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65% of smokers in the European Union believe that EU decision makers do not consider the impact to smokers when deciding rules and regulations on tobacco and nicotine-containing products.

Moreover, 66% of general population adults across Europe agree that organizations like the EU and WHO should put more focus on harm reduction by encouraging smokers to use less harmful products rather than trying to eliminate tobacco use altogether.

Paris, April 15, 2024 — The results of a new survey released today by Povaddo reveal there is wide acceptance among Europeans that smoke-free alternatives, such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco, are reasonable alternatives to cigarettes and that the EU should carefully consider the externalities of any tax policy applied to them. Two thirds (66%) of adults surveyed in Europe believe smokers can be encouraged to switch to scientifically substantiated alternatives by taxing these products lower than cigarettes but still high enough to discourage use by youth or non-smokers.

Conducted by the independent public opinion research firm Povaddo for Philip Morris International (PMI), the survey of more than 14,000 adults in 13 EU member states and Ukraine shows how Europeans hold strong opinions about how these products should be treated by governments, both at a national level and in the EU as a whole:

- Adult smokers should be given accurate, scientifically substantiated information that smoke-free alternatives to cigarettes are less risky than continued smoking, even if these alternatives are not risk free (69%).
- Governments can help improve public health by endorsing policies which encourage adult smokers who don't quit altogether to switch to innovative smoke-free alternatives that have the potential to be less harmful than continued smoking (67%).
- The EU should dedicate time and resources to eradicating smoking by encouraging all smokers to either quit completely or switch to a scientifically substantiated less risky alternative (67%).

“These survey results suggest there is a disconnect between policymakers and the citizens they govern and represent when it comes to tobacco policy,” said Povaddo’s President, William Stewart. “The EU policy approach seems more focused on an unrealistic objective, the complete eradication of nicotine use, while the majority of the public is receptive to the pragmatic concept of tobacco harm reduction and encouraging smokers to use less harmful nicotine-containing products.”

Additionally, the survey shows that six-in-ten (60%) believe their country has a “problem” with illicit tobacco and nicotine-containing products, although only 6% of respondents across the 13

Member States correctly identified that in 2022 between EUR 10bio and 15bio tax revenue was lost because of illicit trade.

There is a high acknowledgement and comprehension of the impacts of illicit tobacco and nicotine-containing products, even if the size of the issue is underestimated:

- 74% agree that banning certain tobacco and nicotine-containing products will not actually lead to a reduction in consumption. Instead, consumers will just seek out these products on the black market.
- 65% agree that Illicit trade in tobacco and nicotine-containing products undermines efforts to reduce smoking rates.
- 73% agree that Illicit trade in tobacco and nicotine-containing products can have serious negative consequences on security, safety, and public health in their respective countries.

“The bottom line is the illicit trade of tobacco and nicotine-products is viewed as a problem across Europe, and people are attuned to the negative consequences that stem from this problem,” according to Stewart. “There’s a pretty clear mandate from the public that governments must take illicit trade into account when deciding how to regulate and tax these products, and there are a lot of people who do not feel that is happening.”

Survey Methodology

PMI commissioned Povaddo to field the survey in the following countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Ukraine. A total of 14,119 interviews were conducted among legal age, general population adults (approximately 1,000 per country) from 29 December 2023 – 31 January 2024. The data has been weighted at a country level by age, gender, and tobacco/nicotine product consumption to reflect national population statistics. The survey carries an overall margin of error of +/- 1% at the 95% confidence interval. Results are available both at an overall level (14 countries) and at an individual country level. Country-level results carry a margin of error of +/- 3% at the 95% confidence interval.

Contact

Povaddo
info@povaddo.com