

# Pleasure Seeking, Risk Managing: Tobacco Control and Tobacco Harm Reduction in Germany

**City Health Conference 2024 „Challenges in Mental  
Health, Social Work, and Risky Lifestyles“**

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**Prof. Dr. Heino Stöver**

# Declaration: No conflicts of interest



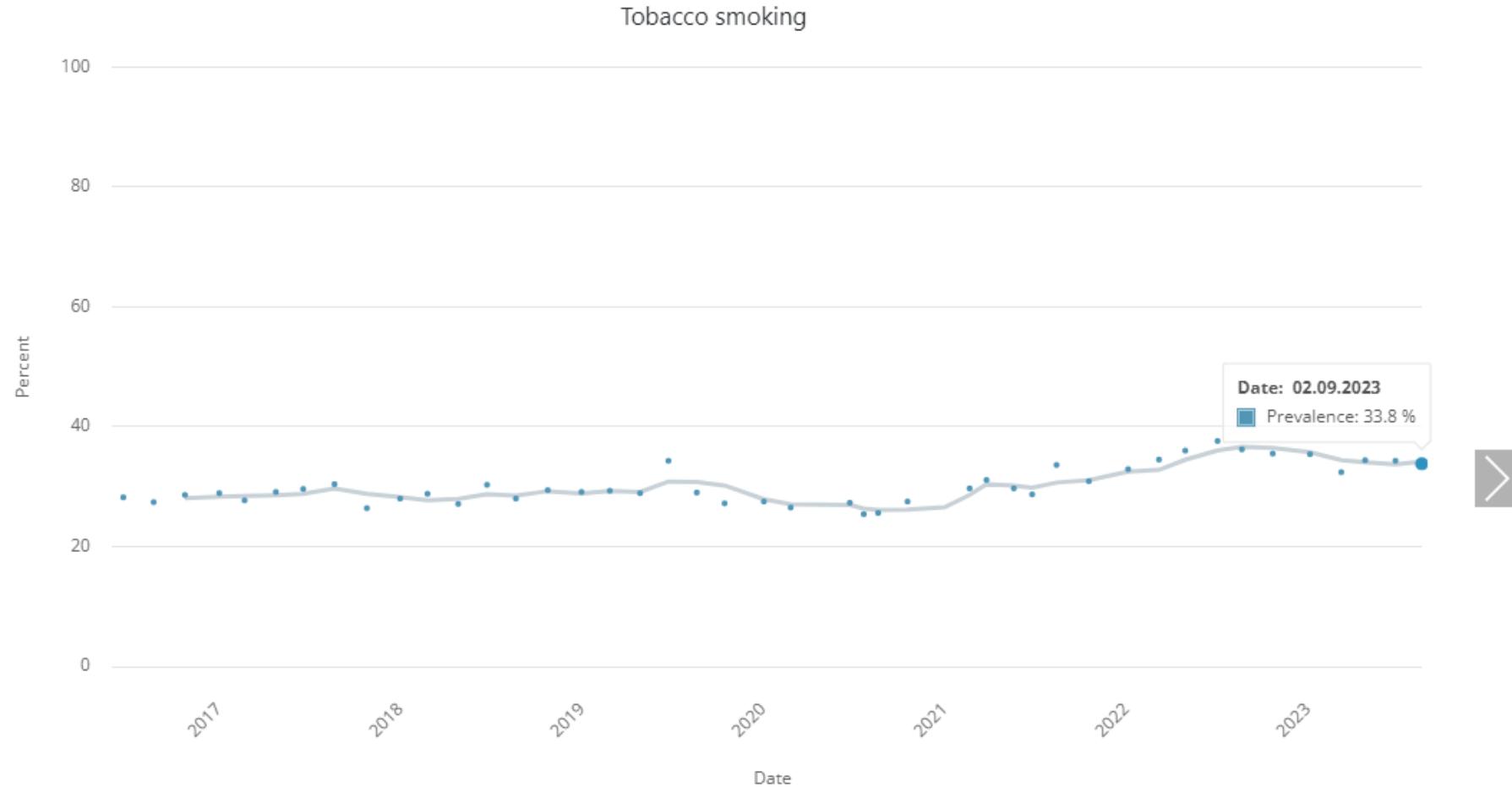
**Prof. Dr. Heino Stöver**

# Seeking pleasure...<sup>1</sup>

- ...is an everyday activity<sup>1</sup>
- ...feeds reward system in the brain
- ...is aware of risks =>harm reduction: helmet, seat belt, airbags, condoms, low percent beverages...
- ...is balancing pleasure against risks
- ...high degree of locus of control
- ...often associated with high degree of self control, self efficiency (be aware of masculinity conceptions!)
- ...is denying risks at all
- ...is projecting risks to others
- ...is projecting risks to a later stage of biography

1. Stöver, H./Deimel, D. (2023): Der Reiz der Gefahr - zwischen Risikolust und Kontrolle. In: Suchtmagazin

# German longitudinal study on smoking



[last update 2023/09]

# Tobacco Control Strategy & Policy in Germany

2040



# Strategy for a tobacco-free Germany 2040

Goal: By 2040, less than five per cent of adults and less than two per cent of adolescents in Germany use tobacco products, e-cigarettes or other related products, especially if these contain nicotine, as it is addictive

**dkfz.**

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IN THE HELMHOLTZ ASSOCIATION

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# Our goal: a tobacco-free Germany 2040

In Germany, about 127,000 people die each year from the health effects of smoking<sup>23</sup> – this corresponds to one death every four minutes. At the same time, Germany has no strategy for sustainable tobacco control and ranks last in Europe when it comes to implementing measures to reduce tobacco consumption. We want this to change.

Our goal is a society in which no one suffers or dies from the health effects of tobacco use or nicotine addiction. Therefore, we want Germany to be tobacco-free by 2040, meaning, less than five per cent of adults and less than two per cent of adolescents in Germany use tobacco products, e-cigarettes or other related products.

Achieving a society that is free from tobacco use and nicotine addiction requires commitment from political decision-makers and protection of public health interests from the influence of manufacturers of tobacco and of related products. By signing and ratifying the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004, Germany committed to implementing the defined measures. In past years, this implementation has progressed very slowly. Therefore, we call for legislators and the government to adopt a tobacco control strategy with a binding timeline and to implement the following ten measures for a tobacco-free Germany 2040:

- 1** Significantly increase tobacco taxes every year
- 2** Support smokers in quitting and ensure cost coverage of tobacco-dependence treatment
- 3** Completely ban advertising of tobacco and related products and introduce plain packaging
- 4** Significantly reduce the availability of tobacco and related products
- 5** Effectively protect from second-hand smoke and ensure tobacco-free living environments
- 6** Consistently implement children's rights with regard to tobacco and improve the protection of minors
- 7** Conduct regular campaigns to raise awareness of the risks of tobacco use, motivate people to quit and make living tobacco-free the norm
- 8** Support both tobacco control initiatives and alternatives to tobacco cultivation within the framework of development cooperation
- 9** Effectively protect political decisions from the influence of manufacturers of tobacco and of related products and their associations
- 10** Regularly review, adapt, and further develop the measures



We are world champion  
(in terms of cigarette  
vending machines)



340,000 pieces are  
hanging in Germany.

# Are we equipped to achieve our goals?

- Political attention and allocation of resources
- Does an ever-more-of the same lead to an achievement of our targets?
- The (underestimated) impact of dependence dynamics
- One-dimensional fixation on abstinence as the only target
- Lack of answers to diversity

# Tobacco consumption and Tobacco control in Germany

- 127.000 tobacco-related premature deaths annually
- >348 people die per day
- 340,000 cigarette automats
- Public advertising for tobacco products still legal until end of 2024<sup>1</sup>
- “Smokers smoke for the nicotine but they die from the tar” – Michael Russel



1. Jazbinsek, D. (2019): Die Regulierung von E-Zigaretten-Werbung - Fragen und Antworten zum Stand der Forschung. In: akzept/DAH (Hrsg.): 6. Alternativer Drogen- und Suchtbericht, S. 48-61

# Tobacco use/control policy in Germany

- Relationship between inadequate tobacco control policy and prevalence = Germany high consumption country => counterexample UK<sup>1,2</sup> and Sweden with a smokers rate of approx 6 %<sup>3</sup>
- Amendment to the Tobacco Products Act 2020: advertising ban until 2024
- Tobacco Tax Modernization Act: tax increases for the next five years
- Assumption of drug costs for smoking cessation by the statutory health insurance system

1. Parliament Hearing, Sept. 2020:<http://sea-02.cit.frankfurt-university.de:32224/?dmVyPTEuMDAxJiY3M2EyNjI4ZjdIZWZhMjk5NT01RjU3ODM4NI82OTQwOF8xMDQyNi8xJiZiNDk2MDBjNGNIOTBiNmI9MTIzMyYmdXJsPW0dHBzJTNBdTJGJTGd3d3JTJFYnVuZGVzdGFnJTJFZGUIMkZkb2t1bWVudGUIMkZ0ZXh0YXJjaGI2JTJGMjAyMCUyRmt3MzctcGEtZmluYW56ZW4tZGFtcGYtNzA3MjAw>
2. Stöver, H. (2019): Großbritanniens Tabakkontrollpolitik: Vorbild für den deutschen Regulierer, v.a. hinsichtlich E-Zigaretten? .In: akzept/DAH (Hrsg.): 6. Alternativer Drogen- und Suchtbericht, S. 42-47
3. Fagerström, Karl Olof (2021): Harm Reduction in Sweden – the case of Snus. In: Stöver, H (2021) Tobacco Harm Reduction, Neue Rauchentwöhnungsstrategien, S. 197 ff..

# Tobacco Harm Reduction - extension of smoking cessation strategy?

- Harm reduction successful in other health/drug policy areas<sup>1</sup>
- Alternative forms of nicotine consumption
- Extension of smoking cessation strategy to include e-cigarettes successful<sup>2, 3</sup>
- Little knowledge about health benefits of e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stöver, H. (2018): Harm Reduction – Ergebnisse akzeptanzorientierter und niedrigschwelliger Drogenarbeit. In: Rausch 7, H. 4., S. 303-312

<sup>2</sup> Hajek P et al (2019) A randomized trial of e-cigarettesversusnicotine-replacementtherapy.NEnglJMed380(7):629–63

<sup>3</sup> Stöver, H. (2021): Diversifizierung der Rauchentwöhnungsprogramme – die Rolle der E-Zigarette . In: Bundesgesundheitsblatt November 2021

<sup>4</sup> E-Zigaretten: Mehrheit der Bevölkerung sieht gesundheitliche Risiken.

[https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/presseinformation/2020/09/e\\_zigaretten\\_mehrheit\\_der\\_bevoelkerung\\_seht\\_gesundheitliche\\_risiken-244844.html](https://www.bfr.bund.de/de/presseinformation/2020/09/e_zigaretten_mehrheit_der_bevoelkerung_seht_gesundheitliche_risiken-244844.html)

# Plea for diversification of smoking cessation programs in FCTC

- Article 1 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)<sup>1</sup> – fundamental international agreement on tobacco control(2003):
- *“tobacco control itself means a range of supply, demand and harm reduction strategies that aim to improve the health of a population by eliminating or reducing their consumption of tobacco products and exposure to tobacco smoke”*

# E-Cigarette, tobacco heater products: Complementing abstinence-oriented smoking cessation strategies

- strongly reduced health risks in comparison to combustable cigarette<sup>3</sup>
- No aggravation of symptoms for COPD and asthma<sup>1</sup>
- besides ‚point method‘ second prevalent stop smoking strategy among smokers in Germany<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Moerchel/Kröger (2020): Leitlinien zum Rauchstopp und die Rolle der e-Zigarette. <https://www.der-niedergelassene-artz.de/kommcenter/coronaktuell/news-details/coronaktuell/leitlinien-zum-rauchstopp-und-die-rolle-der-e-zigarette>

<sup>2</sup> Kotz/Batra/Kastaun (2020): Schlusswort. In: [Dtsch Arztbl Int 2020; 117: 299; DOI: 10.3238/arztbl.2020.0299](https://www.aerzteblatt.de/treffer?mode=s&wo=17&typ=16&aid=213632&s=Schlusswort); <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/treffer?mode=s&wo=17&typ=16&aid=213632&s=Schlusswort>

<sup>3</sup> Hering, T. (2020). E-Zigaretten – toxikologisches Fiasko oder besser als kein Rauchstopp? Der Internist. <https://scihub.se/https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00108-020-00794-0>

# Lacking education of medical doctors about tobacco-related mortality and morbidity

Study of Rutgers University in New Jersey, US:

- >1000 US doctors
- High percentage of misconceptions about potential risks of nicotine:
  - „*Overall, the majority of physicians “strongly agreed” that nicotine directly contributes to the development of cardiovascular disease (83.2%), COPD (80.9%), and cancer (80.5%).*

# Evidence update e-cigarettes - Public Health England<sup>1</sup> (Febr 2021)

## Main findings

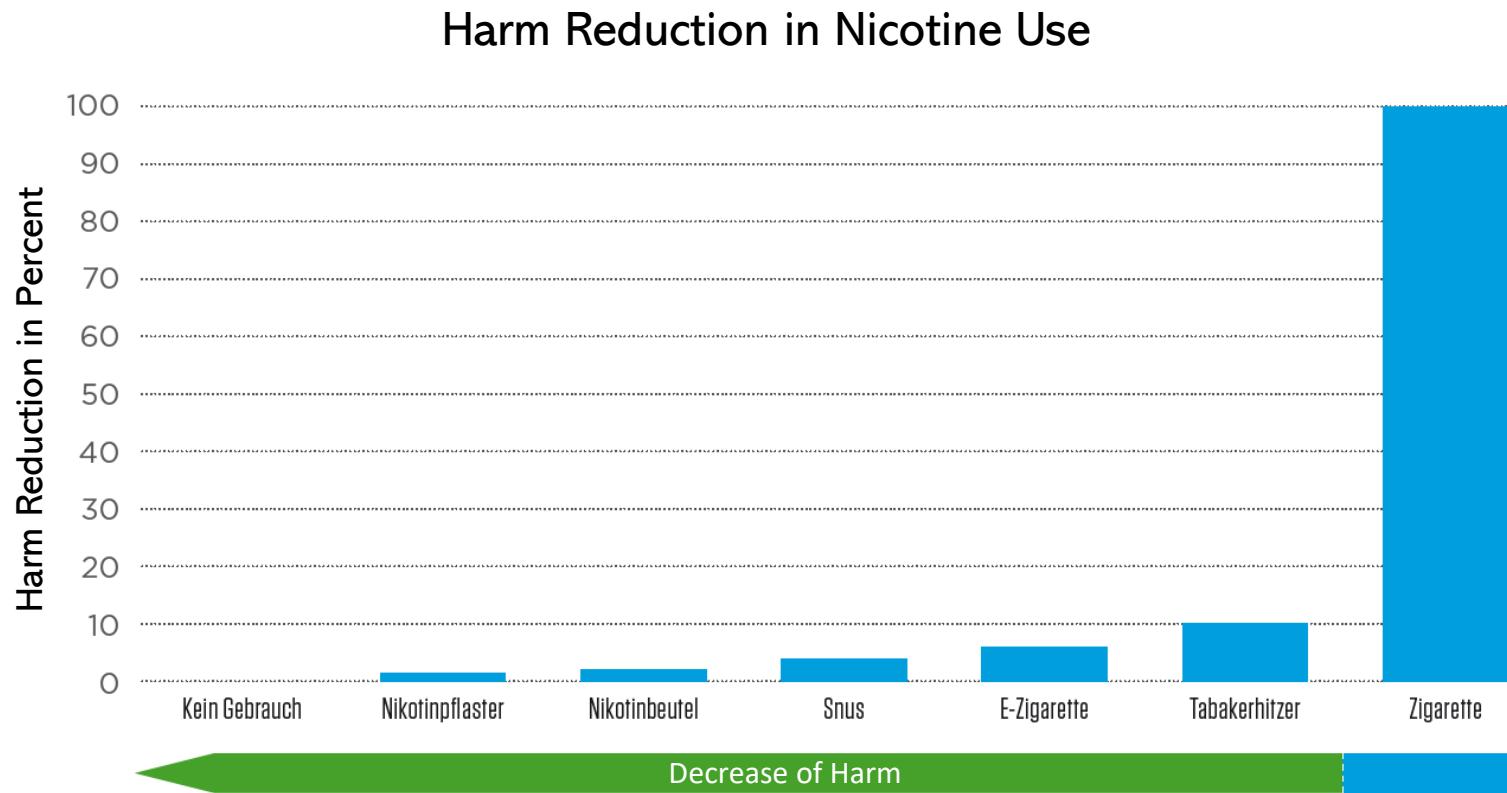
The following are the main findings from nationally representative survey data (STS).

1. Using a vaping product is the most popular aid used by people trying to quit smoking.  
In 2020, 27.2% of people used a vaping product in a quit attempt in the previous 12 months. This compares with 15.5% who used NRT over the counter or on prescription (2.7%), and 4.4% who used varenicline.
2. Vaping is positively associated with quitting smoking successfully. In 2017, over 50,000 smokers stopped smoking with a vaping product who would otherwise have carried on smoking.
3. Prescription medication and licensing NRT for harm reduction were also positively associated with successfully quitting smoking. This shows how important it is for people who smoke to have access to a wide choice of cessation aids.
4. The extensive use of vaping products in quit attempts compared with licensed medication suggests vaping products may reach more people who smoke and so have more impact than NRT and varenicline.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaping-in-england-evidence-update-february-2021> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vaping-better-than-nicotine-replacement-therapy-for-stopping-smoking-evidence-suggests>

# Differentiation of the Harm Potential



**Quelle:** Modifizierte Abbildung des Schadensminimierungskontinuums orientiert an: Abrams et al.: „Harm Minimization and Tobacco Control: Reframing Societal Views of Nicotine Use to Rapidly Save Lives”, in: Annual Review of Public Health, Vol. 39, April 2018, S.195.; BfR: „Gesundheitliche Bewertung von Nikotinbeuteln (Nikotinpouches)”, Aktualisierte Stellungnahme Nr. 042/2021, 21. Dezember 2021, S. 13.; Mallock et al.: „Levels of selected analytes in the emissions of “heat not burn” tobacco products that are relevant to assess human health risks”, in: Archives of Toxicology, Vol. 92, Juni 2018.

# Gateway-Hypothesis

- ...not confirmed<sup>1</sup>
- According to EU-Barometer only 1% of smokers used e-cigarettes, before switching to combustable tobacco<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PHE (2020): Evidence Report <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaping-in-england-evidence-update-march-2020/vaping-in-england-2020-evidence-update-summary>; ASH (2019): Use of e-cigarettes among young people in Great Britain <https://ash.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ASH-Factsheet-Youth-E-cigarette-Use-2019.pdf>; Werse, B.; Müller, D.; Stöver, H.; Dichtl, A.; Graf, N. (2017): Der Konsum von elektronischen Dampferzeugnissen unter Jugendlichen – Konsummuster in einer repräsentativen Stichprobe aus Frankfurt/Main.

In: Suchttherapie 2017; 18(3), S.134-139. Bernd Werse, Jennifer Martens & Heino Stöver (2020): E-Zigaretten als Einstiegsdroge ins Rauchen? Update zur Diskussion um die „Gateway-Hypothese“ In: akzept/DAH (Hrsg.): 7. Alternativer Drogen- und Suchtbericht. Pabst Science Publishers: Lengerich, S. 192-197

<sup>2</sup> Attitudes of Europeans towards tobacco and electronic cigarettes;  
<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2240>

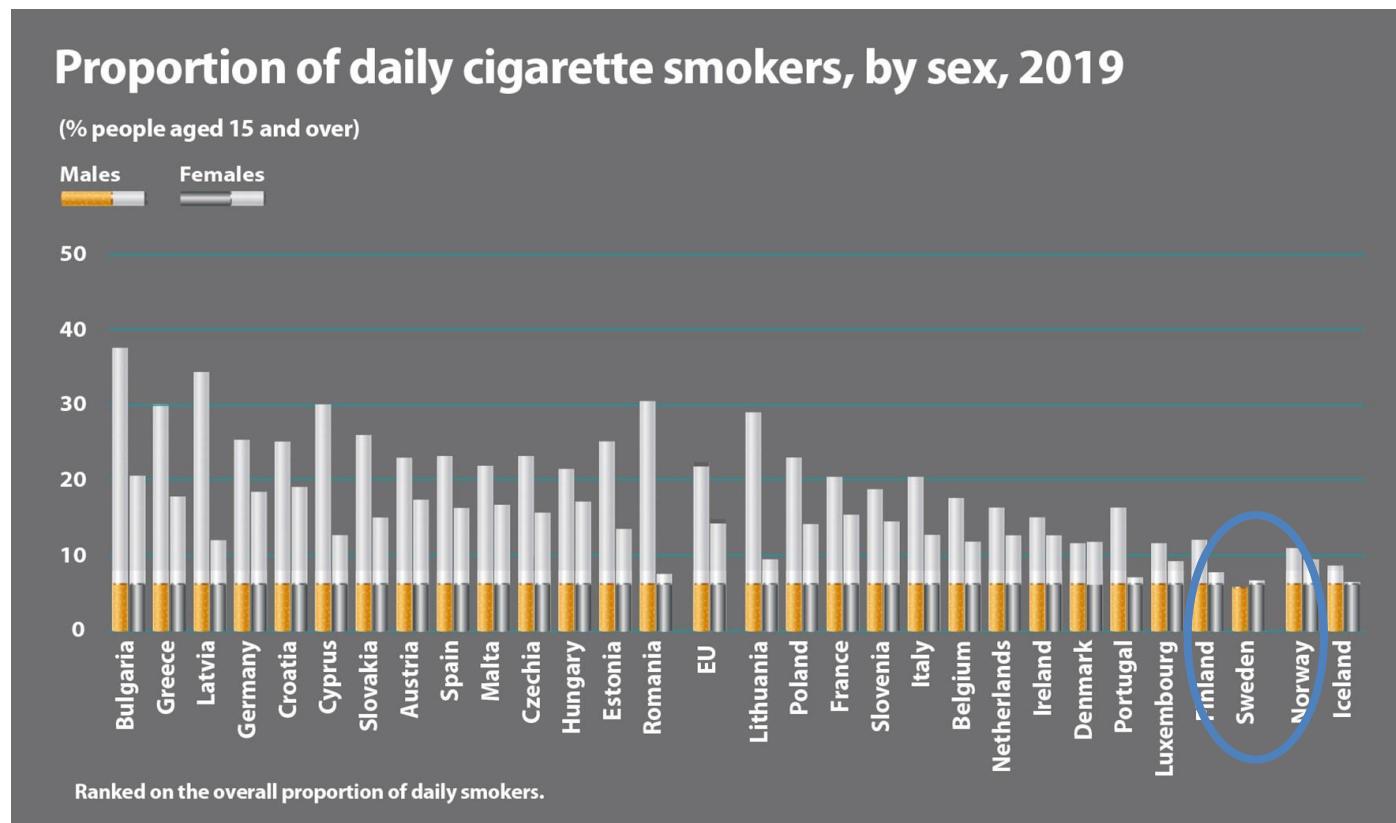
# Conclusion

1. High tobacco smoking rates are the largest preventable health risk in Germany and Croatia
2. Tobacco control policy is not evidence-based and differentiated in its objectives
3. Alternative nicotine consumption products are much less harmful to health than tobacco cigarettes – regulation has to take this into account
4. The reputation of e-cigarettes/tobacco heaters is low - factual education is urgently needed
5. Nicotine pouches need to be legalized!
6. Diversification of smoking cessation strategies is necessary!

**Who does better?**

**For example Sweden**

# Sweden smallest share of male smokers in European Union – first <5%



# Sweden smallest share of tobacco-related deaths in EU

Smoking-attributable deaths: Sweden vs EU (2000-2019)

Cause of death	Smoking-attributable deaths, rate per 100k (2000-2019)		Smoking-attributable deaths, number (2000-2019)		Deaths that could have been averted, number
	Sweden	EU	EU (actual)	EU (if rated like Sweden)	
Non-communicable disease (NCD)	139.9	167.6	16,870,287	14,082,789	2,787,499
All cancers	56.0	79.6	8,020,071	5,637,051	2,383,020
Respiratory tract cancers	28.4	44.0	4,434,576	2,858,811	1,575,765
COPD	18.9	23.2	2,336,499	1,906,782	429,717
Cardiovascular disease	52.7	55.2	5,541,923	5,294,089	247,834
Lower respiratory tract infections	5.0	5.9	595,510	503,637	91,873
All causes	145.8	174.5	17,562,390	14,672,386	2,890,004

# Harm Reduction in Sweden: e.g. Snus

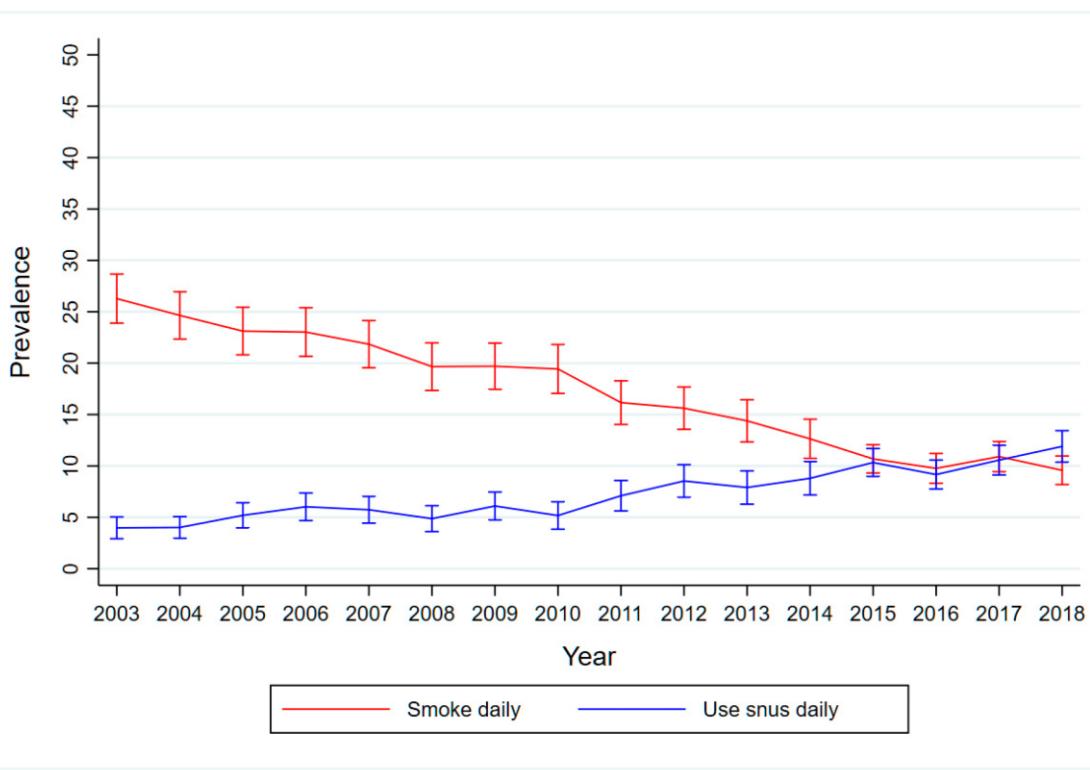
SNUS



- Non-smokable tobacco product
- Loos or in small bags under the upper lip
- Selling prohibited in the whole of EU, but not in Sweden

# Harm Reduction Approach - Snus

The case of snus



- Longstanding Tradition
- Increase of snus associated with reduction of use of combustable cigarettes

# The relative risk of nicotine needs to be reflected in smoking cessation strategies

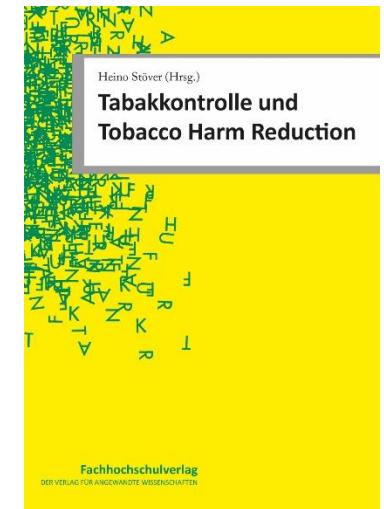
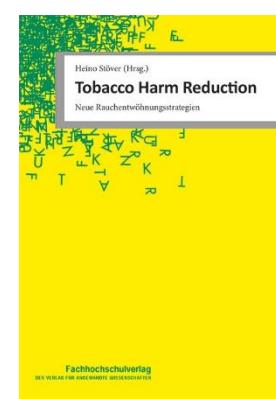
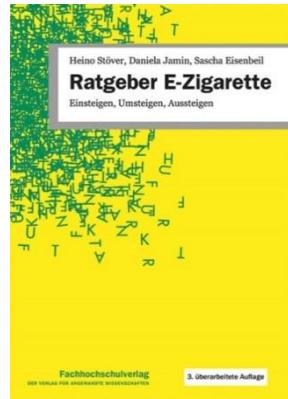
- Sweden first country in EU smokefree (<5% smokers)
- New products, new forms of nicotine intake needs a rethinking of health policy and law making
- Sweden is an example that less risk-related nicotine application system saves lives...and guarantees more pleasure!

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**Who does better?**

**For example UK**

# Tobacco control scale – UK's place in Europe

100 points maximum

Price, Public place bans, Budget, Ad bans, Health warnings, Treatment, Illicit trade, FCTC 5.3 compliance

2005	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019	2021
73 points	93 points	77 points	74 points	81 points	80 points	82 points



Germany: 36 to 43 points

[Tobaccocontrolscale.org](http://Tobaccocontrolscale.org)



# Smokefree ambition



- 2019 government objective
- England to be smokefree by 2030
- Definition: ≤ 5% of the population smoke

# April 2023 Government speech

## “Swap to stop”

- Free vaping kit offer to 1 million smokers
- Alongside behavioural support
- Develop digital approach
- Target most at risk

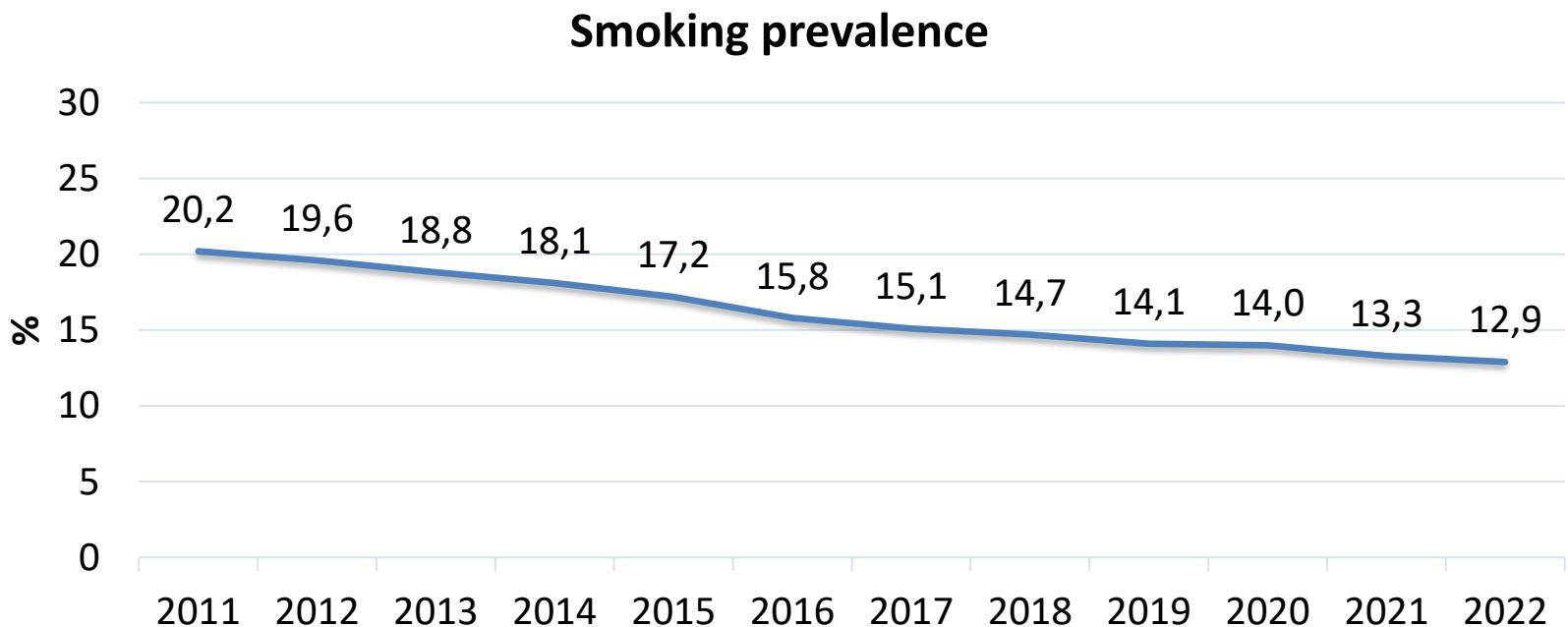
## Financial incentive to support quitting in pregnancy

- 11% smoking at time of delivery
  - 1.6% to 28% by local authority
- Vouchers for confirmed abstinence, several time points

## Other aspects

- Stopping kids vaping and other aims, since superseded

# Adults



# Summary for UK

- Comprehensive tobacco control
- Smokefree England ambition
- Smokefree generation
- Behavioural and pharmacological smoking cessation support
- Vaping and incentives for smoking cessation
- Consultations on regulation to curb youth vaping



## Can Rishi Sunak create a smoke-free generation?

MPs voted this week to ban anyone aged 15 or younger in 2024 from buying cigarettes. If the...

The Guardian  
vor 1 Woche



Politics

Rishi Sunak braces for Conservative rebellion over 'smoke-free'

Daily Mail via MSN.com

Rishi Sunak faces a Cabinet revolt over his proposed smoking ban as MPs back rebels

Sky via MSN.com

Rishi Sunak faces Tory rebellion over landmark 'smoke-free generation' bill

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