.eurovape.eu

Company Contact:

_

news aktuell

E. desk@newsaktuell.de
W. https://www.newsaktuell.de/

View Online

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.newsaktuell.pressat.co.uk