

Austria falls in line with Europe to ban smoking in restaurants

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Austria on Friday finally decided to ban smoking in cafes and restaurants from 2018 after years of debate in a country famed for its cafe culture.

"We have at last joined Europe in terms of protecting non-smokers," Health Minister Sabine Oberhauser said.

Smoking is banned in public places in Austria under a 2009 law but restaurants and cafes are exempted and the government admits that the legislation is not tightly enforced.

The future smoking ban also includes [electronic cigarettes](#) but exempts hotels which can still maintain [smoking rooms](#).

Austria figures among Western European countries where cigarettes are cheapest. A third of its population are smokers against an EU average of 28 percent, according to a study conducted in 2012.

The country has smoking areas in [public places](#) such as supermarkets. The anti-smoking law is being opposed by many restaurant and cafe owners and the Austrian chamber of commerce has said it is mulling whether to file a suit in the constitutional court.

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