



EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR SMOKING PREVENTION
RESEAU EUROPEEN POUR LA PREVENTION DU TABAGISME aisbl

Arguments in favour of a ban on smoking in the workplace

1. TOBACCO SMOKE KILLS

Second-hand smoke is one of the main contributing and preventable factors of work-related cancers and cardiovascular diseases, according to the International Labour Office (ILO)¹ and it has been classified as 'carcinogenic to humans' by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)², as well as by the German and Finnish governments.

Second-hand tobacco smoke increases both smokers' and non-smokers' risks of lung cancer, heart disease and stroke. Second-hand smoke can also lead to a variety of other illnesses such as decreased pulmonary function and respiratory diseases, exacerbation of allergic symptoms, the development of middle ear disease, cataract, Crohn's disease, gastric ulcer and osteoporosis. In the short term, tobacco smoke and smoking can cause: shortness of breath; nausea; airway irritation, coughing and eye irritation³.

Additionally babies born to smokers are more likely to be born premature and with a low birth weight. Infants and children exposed to tobacco smoke have an increased risk of cot death (sudden infant death syndrome – SIDS), middle-ear disease, respiratory infections and of developing asthma.

2. ONLY A COMPLETE BAN IS EFFECTIVE

Separate smoking areas not only ineffective in protecting people who do not smoke, they also do nothing to protect the health of smokers, who are also at risk from passive smoke. The only solution is a complete ban on smoking in the workplace. Second-hand smoke contains over 4000 compounds and more than 40 are known carcinogens, some of which are pharmacologically active, mutagenic or toxic⁴ and many of which cannot be smelt.

[We will keep you updated with current research into the number of deaths linked to passive smoking]

3. VENTILATION IS NOT THE ANSWER

A study by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) on indoor air pollution confirms that attempts to reduce indoor air pollution, such as tobacco smoke, through higher ventilation rates in buildings and homes, fail to improve indoor air quality⁵.

4. NO NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON BAR/RESTAURANT BUSINESS

The bars and restaurants will experience no negative economic impact – no loss of income – from taking preventative measures against second-hand smoke⁶. We see this from the example of New York, we are beginning to see this in Ireland and we can illustrate this using the results of a survey carried out among bar and restaurant owners in five European countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and Spain)⁷.

A review of 21 studies using objective outcome measures, which were peer reviewed and not financed by the tobacco industry, all concluded that smoke-free restaurant and bar laws had no negative impact on revenues or jobs⁸. It is up to the policy makers to protect workers and customers and reject industry claims that there will be an adverse economic impact.

¹ Introductory Report: Decent Work – Safe Work, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2002.

http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/wdcongrs/ilo_rep.pdf

Workplace Smoking. Working Paper: A Review of National and Local Practical and Regulatory Measures, by Carin Hakansta, March 2004, ILO.

http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/tobacco/tobacco_report.pdf

² IARC international review on tobacco smoking and tobacco smoke 2002, <http://monographs.iarc.fr/htdocs/monographs/vol83/01-smoking.html>

³ Towards smoke-free public places, British Medical Association, London, 2002.

⁴ Reducing the Health Consequences of Smoking: 25 years in Progress. A report of the Surgeon General, US Department of Health and Human Services, Maryland, 1989

⁵ Human exposure to indoor air pollution: Do you really know what you are breathing when sitting at home? September 2003, Joint Research Centre, http://www.jrc.cec.eu.int/default.asp@sidesz=more_information&sidstsz=press_releases&sanchor=434.htm

⁶ Report says weight of evidence is that smoking bans have little or no effect in aggregate on hospitality sales, Press release of the Irish Office of Tobacco Control, 23 March 2004. <http://www.otc.ie/article.asp?article=192>

⁷ Non-Smokers Protection in Restaurants and Bars in Europe, a survey in five European countries, ENSP Framework Project 2001-2002, funded under European Commission Grant Agreement no.S12.324433 (2001CVG2-008) http://www.ensp.org/files/Ch2_Bars_and_Restaurants.pdf

⁸ Review of the quality of studies on the economic effects of smoke-free policies on the hospitality industry, Scollo M, Lal A, A Hyland A, Glantz S, Tobacco Control, 2003;12:13-20



5. CITIZENS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION SPEND A MAJORITY OF THEIR TIME AT WORK

Workers in Europe are exposed to passive smoke for at least 75% of their working time⁹. It is also important to see workers in a social, family context: illness or death caused by workplace exposure to tobacco smoke can have a devastating effect on the family unit, socially and economically.

6. EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL NOT DAMAGE THEIR HEALTH OR THAT OF THEIR UNBORN CHILD.

Studies have shown that women exposed to second-hand smoke during pregnancy give birth to lower weight babies have a higher risk of premature birth¹⁰. The Pregnant Women Directive is not adequately enforced and is not used as a tool to protect pregnant workers from the effects of second-hand smoke. Additionally, this Directive does nothing to protect non-pregnant and non-female workers from passive smoke. Shouldn't they have a right to work in a healthy environment too?

Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy workplace for their employees and therefore a ban on smoking in the workplace can help employers act responsibly, reduce their liability, boost the business' corporate image, increase its profits and morale.

7. CHILDREN ARE PARTICULARLY AT RISK

While children's health is not the prime concern of employers and businesses, they should be aware that children spend up to 80% of their time in indoor environments, many of which are workplaces: these include not only the home, but also nursery and day-care centres, schools, leisure facilities – and also shops, cafés and restaurants.

8. ENCOURAGES QUITTING

Banning smoking in workplaces would encourage smokers to cut down or quit and employers should be encouraged to support workplace smoking bans with cessation support programmes in the workplace.

9. MANY SMOKERS SUPPORT A BAN!

According to surveys conducted by the Irish Office of Tobacco control, prior to the implementation of the Irish smoking ban on 29 March 2004: In relation to compliance in pubs and bars, research conducted for the Office in late January shows that 73% of the public who visited pubs in the previous two weeks were non-smokers, whereas 27% were smokers - so only in the region of one quarter of pub customers are smokers. Further research we conducted late last year shows that 81% of the public state that publicans should comply with the law, including 61% of smokers.¹¹

10. NO COST! FREE TO IMPLEMENT! SAVES LIVES AND €€€!

Potentially important cost savings for health care budgets, savings for employers on cleaning and ventilation systems, as well as reduced employer contributions for health care in private schemes and increased productivity from a healthier workforce.

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⁹ Carex Study on Occupational Exposure to Carcinogens in the European Union: http://www.ensp.org/files/Carex_study.pdf

¹⁰ Smoking and reproductive life – The impact of smoking on sexual, reproductive and child health, British Medical Association, 2004. http://www.tobacco-control.org/tcrc_Web_Site/Pages_tcrc/Resources/tcrc_Publications/Smoking&ReproductiveLife.pdf

¹¹ Office of Tobacco Control research indicates supportive environment for introduction of smoke-free workplace legislation, Press release of the Irish Office of Tobacco Control, 28 March 2004. http://www.otc.ie/communication_press.asp