



To: Mr. Fahrettin Koca
 Minister of Health of the Republic of Turkey

Brussels, 12 February 2019

Re: The implementation of the smoke-free legislation in Turkey

Dear Minister,

We are writing to you as representatives of leading European and international organisations in public health and tobacco control¹, to express our deep concern regarding the possible introduction of separate smoking areas indoors, as reported in the Turkish media and attributed to yourself. We welcome the drive towards a renewed anti-smoking effort, following an increase in the number of smokers in Turkey, but are worried about a possible reversal of the smoke-free policy in your country.

Weakening smoke-free laws would undermine the main purpose of the legislation, that of protecting people from exposure to second hand smoke. From a public health perspective, **smoke-free laws are strongly rooted in evidence and are proven to be effective** everywhere they have been introduced. Experience from all over the world shows that smoking bans are effective in reducing exposure to environmental smoke as well as in reducing overall smoking especially in young people, without having resulted in economic loss, and are also very popular with citizens. Experience also shows that effective smoke-free legislation has **the least possible exemptions** and that **comprehensive bans** are more effective both in terms of public health by protecting people from second-hand smoke, but also because they are less costly to introduce and easier to enforce.

Smoke-free laws also help to reduce the uptake of smoking among children and young people. Multiple studies have shown that young people who live in towns with comprehensive smoking bans in restaurants are half as likely to become smokers in comparison with young people living in areas with a partial or no smoking ban.² Children and young people also benefit from

¹ SFP Coalition membership: <https://smokefreepartnership.eu/about-us/sfp-coalition>

EPHA membership: <https://epha.org/our-members/>

² <http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/14/5/300.full>

strong smoke-free policies through improved health outcomes, for example reductions in asthma-related hospitalisations in children³ and a reduction in premature births.⁴

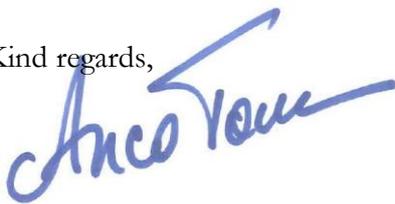
Turkey has been a Party to the WHO FCTC since 2005, a binding public health treaty, which enshrines the aforementioned evidence in Article 8 and its accompanying guidelines. In this context, despite its status as a high-burden tobacco-use country⁵ Turkey registered significant progress in tobacco control, distinguishing itself on the international scene as one of the frontrunners of this fight, by implementing key measures to tackle the tobacco pandemic. One of the crucial areas where Turkey has enacted comprehensive legislation concerns the smoke-free policy. Thus, it would be regrettable if these positive efforts were reversed at great costs for the health of Turkish people.

Moreover, the said initiative runs counter the political commitments previously made by the former Turkish Health Minister and by the President,⁶ to strengthen the smoke-free policies by extending the smoking ban to certain public outdoor areas.

With this in mind, our community trusts that the already enacted smoke-free legislation along with the positive effects it has brought will be strengthened, not endangered. We urge you to make a clear, public statement that dispels any misunderstanding in the news reports and reaffirms these principles and the need to protect people from second-hand smoke.

Thank you for your support and we remain at your disposal for any further information.

Kind regards,



Anca Toma Friedlaender
Director, Smoke Free Partnership

³ <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1002861#t=articleDiscussion>

⁴ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24680633>

⁵ <https://www.who.int/tobacco/about/partners/bloomberg/tur/en/>

⁶ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-issue-smoking-ban-for-outdoors-94976>

LIST OF SIGNATORY ORGANISATIONS:

Belgium/EU: International association of mutual benefit societies

Belgium/EU: CPME: Standing Committee of European Doctors

Belgium/EU: ECL: Association of European Cancer Leagues

Belgium/EU: EHN: European Heart Network

Belgium: Belgian Foundation against Cancer

Belgium: Kom Op Tegen Kanker

Bosnia and Herzegovina: PROI: Progressive Reinforcement of Organizations and Individuals

Bulgaria: Smoke Free Life Coalition Bulgaria

Czech Republic: Česko Bez Kouře

Finland: Suomen ASH: Finland's Action on Smoking and Health

France: CNCT: Comité National Contre Le Tabagisme

France: La Ligue contre le cancer

FYROM: Institute of Public Health of Republic of Macedonia

Germany: Unfairtobacco

Ireland: ASH Ireland

Ireland: Irish Cancer Society

Italy: SITAB: Società Italiana di Tabaccologia

Kosovo: Kosovo Advocacy and Development Center

Montenegro: Juventas

Lithuania: NTAKK: Lithuanian National Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition

Norway: Norwegian Cancer Society

The Netherlands: Alliantie Nederland Rookvrij!

The Netherlands: Dutch Cancer Society

The Netherlands/EU: INWAT: International Network of Women against Tobacco Europe

Turkey: Health Institute Association (Sağliga evet derneği)

Poland: MANKO Association

Portugal: CATR: Centro de Apoio, Tratamento e Recuperação

Romania: ARPS: Asociația Română pentru Promovarea Sănătății

Romania: Asociația România Sănătoasă 2035

Serbia: Association „Health Mission“

Serbia: Serbian Society for the Fight Against Cancer

Slovenia: No Excuse Slovenia

Slovenia: Slovenian Coalition for Public Health, Environment and Tobacco Control

Spain: IDEPP: Grupo de I+D en Economía, Políticas Públicas y Salud

Spain: XQNS!

Sweden: Tobaksfakta - Independent Think Tank

UK: ASH (UK)

UK: Cancer Research UK

UK: UKCTAS: UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies

UK: FRESH

Ukraine: Life: Regional Advocacy Center