

Tobacco control in Europe: A deadly lack of progress

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Intro

Cigarettes are uniquely dangerous, killing half of all those who regularly use them and damaging the health of those who breathe in users' smoke, particularly children. Just under a third of European adults currently smoke, and smoking has become increasingly associated with poverty, contributing significantly to widening health inequalities across the EU. In 2004, the ASPECT report, a comprehensive review of tobacco use and tobacco control policies in the EU, found that tobacco use caused well over half a million deaths in Europe annually and on top of that constituted a huge economic burden, estimated conservatively at €98-130 billion a year.¹ This review also identified that whilst some European countries were observing declines in tobacco use and mortality, in other countries tobacco use was still increasing, particularly among women. The ASPECT report identified 43 recommendations to combat the epidemic, covering tobacco control policy, interventions and research. Yet to date, few of these recommendations have been implemented, and as a result, future prospects for curbing the smoking epidemic across Europe are currently very bleak.

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