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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Council Recommendation on smoke-and aerosol-free environments replacing Council Recommendation 2009/C 296/02 (legal basis proposed by the Commission: Article 168(6) TFEU) - <i>Statement by the Czech Republic</i>

Delegations will find in Annex a statement by the Czech Republic to be included in the minutes of the EPSCO Council (Health) on 3 December 2024.

Statement of the Czech Republic*Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Smoke and Aerosol Free Environments*

The Czech Republic believes that the Council Recommendation on a Smoke and Aerosol free Environment represents a step towards reducing the harm caused by tobacco and related products. However, we believe that policies that aim to protect public health should be rational, realistic and based on prevention and harm reduction.

The Czech Republic will follow it in line with our national context and, in particular, with our national strategy as outlined in the Action Plan for Addiction Policy 2023-2025. In this regard we emphasize that, while we support the general objectives of the Recommendation improving public health, any Union action shall be strictly in line with the subsidiarity and proportionality principle and solely complementary to national policies, as stipulated by Article 168 TFEU, and its implementation must be adapted to the specific national needs, challenges, practices and evidence.

Our national policy, as defined in the Action Plan, supports a balanced and realistic approach to addiction policy, including tobacco policy. This approach not only focuses on prevention but also supports harm reduction as one of the main pillars of our policy applied towards those adults who cannot or do not wish to quit smoking. In such cases, policies that reduce the health risks associated with smoking are seen as valuable tools for improving public health.

The Czech Republic recognizes that, according to the latest scientific evidence, the use of new and emerging tobacco and nicotine products may pose lower health risks compared to traditional tobacco products. Therefore, it is essential that further research will be conducted to provide more conclusive evidence on the long-term effects of these products on public health. At the same time, it is crucial to acknowledge that new products, in particular those with characterizing flavors, are particularly attractive to children and young people, which requires strict regulation to prevent access to these products.

In line with this, the Czech Republic advocates for measures that take into account the relative harm and societal risk of different tobacco and nicotine products.

The primary objectives should be:

- 1) to protect children and adolescents from tobacco use and exposure to tobacco and related products, and
- 2) to facilitate the transition of adult smokers to less harmful alternatives when they are unable or unwilling to quit smoking altogether.

We consider it important to state our position on tobacco policy and on the approach to new products, anticipating that this approach will be reflected on behalf of the Czech Republic in the expected revision of the 2014/40 Directive.

In conclusion, the Czech Republic remains committed to implementing an effective policy in accordance with the best available scientific evidence, national health policies, and international frameworks. We believe that our approach will contribute to the reduction of tobacco-related harm, protect public health, and promote the well-being of all citizens.
