



# Statement on Tobacco 21 from the European Respiratory Society Tobacco Control Committee

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**The ERS Tobacco Control Committee supports the Tobacco 21 initiative** <https://bit.ly/3YbqKP4>

**Cite this article as:** Cox DW, Rodriguez L, Grigg J. Statement on Tobacco 21 from the European Respiratory Society Tobacco Control Committee. *Eur Respir J* 2023; 61: 2300134 [DOI: 10.1183/13993003.00134-2023].

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Received: 20 Jan 2023  
Accepted: 22 Feb 2023

Tobacco consumption is the most significant cause of premature death across the European Union (EU) and is responsible for 700 000 deaths every year. Smokers are more likely than nonsmokers to develop lung cancer, COPD, coronary artery disease, stroke, diabetes, infertility and many other conditions [1]. According to Eurostat, 18.4% of people aged 15 years and over in the EU were daily smokers in 2019 [2]. Across Europe, the minimum age of sale of tobacco products is 18 years as per the obligations of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). Data from the US Department of Health suggest that 90% of smokers begin smoking before the age of 18 years and we know that, overall, the average age to start smoking is 16 years of age. Furthermore, many young people in the upper age range of 18 to 21 years in some European countries, start smoking regularly after 18 years of age [3]. For many years, tobacco companies marketed their products to entice initiation by young people. Since most EU countries have now introduced strict bans on the packaging, advertising and marketing of tobacco products, the European tobacco control policy needs bolder measures to decrease adolescent and young adult smoking rates and protect a new generation from the dangers of tobacco smoking. Many countries are examining tobacco endgame policies, which aim to rapidly reduce smoking prevalence to minimal levels. One such policy is raising the tobacco age-of-sale to 21 years, widely referred to as "Tobacco 21" (T21).