Your support is needed!

In order to bring Tobacco Endgame – Smoke Free Sweden 2025 from vision to realistic action more organisations need to speak up, many in their own interest. Reduced smoking benefits all, not only smokers. Minors have a right to grow up in a smoke free world and grown ups are obliged to give them that right. Election time is perfect to address these facts, aiming at political assemblies on all levels that promote child and public health rather than the profits of the tobacco industry.

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Read more:
Ruth E Malone: *The Race to a Tobacco Endgame*, Tob Control 2016 25: 607-608

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TOBACCO RÖKFRITT ENDGAME SVERIGE 2025

Mobilizing public opinion for a Swedish Tobacco Endgame strategy

The public support for Tobacco Endgame – Smoke Free Sweden 2025 is increasing. This folder updates the information on the endgame initiative – what it means and what it takes to join and be a supporting organisation.

Tobacco Endgame = a change of perspectives

In Sweden the yearly death toll from smoking is approximately 12 000 people, and every year 100 000 smokers are in need for hospital care due to smoking related diseases. Societal costs are substantial and much larger than the revenue from tobacco taxes. The tobacco industry spends vast resources on attracting new customers, sustaining the tobacco epidemic.

To counter this development the global health community through the WHO agreed in 2003 on a Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). It contains the numerous measures needed to achieve a lasting decrease in tobacco use.

But why just try to decrease smoking – why not increase ambitions and aim for a phasing out of the habit long term? That would mean a change of perspectives which would inspire tobacco control work and – through political decisions and the implementation of FCTC – would lead to decreasing tobacco use and increasing public health.

This strategy has internationally been known as Tobacco Endgame. New Zealand and Ireland are intending to be (essentially) smoke free in 2025, Finland in 2030 and Scotland in 1034.

The Swedish Tobacco Endgame initiative

In 2012 the Swedish tobacco control NGOs, some fifteen organisations co-operating under the umbrella of Tobaksfakta – oberoende tanke-smedja (Tobacco Facts – Independent Think Tank), proposed that the Swedish government should take a bold decision. As soon as possible, the government should set a goal that by 2025 daily smoking would be reduced to less than five per cent, about one half compared with today's situation. Other forms of nicotine intake such as snus (oral tobacco), water pipe and e-cigarettes are not included but should certainly be subject to preventive measures according to the FCTC.

However, such a political decision can not be expected without solid public support. Therefore a mobilization of organisations willing to support the initiative was started in 2013. A rather informal commitment was asked for from organisations:

• We understand the background and the need for stronger tobacco control;

• We support the endgame principle of establishing a date when a certain reduction in smoking should be reached;

• We support a public opinion for political decisions needed to reach this goal.

All organisations have been regularly informed about the process towards a political consent for the strategy and some have taken an active part in the opinion building. An important "side effect" of a decision to support the endgame initiative has been an increased engagement in organisations regarding their own possibilities to support their own smokers, implementing smoke free areas etc.

What has happened so far?

Since 2013 close to 170 organisations has declared their support for the initiative (October 2017). Support has been obtained from all sectors of the community but is most frequent in health care professionals' organisations, regional health care providers and in an increasing part of county administrative boards and communities. This pattern indicates a growing awareness of the destructive health effects of smoking as well as of the obvious possibilities to change these conditions through the implementation of the measures in the Framework Convention.

Public polls have shown increasing public support. In 2016 seven out of ten inhabitants would welcome a Smoke Free Sweden 2025 decision by the government. The same is true for six out of ten smokers.

Even the government has stated its support for the goal in 2025 in a strategy document for 2016-2020. However, so far no action plan, no national implementing agency or economical investments for the implementation have been presented.

Other reasons for why the opinion building should be continued and increased include the fact that the government when coming into power in 2014 expressed its ambition to erase the health inequity gap in one generation. The skewed distribution in smoking habits in the population – affecting mostly vulnerable groups - indicates that smoking constitutes a substantial part of the cause of the health gap.

The shift of perspectives in tobacco control is also important for the universal struggle to reach the goals set up by the UN in the Agenda 2030. In all seventeen Agenda goals smoking can be traced as part of the problem.

It's time to proceed!

In September 2018 there is a general election, providing a chance to inform all candidates about tobacco issues and the way forward – based on the FCTC :

• Identify the tobacco industry as the root of the evil: limit its possibilities to manufacture and market their deadly products;

• Abide by the Article 5.3. of the convention: don't let the industry influence public health policy. Be aware of its tactic to stop, diminish or delay all public efforts to counter its actions;

• Protect minors from exposure of tobacco products and experimental use with its risk of developing an addiction;

• Increase the quality and availability of quit smoking support, especially to vulnerable groups;

• Increase smoke free environments in the community;

• Monitor smoking and use of other nicotine products in the population as well as attitudes to FCTC measures.