

Snus & Nicotine Pouch Users Association

The Snus & Nicotine Pouch Users Association is a group of UK Snus & Nicotine Pouch users who wish to share their experience of quitting smoking through the use of safer oral nicotine products. We would like to see a world in which there is a significant reduction in the number of people having their lives shortened through the use of smoked tobacco. We advocate for a harm reduction approach in order to help smokers switch to vastly safer nicotine products.

Dutch Tobacco and Smoking Products Act

The Dutch proposal to prevent the sale of nicotine pouches, a product which has the ability to deliver nicotine to consumers without the damage caused by combustible tobacco is a proposal that will lead to higher smoking rates in the Netherlands and therefore cause an increase in morbidity amongst the Dutch population.

We know that nicotine is not the cause of harm to smokers, it is in fact the burning and inhalation of a product into the lungs which has such drastic health implications. Therefore, a policy of harm reduction which allows those that would or do smoke to choose a nicotine product which does not need the combustion of tobacco to deliver nicotine to the body will drastically reduce the harm caused to consumers.

The role of harm reduction to save lives

Harm reduction is a principle that has a strong record of working in diverse fields from reducing HIV transmission to reducing the number of people who die from substance use. Harm reduction refers to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise the negative health, social impacts associated with the risks posed by sexual intercourse, drug, alcohol and nicotine use.

Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights. It focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgment, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that people stop using a substance or having sex.

In the field of tobacco harm reduction Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom have shown that by allowing people to make the switch to safer nicotine products the consumption of combustible cigarettes reduces significantly and this leads to a reduction in the damaging health outcomes associated with smoking.

With the UK smoking rate now down to 13.3%, Sweden's smoking prevalence at 5.8% it is clear that by offering alternatives to smoking that are safer, smokers are more than willing to make the switch. Both countries have a significantly lower smoking rate than the UK. In the UK the use of vaping devices has played the largest role. Whilst in Sweden a combination of nicotine pouch use and Swedish Snus has driven smoking rates down successfully. Leading to Sweden

having the lowest smoking related illnesses amongst men (due to men using the product historically at a higher rate to women). Sweden has the second lowest rate for oral cancer.

Conclusions

By preventing the sale of this potentially life saving harm reduction product the Dutch Government is perhaps inadvertently encouraging its population to smoke. This will have wider implications for those visiting the Netherlands who will be unable to access their safer nicotine product of choice whilst visiting the country. It will also discourage other countries, particularly in LMIC's where there are a high number of smokers from utilising nicotine pouches as a method for reducing smoking rates. Ultimately this will keep the over 1 billion smokers across the world smoking and lead to greater health harms as a result.

By Mark Oates, Founder of the SNP UA