

Austria set to stub out smoking ban

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Clients of a coffee shop enjoy cigarettes with their drinks at Vienna's most famous market, the Naschmarkt

Austria's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) said Monday that a planned ban on smoking in all bars and restaurants due to come into force in mid-2018 will be scrapped.

FPÖ chief Heinz-Christian Strache said that the reversal was agreed in ongoing talks to form a coalition with the conservative People's Party (ÖVP) following elections in October.

"I am proud of this excellent solution in the interests of non-smokers, smokers and [restaurant](#) owners," Strache, who had made the move a key campaign pledge, said on [social media](#).

"The freedom to choose lives on. The existence of restaurants (particularly small ones) has been secured. Thousands of threatened jobs have been saved," said Strache, 48, himself a smoker.

Unlike in most of Europe, in Austria people can smoke in eateries under certain conditions—which are widely flouted—including that it is confined to separate rooms.

The outgoing government, a coalition of the OeVP and the Social Democrats, passed a law in 2015 banning smoking completely in bars and eateries, which was due to take effect next May.

The new government, which Strache and non-smoker OeVP head Sebastian Kurz, 31, want installed before Christmas, will however make some concessions, media reports said.

Under-18s will not be allowed in [smoking rooms](#) of bars and restaurants, smoking will be outlawed in cars if under-18s are inside, and the minimum age for [smoking](#) will rise from 16 to 18.

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