

ACCESS Report 2010, Preface

This report deals with nothing less than saving the health of our youth by stopping a bad habit before it causes disease. Nine guiding principles have been formulated by experts with youth participation in order to help policy makers, public health professionals and communities to confine the tobacco epidemic.

Smoking cessation supplements prevention and should start early, if possible before a strong habit is formed and severe nicotine addiction makes quitting more difficult. Because anticipation of psychological strain and suffering is mostly missing at young age, special strategies of communication have to be chosen to recruit young smokers for cessation interventions and engage them successfully. This report gives advice also for the use of internet, traditional media and on the cooperation of health care and social services, schools, workplaces and leisure settings. Thereby recommendations given at the conference “Media and Smoking Prevention”

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/conference_prevention_en.htm are expanded to smoking cessation interventions, which are urgently needed for youth and even for children, because in recent years the tobacco industry succeeded to hook young people at earlier age.

Especially in Central and Eastern Europe this goes in line with poor legislation for protection of nonsmokers from second hand smoke and a high visibility of smoking in public. Governments which try to please business interests of the tobacco industry are still giving free access to cigarettes above 16 years of age and did not install any effective control of sales to younger persons such as a ban of vending machines, test purchase of cigarettes by underage and prosecution of illegal sales. Taxation and prize of cigarettes are low in Eastern and Central Europe, so that young persons and low income groups, underprivileged from low education, can afford to smoke.

In the hospitality industry children are exposed to second hand smoke and youth is hooked to nicotine in waterpipe restaurants, discotheques, youth clubs, bars, etc.. Both nonsmokers protection and population based smoking cessation would need enforcement of smoking bans at all workplaces. Tobacco smoke is the last remaining potent carcinogen at many workplaces in Europe. Regulation is long overdue and would help to denormalize smoking. Otherwise we expect stagnation and reversal of life expectancy increase, with cancer, COPD and other smoking related diseases occurring at younger ages, an increase of pain and suffering and exploding costs for disease treatment.

I wish this booklet a large distribution among opinion leaders, to encourage action against the business interest of Big Tobacco and to begin a trend reversal among youth, which is our future.

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