

# WHO aims to make Europeans start moving, stop smoking

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

The World Health Organisation on Wednesday launched strategies aimed at getting Europeans to start moving and stop smoking over the next decade to defuse what it termed the ticking time-bomb of sedentary lifestyles.

"Health systems across the region (Europe) risk being crippled by people

suffering the effects of [physical inactivity](#) and sedentary behaviour," Doctor Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, said in a Wednesday statement issued at talks in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius.

"To address this, we have developed the first physical activity strategy for the WHO European Region 2016-2025."

"Rates of [overweight and obesity](#) are rising dramatically" in 46 of the 53 countries in its European region, the WHO noted in the same statement.

"More than 50 percent of adults are overweight or obese; in several of those countries, the rate in the adult population is close to 70 percent," the statement added.

"In some countries, more than 40 percent of 7- and 8-year-old boys are overweight, and more than 20 percent are obese," it warned.

As part of the new strategy, the WHO's 53 European member have agreed to ensure their populations have equal and safe access to areas and infrastructure designed for exercise regardless of "gender, age, income, education, ethnicity or disability."

Ministers of health from the WHO's 53 European members on Wednesday also signed up to an unprecedented roadmap to make "tobacco a thing of the past" over the next decade by enforcing a series of anti-tobacco measures.

They include enforcing smoking bans, especially in children's environments, effectively banning [tobacco advertising](#), curbing tobacco product placement in entertainment and "increasing public awareness through educational initiatives to prevent young people from starting to smoke."

"The generation growing up now cannot comprehend that people used to smoke on airplanes, buses, in restaurants or in offices," Jakab said, pointing to the progress made over the last 20 years in enforcing tobacco controls but insisted there was "hard work ahead."

"Governments must fully implement the measures in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and define a common goal: a Europe where tobacco is not a social norm," she said.

The WHO also singled out countries that have announced a target year to end tobacco use in their populations: Ireland by 2025, Scotland by 2034, Finland by 2040.

"They are paving the way to a tobacco-free future by introducing plain packaging, banning smoking in cars carrying children and aiming for a tobacco-free millennial generation," it said.

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