

# “Tobacco consumption still a threat to our societies”: Statement by Commissioner Andriukaitis on World No Tobacco Day

Tobacco use remains the single biggest cause of chronic disease and avoidable death in the EU. [Statistics](#) on deaths in the EU from lung cancer, the cancer most associated with smoking, show that in 2015, there were 273 400 deaths from lung cancer alone, 273 400 too many. Somebody lost their child, parent, brother, sister or a friend. Lung cancer accounts for a fifth of all cancer-related deaths. On top of this, tobacco is also a major risk factor in many other forms of cancer, as well as other major diseases such as cardiovascular disease.

I am very concerned by the fact that the EU smoking rate has remained stagnant at 26% since 2014. Even more worrying is that amongst people aged 15 to 24, [the rate has increased](#) from 25% in 2014 to 29% in 2017. Having been personally affected by the loss of loved ones to the terrors of tobacco, I am deeply upset by the statistics of young people smoking. We need to reverse this trend. One of the key aims of the new [Tobacco Products Directive](#), which became fully applicable in the EU two years ago, is to make tobacco products less attractive to young people. However, the growing popularity of new products such as electronic cigarettes among the young generation worries me a lot.

That being said, we have taken important steps towards better protecting our citizens' health from tobacco consumption, in particular via the implementation of the [Tobacco Products Directive](#) (TPD) as well as the [Tobacco Advertising Directive](#). We also reached an important milestone on 6 May this year when the [EU track and trace system](#) entered into force, making the EU the first jurisdiction worldwide to have put in place the legal framework to tackle illicit tobacco trade. A ban on menthol cigarettes also comes into effect in May 2020. Moreover, at the end of last year we launched the [Joint Action on Tobacco Control](#), allocating nearly €2 million to help Member States implement the TPD during the next three years. Non-governmental organisations can also play a big role here, which is why in April this year I launched the [EU Health Award for NGOs](#), to highlight the outstanding initiatives of international, European, national and regional NGOs that have significantly contributed to prevent tobacco use within the EU. The deadline for submissions is **15 June 2018**, and I will be presenting the Award this November.

As a medical doctor, I have seen first-hand the devastation tobacco use has on health, and how important it is to attack the problem from all angles. We should all step up our efforts to inform, educate and protect our citizens from the harmful effects of tobacco.

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[https://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/overview\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/overview_en)

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