

Czechs to ban smoking in restaurants like most of EU

June 3 2015

The Czech government on Wednesday agreed to ban smoking in cafes and restaurants starting 2016, paving the way for the country to fall in line with the rest of Europe.

The centre-left cabinet of Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka approved the bill unanimously but it still needs a green-light from parliament and President Milos Zeman, a chain-smoker. It is expected to pass.

The Czech Republic is currently an "island where it is possible to smoke in places where it's almost impossible elsewhere in Europe," Health Minister Svatopluk Nemecek told reporters.

Smoking has already been outlawed in most public places in the country since 2005. The restaurant ban will also apply to electronic cigarettes.

Smokers found breaking the law could be fined up to 5,000 koruna (180 euros, \$200) while restaurants could be hit with up to 50,000 koruna.

Twenty-nine percent of Czechs smoke, according to a Eurobarometer poll from 2012. The EU average is 28 percent.

All EU countries have adopted measures to protect citizens against exposure to tobacco smoke but national measures differ considerably in extent and scope.

Some of the strictest measures have been introduced in Ireland, Britain,

Greece and Spain.

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