

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-ninth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 10–13 October 2022**

October 2022

REPORT ON THE MOST RECENT DATA ON EMERGING TOBACCO AND NICOTINE PRODUCTS

Objectives of the event

On 12 October 2022, a side event on new and emerging tobacco and nicotine products will be held.

The objectives of the event are to:

- share the most recent global evidence on new and emerging tobacco and nicotine products with Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region; and
- identify and agree on the way forward for regulation of new and emerging tobacco and nicotine products in the Region, based on international best practices and the recommendations of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

Background

The tobacco industry is flooding the global market with novel and emerging tobacco and nicotine products which pose a new threat to tobacco control efforts. The industry is making aggressive marketing claims about the reduced harm of these products on human health and marketing them as “clean”, “smokefree” or “safer” products, as well as claiming that they are effective as cessation aids. The tobacco industry is using the concept of “harm reduction” and is promoting “healthier alternatives” to smoking to justify allowing the entry of emerging nicotine and tobacco products into national markets without regulation.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region suffers from a very high prevalence of tobacco use. Only one Member State in the Region is set to achieve the target of a 30% relative reduction in the prevalence of tobacco use by 2025, while other countries will only achieve a slight reduction or even see an increase, in their levels of tobacco use. It is vital to scale up tobacco control efforts in Member States in order to achieve the WHO target. In addition to traditional tobacco products, a range of novel and emerging tobacco and nicotine products are now entering the Region and there is increasing pressure from the industry to allow such products without any regulation, contrary to international best practice and WHO FCTC guidelines and recommendations.

Ten years ago, all Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region banned novel and emerging tobacco products; however, the situation has changed and many countries are now allowing such products into their markets. At the same time, the tobacco industry is continuously developing new products and therefore countries need to be prepared for an evolving situation and take the needed action to protect their populations. COP decisions have called on Parties to control emerging tobacco and nicotine products at the national level using a recommended set of activities and actions.

In 2018, the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean endorsed a regional strategy and action plan for tobacco control to accelerate implementation of the WHO FCTC, in addition to a regional framework for action on tobacco control (2019–2023).

Challenges in the Region

The Region faces many challenges in addressing these new and emerging tobacco and nicotine products, including: the lack of clarity on regulatory options; lack of data related to novel tobacco products; and pressure from the industry to allow new products and exempt such products from national tobacco regulatory schemes.

Expected outcomes

- Member States are updated on global evidence on new and emerging tobacco and nicotine products;
- agreement on the way forward for the regulation of new and emerging tobacco and nicotine products in the Region, based on international best practice and the recommendations of the COP and WHO.