

# ENSP FACT SHEET

## Belgium Tobacco Control Policies Implementation level



Belgium adopted the first Royal Decree on the Manufacture and Sale of Tobacco-based and Similar Products on 13 August 1990 and complemented the regulation by multiple Royal Decrees, Laws and Ministerial Decrees. The Royal Decree of 28 October 2016, transposing the European Tobacco Products Directive (TPD) into Belgian law, came into force on 17 January 2017.

Furthermore, on 13 April 2019, Belgium adopted a Royal Decree introducing plain packaging. The new legal requirements apply to all forms of tobacco and come into force on 1 January 2020, with a one-year transition period for stock sell-out.

Effective 1 November 2019, the minimum age of buying tobacco increased to 18 years. Prior to the change, Belgium was the only country in Europe where cigarettes were still sold to teenagers 16 to 18-year old.

Also, Belgium adopted a legal ban on smoking in the car when minors are present. According to the 2017 Eurobarometer report from the European Commission<sup>1</sup>, the proportion of daily smokers came down from 23% in 2014 to 17% in 2017, so that the smoking rate among adults and adolescents in Belgium is now lower than the EU average. Belgium has a good level of existing indoor smoking ban implementation, as exposure to SHS inside drinking establishments such as bars is only reported by 18%.

### Additional details for Belgium show that:

- The majority (55%) of those polled said that they have seen an advertisement for e-cigarettes or similar products during the last 12 months
- Two thirds (66%) of respondents favoured banning the use of e-cigarettes in environments where smoking is prohibited
- 60% were in favour of keeping tobacco products out of sight in shops or points of sale
- More than half of the smokers tried to quit (64%)
- Just over three quarters (77%) smoked boxed cigarettes, while 41% smoked hand-rolled cigarettes
- The average ex-smoker was below the age of 40 (37.7) before they managed to quit, compared with 38.6 of the EU average
- 7% of smokers have never tried to quit.



**ENSP**

European Network  
for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention

## WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) implementation level

Ratification: 01/11/2005

Entry into force: 30/01/2006

Policy <sup>2</sup>	Status
<b>Protection from tobacco smoke</b>	
comprehensiveness of protection in health-care facilities	Complete
comprehensiveness of protection in educational facilities	Complete
<b>Tobacco-related mortality</b>	
Estimated total number of tobacco-related deaths	187003
<b>Taxation of tobacco products</b>	
proportion of the retail price consisting of taxes	79
only specific tax levied	No
only ad valorem tax levied	No
combination of specific and ad valorem taxes levied	Yes
<b>Supply of tobacco and tobacco products</b>	
tracking regime to further secure the distribution system developed	No
sales of tobacco products to minors prohibited	Yes
sale of tobacco products from vending machines prohibited	No
sale of cigarettes individually or in small packets prohibited	Yes
<b>Tobacco growing</b>	
viable alternatives for tobacco growers promoted	No
number of workers	5 farms: 336 ha
<b>General obligations</b>	
comprehensive multisectoral national tobacco control strategy	No
focal point for tobacco control	Yes
national coordinating mechanism for tobacco control	Yes
<b>Packaging and labelling of tobacco products</b>	
health warnings occupying 50% or more	Yes
health warnings in the form of pictures or pictograms	Yes
<b>Liability</b>	
criminal and/or civil liability action launched by any person	No
<b>Education, communication, training and public awareness</b>	
implemented educational programmes targeted to adults	Yes
implemented educational programmes targeted to children and youth	Yes
<b>Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship</b>	
comprehensive ban on all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship	Yes
ban on display of tobacco products at points of sales	No
ban covering tobacco sponsorship	No
ban covering cross-border advertising originating from the country	Yes
<b>Demand reduction measures concerning tobacco dependence and cessation</b>	
evidence-based comprehensive and integrated guidelines developed	Yes
implemented media campaigns to promote tobacco cessation	Yes
implemented telephone quitlines	Yes
primary health care providing programmes on diagnosis and treatment	Yes
nicotine replacement therapy available	Yes
<b>Surveillance</b>	
national system for surveillance of patterns of tobacco consumption established	Yes
national system for surveillance of consequences of tobacco consumption established	Yes

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## References:

1. European Commission. 2017. Special Eurobarometer 458. Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes. ISBN 978-92-79-69104-1.2.
2. Belgium latest WHO FCTC Report 2018. Available online: <https://untobaccocontrol.org/impldb/belgium/>
3. The Tobacco Atlas 6th edition <https://tobaccoatlas.org/country/belgium/>
4. WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic 2019, Belgium Country Profile [https://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/policy/country\\_profile/bel.pdf](https://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/policy/country_profile/bel.pdf)
5. Tobacco control achievements and priority areas in the WHO Europe Region: A review <http://www.tobaccopreventioncessation.com/Tobacco-control-achievements-and-priority-areas-in-the-WHO-nEurope-Region-A-review,89925,0,2.html>

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Co-funded by the European Union

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## National Action Points:

### Protect people from tobacco smoke:

Monitoring of the enforcement and good implementation of the smoke free legislation. Designated smoking rooms are permitted under the law<sup>4</sup>.

### Offer help to quit tobacco use:

Belgium takes measures to record smoking status in medical notes, has a national quit-line, offers some network cessation support and partial reimbursement of medicines. Belgian doctors are not reimbursed for providing brief advice<sup>4</sup>.

### Warn about the dangers of tobacco:

Belgium has a very low record of spending on public information campaigns<sup>4</sup>. Wallonia region spent 1 million Euro in 2016 on tobacco control campaigns<sup>5</sup>.

### Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship:

Advertising is banned on all media (press, TV, billboards, internet), but Belgium does not ban advertising at point of sale. Product placement in TV and/or films is prohibited and there is a complete ban on sponsorship<sup>4</sup>.

### Raise taxes on tobacco:

In Belgium, a pack of cigarettes costs 6.60 Euro, of which 77% is tax (17.4% value added tax and 59.6% is excise tax)<sup>4</sup>.