



**ECigIntelligence**

*Regulatory and Market Intelligence for the e-Cigarette Sector*

## **Proposals to ban e-cigs in Russia stall as fears of growth in black market persist**

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Attempts to completely ban the sale of e-cigarettes in Russia have so far never met with government support amid concerns from industry organisations that a total ban will only exacerbate the already large illegal market in the country.

In December last year, the Communist Party introduced a [draft decree](#) introducing a complete ban on e-cigarettes. This draft came on the heels of another [bill](#) introduced in the State Duma (lower chamber of the parliament) in May 2024, drafted by deputies from the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, the New People Party and the Communist Party.

The government, in its official review, cited the lack of fundamental distinctions between the latest proposal and previous ones that had [already been rejected](#). The first reading of the draft decree was expected in March but has not yet taken place.

### **Government wants more regulation, not prohibition**

Recently, Artem Metelev, chairman of the State Duma Committee on Youth Policy, [said](#) the proposal to ban e-cigarettes is unlikely to be enacted soon, as the government does not support a complete ban on e-cigarettes, preferring instead stricter regulation.

He said that among the measures being discussed is the potential licensing of e-cigarette retailers, which would allow authorities to revoke the licences of non-compliant vendors. However, Metelev called these efforts largely ineffective, arguing

that economic measures, such as increased taxes, are insufficient to safeguard the health of young people. Instead, he called for substantially higher excise taxes on tobacco, coupled with decisive action to combat vaping addiction among minors and young adults.

Likewise, the Russian Union of Nicotine Industry Enterprises (Spini) [told](#) ECigIntelligence that it opposes a total ban on e-cigarettes, believing that such a measure will only exacerbate the problem of the illegal market, which, according to the organisation's estimates, has already reached 95% due to the sharp increase in excise taxes and the price gap between legal and counterfeit products.

"Banning vaping is seen as a dead end that does not solve the problem but only contributes to the growth of the illegal market," a Spini spokesperson told ECigIntelligence. "The logic of 'no market, no problem' is shortsighted, because bona fide participants will leave the market and millions of adult consumers will be faced with a choice: to seek out illegal products or to return to smoking cigarettes with the associated negative consequences."

Instead of imposing bans, Spini proposes to reduce excise duties, introduce a flexible registry model for regulating sellers, and strengthen control over the turnover of nicotine-containing products to combat counterfeiting and maintain legal business (over 150,000 small and medium-sized businesses) and protect consumers from low-quality products. Spini said the organisation insists on dialogue with the authorities to create balanced rules that will replenish the budget and limit access to nicotine for minors without destroying the sector.

### **Conflicting positions**

However, within the government there are different positions regarding vaping. While the Ministry of Health previously [supported](#) a bill to ban the sale of tobacco and nicotine-containing products and devices for consumption to anyone born on or after 1st January 2010, the Ministry of Finance rejected the bill, as it is in conflict with the provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, according to which a citizen from the age of 18 has no limits on rights and freedoms.

However, this bill has not been submitted to the parliament, and due to the government's opposition, it is not clear if it will be submitted. The Federal Service for Regulation of the Alcohol and Tobacco Market (Rosalkogoltabakkontrol) also did not support the bill, arguing that it would lead to increased consumption of illegal products and, as a result, the growth of the black market for tobacco.

President Vladimir Putin has also stated in the past that he does not support a complete ban on e-cigarettes or a sharp increase in excise duties on these products, stressing that, instead of further tax increases, it would be worthwhile to engage in educating consumers and providing them with a competent explanation of the

dangers that e-cigarettes pose to health.

It seems unlikely that, despite attempts to introduce proposals to ban the sale of these products, these will succeed. However, it is questionable whether other restrictive measures that find greater support in the government, such as increased taxation, will ever be implemented, and whether these, by themselves, will be able to reduce the already very serious problem of the illegal market in the country.

– Antonia Di Lorenzo *ECigIntelligence staff*

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