

Next steps towards tobacco and nicotine free Finland by 2030

Background

Finland was the first country in the world to set a tobacco endgame goal in its national legislation. The goal was included in Tobacco Act in 2010. The goal was set to ending the use of tobacco products by the year 2040. Other key changes in the 2010 Tobacco Act included the point-of-sale display ban, which came into force 2012. Tobacco taxation has been increased regularly since 2009. In 2014, a new national tobacco control strategy was established to ensure that governments regularly adopt and implement new tobacco control measures.

In 2016, the tobacco endgame goal was further broadened to include nicotine products. The new goal of tobacco and nicotine free Finland entailed a vision of not more than 5 % daily use prevalence already by 2030. The goal covers all tobacco and nicotine products regulated under the Tobacco Act, that is all smoking and smokeless tobacco products and electronic cigarettes. Additionally, the EU Tobacco Products Directive was transposed to the national legislation in 2016, bringing in pictorial warnings and regulation for electronic cigarettes. In Finland, electronic cigarettes and e-liquids were imposed mostly the same regulations as tobacco products, including taxation, advertising ban, point-of-sale display ban, retail sale license, ban on online sales, age limit, vaping bans in the areas covered by smoking bans, and ban on other than tobacco flavor.

Due to regular updates of legislation and tightening of the tobacco control measures, smoking has declined steadily without marked increases in the use of other types of tobacco or nicotine products in the general population. Youth smoking has over halved from the beginning of 2000s. Daily use of electronic cigarettes in the general population has remained around 1 % over the follow-up period. Among youth, some more regular use was observed before the comprehensive regulation of 2016, but daily use has since declined. Use of snus, Swedish type smokeless tobacco, has been more common among young boys and in the recent years, it has been increasing among young adult males. The sale of snus is not allowed in Finland, but traveler imports are allowed in limited quantity from neighboring country Sweden – which has the EU exception to snus sale.

New Tobacco act into force 2022

The Tobacco Act was tightened further in Finland. The most important updates of the act were:

- the so-called plain packaging regulation according to which the unit packets of tobacco products, electronic cigarettes and nicotine-containing liquids should not stand out from other unit packets of similar products with regard to their labelling or appearance;
- prohibition of products intended to create a characterising flavour or aroma for a tobacco product;
- prohibition of the display of smoking accessories intended for heating tobacco products;
- prohibition of smoking 1) at public beaches during the swimming season, 2) on playgrounds for which a safety document must be drawn up, and 3) in the outdoor areas of institutions providing care under the Child Welfare Act or the Mental Health Act, intended for persons under 18 years of age;
- introduction of an annual supervision fee for manufacturers and importers, which should be paid to National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health.

Most of the amendments came into force in the beginning of May 2022, but the plain packaging regulation in the May 2023. Technical details related to the layout of packages and products were issued by a decree.

New strategy and working group to support the comprehensive policy

In 2021 Finland got its' first ever comprehensive Substance Use and Addiction Strategy which sets out the priorities and joint guidelines until 2030. The Strategy is based on the recognised need to provide more

comprehensive guidance on the prevention and treatment of risks, harms and problems related to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and gambling.

In addition to preventing addictions, also continuing determined efforts to put an end to smoking is part of the current Government Programme in Finland. In order to achieve the objective of the Tobacco Act, the systematic and purposeful actions must be continued and developed, and new actions adopted. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health appointed a new working group

- to prepare proposals to support and promote the ending of the use of tobacco and nicotine products in accordance with the objective of the tobacco Act
- to examine the current state of the use and regulation of all nicotine products and give proposals for legislative amendments and other measures to end the use of nicotine products.
- to examine the current state of smoke-free housing and regulations related to them, and give proposals for legislative amendments and other measures to improve smoke-free housing.
- to examine raising the minimum purchase age for tobacco and nicotine products from the age of 18 and make related proposals.

The term of the working group will continue until the end of January 2023.

Active international collaboration

Finland has a long history in supporting Health in All Policies approach, information exchange and international tobacco control development. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) hosts one of the global WHO FCTC Knowledge Hubs, the Knowledge Hub on Surveillance. It focuses on the Article 20 of the WHO FCTC (Research, surveillance and information exchange).

The Knowledge Hub, as part of THL, participates to the newly launched EU Joint Action on Tobacco Control 2, where THL leads a work package focusing on tobacco endgame strategies in Europe. In 2022, the Knowledge Hub also carries out a research partnership with the CDC Foundation to study the implementation of the Article 13 of the WHO FCTC (Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship) and its associations with youth tobacco and nicotine use.

Additional information:

- [Press release on the amendments in Tobacco Act in 2022](#)
- [Development of tobacco and nicotine policy: Proposals for action by the working group](#) (2018)
- [Substance Use and Addiction Strategy - Joint guidelines until 2030](#) (2021) *(only abstract in English)*
- www.thl.fi/tobacco