

Smokers' support for the ban on sale of slim cigarettes in six European countries: Findings from the EUREST-PLUS ITC Europe Surveys

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Abstract

Background: Efforts to regulate tobacco products and reduce consumption in the European Union (EU) include the European Tobacco Products Directive (TPD), which went into force in May 2016. Despite the initial discussion to include a ban on sale of slim cigarettes, it was excluded in the final TPD. The main goal of this study was to examine support for a ban on slim cigarettes among smokers in six European Countries.

Methods: Data from the 2018 (Wave 2) International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project 6 European Country (ITC 6E) EUREST-PLUS project survey, a cross sectional study of adult smokers (n=5592) from Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Spain, was analysed. Descriptive statistics were used to estimate support for a ban on slim cigarettes by sociodemographic characteristics and smoking behaviors. Logistic regression analysis was used to examine factors associated with support for a ban on slim cigarettes and perceptions of harm.

Results: Support for a ban on slims varied across countries, with highest support in Romania (33.8%), and lowest in Greece (18.0%). Female smokers (OR=0.78; 95%CI=0.67-0.91), daily smokers (OR=0.68; 95%CI=0.47-0.97), menthol smokers (OR=0.55; 95%CI=0.36-0.86), and smokers who did not have plans to quit within next six months (OR=0.45; 95%CI=0.36-0.56) had significantly lower odds of supporting a ban on slim cigarettes. Overall, 21% of smokers perceived slim cigarettes as less harmful than regular cigarettes.

Conclusions: Support for a ban of slim cigarettes was relatively low among smokers, while misperceptions that slim cigarettes are less harmful is high, particularly among countries where slim cigarette use is more prevalent. Findings support a ban on slim cigarettes to reduce misperceptions around slim cigarettes being less harmful.

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