

Quitting activity and use of cessation assistance reported by smokers in eight European countries: Findings from the EUREST-PLUS ITC Europe Surveys

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Abstract

Introduction: There is clear evidence that the use of cessation aids significantly increases the likelihood of successful smoking cessation. The aim of this study was to examine quitting activity and use of cessation aids among smokers from various European countries. Subgroup differences were also examined for sex, income, education, and age in each country.

Methods: Cross-sectional data were collected in 2016 from 10683 smokers in eight European countries participating in the ITC Project: England (n=3536), Germany (n=1003), Greece (n=1000), Hungary (n=1000), the Netherlands (n=1136), Poland (n=1006), Romania (n=1001), and Spain (n=1001). We measured quitting activity, including quit attempts in the previous 12 months and intention to quit, use of cessation aids (i.e. medication, quitlines, internet, local services, e-cigarettes), and whether respondents had received advice from health professionals about quitting and e-cigarettes.

Results: Quit attempts were most common in England (46.3%) and least common in Hungary (10.4%). Quit intention was highest in England and lowest in Greece. Use of e-cigarettes to quit was highest in England (51.6%) and lowest in Spain (5.0%). Use of cessation aids was generally low across all countries; in particular this was true for quitlines, internetbased support, and local services. Receiving health professional advice to quit was highest in Romania (56.5%), and lowest in Poland (20.8%); few smokers received advice about e-cigarettes from health professionals. No clear differences were found for sex and income groups. Across countries, smokers with lower education reported less quitting activity.

Conclusions: Quitting activity and use of cessation methods were low in most countries. Greater quit attempts and use of cessation aids were found in England, where large investments in tobacco control and smoking cessation have been made. Health professionals are important for motivating smokers to quit and promoting the effectiveness of various methods, but overall, few smokers get advice to quit.

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