

On 3-4 May 2007, more than 50 members of the tobacco control and scientific community met to discuss tobacco and nicotine product regulation within the European Union. What emerged from the meeting is the 'Leuven Consensus'.

THE LEUVEN CONSENSUS

- There is a spectrum of harm and toxicity of tobacco and nicotine products. Smoked tobacco is the most dangerous form. Smokeless tobacco products are less harmful, some of these products being less hazardous than others. Medicinal nicotine products are by far the least harmful.
- Greater regulatory consistency is needed on tobacco and nicotine products, including price and availability. The regulatory process should include an assessment of the harm and regulate accordingly. As it currently stands, tobacco product regulation is very weak and should be strengthened. The most dangerous form of nicotine containing products (cigarettes) is the least regulated and least dangerous (NRT) is heavily regulated.
- Current NRT products are much less addictive than tobacco. NRT should be more accessible for cessation of smoking and appropriate use should be encouraged.

Evidence that is still needed

- Harm of smokeless tobacco on health
- Impact of SNUS on public health
- Research for novel products, based on emerging evidence of all aspects of tobacco dependence

Where do we want to be within 15 years

Our vision is zero tobacco use. The following are steps towards this:

- The public health community to have completely taken back control of the Regulatory agenda on tobacco and nicotine products
- EU Regulation to remove the misleading product yield info on cigarette packets and replace with appropriate data
- Tobacco products out of the consumer price index
- A price differential between tobacco and non-tobacco nicotine products. Tax and price increases are the most effective mechanism to reduce sales and consumption. This should be part of the regulatory approach.
- Reduced Ignition Propensity (RIP) cigarettes within 3 years
- Effective graphic warnings on tobacco packaging within 3 years
- Plain cigarette packages within 10 years
- Tobacco products are 'under the counter' - not visible at point of sale
- Smokers are part of the picture and they need to be taken into account but not through the front groups funded by the tobacco industry
- Access to internal documents from the Tobacco industry
- Effective cessation treatments available through health systems and insurance (no price barrier to quit)
- No tobacco industry involvement in decision-making and regulation but they should contribute to the cost
- At least full and strong implementation of the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) based on the best available evidence

- Greater funds and commitment to tobacco control and prevention, particularly training for tobacco control advocates
- A Tobacco and Nicotine Regulatory Authority