

Europe reins in the smoking habit

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The experts forecast that these measures will reduce the incidence of cardiovascular disease in the short and medium-term, as well as the incidence of cancer. Credit: SINC

A study led by the Smoking Control Unit of the Catalan Institute of Oncology (ICO) has confirmed that the anti-tobacco laws in Europe have a direct effect on the reduction in consumption and passive exposure to smoke. This conclusion was reached by relating the Tobacco Eurobarometer and the Tobacco Control Scale (TCS).

A new study, published in the magazine *Plos One*, has confirmed the hypothesis that the greater the restrictions, the lower the consumption and passive exposure to smoke. The study was carried out in the 27 countries of the EU and relates the Eurobarometer survey on tobacco and the [Tobacco Control](#) Scale (which takes into account the main measures taken in order to control smoking at international level).

"The countries with the highest score in the TCS apply active control policies and the consumption of tobacco and the proportion of the population exposed to smoke, both at home and in the work place, is more reduced", explained Esteve Fernández Muñoz, co-author of the study and the Head of the Tobacco Control Unit of the ICO to SINC.

In countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Malta and Sweden, which score higher on the TCS (that is to say, they adopt stricter controls on smoking), the consumption is "relatively low" -28.8% lower-, as is exposure to smoke -13.8% lower in the home and 23.4% lower in the work place -.

However in the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, Greece and Austria, where there are fewer control measures, smoking is "relatively high" – more than 30%-, as well as the exposure to smoke – between 15% and 30% in the home and between 15% and 36% in the work place -.

Progressively more measures in Spain

Fernández Muñoz pointed out that the reform of Law 28/2005 on health care measures concerning smoking, which came into force yesterday, "is an example of the very important progress in the control of smoking and means the abolition of the 'Spanish model' of supposed tolerance".

Although Spain scores high on the TCS, there are some aspects in which its score is low, such as the price of tobacco. He assured us that, "It is one of the countries in [Europe](#) with the cheapest prices".

"It has been demonstrated that increasing the price of tobacco is the most effective measure for controlling smoking (30 points out of 100 on the TCS scale) as compared with other action, such as, treatment to quit [smoking](#) (10 points on the TCS)", pointed out the researcher.

The experts forecast that these measures will reduce the incidence of cardiovascular disease in the short and medium-term, as well as the incidence of cancer, mainly lung cancer, in the long-term. In Spain, passive exposure to smoke leads to between 1,200 and 3,200 deaths per year due to lung cancer and heart attacks.

More information: Jose M. Martínez Sánchez, Esteve Fernández, Marcela Fu, Silvano Gallus, Cristina Martinez, Xisca Sureda, Carlo La Vecchia, Luke Clancy. "Smoking Behaviour, Involuntary Smoking, Attitudes towards Smoke-Free Legislations, and Tobacco Control Activities in the European Union". *Plos One* 5 (11): e13881, Nov 2010.

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