

Press release

Post-factual consumer uncertainty - BVTE criticises calls for bans on e-cigarettes

(Berlin, 29.1.2023) The use of e-cigarettes causes 95 percent less pollution than smoking and does not encourage people to start using tobacco. Calls for tighter regulation and bans on electronic cigarettes by Manne Lucha, Minister of Health of Baden-Württemberg, lack a scientific basis. Jan Mücke, Chief Executive of the German Association of the Tobacco Industry and Novel Products (BVTE), said in Berlin today: "It is a scientific consensus that the intake of harmful substances when vaping e-cigarettes is much lower than when smoking tobacco. With his post-factual statements, the minister is causing consumer uncertainty with counterproductive consequences for health policy."

Manne Lucha, the Minister of Health, told dpa that e-cigarettes should be treated the same as traditional tobacco cigarettes and, in particular, that flavoured vapour products should be banned. For Lucha, it is decisive which harmful substances arrive in the body of the consumer. E-cigarettes should not suggest that they are less harmful than tobacco products. The German Cancer Research Centre (dkfz), based in Baden-Württemberg, already made a clear statement on this in 2020: "A complete switch from tobacco to e-cigarettes reduces the consumer's exposure to harmful substances."ⁱ British health authorities have also repeatedly stated in the past that e-cigarettes are "at least 95% less harmful than smoking" and emphatically emphasise their significantly lower consumption risk.ⁱⁱ

Switching to e-cigarettes is the most frequently used form of support for quitting smoking in Germany and is more effective than other methods such as medical nicotine replacement products. There are increasing calls for e-cigarettes to also be considered as an aid in medical counselling for smokers.ⁱⁱⁱ

The wide choice of flavoured liquids for e-cigarettes is a significant factor for adult smokers to switch to vaping. Never smokers, on the other hand, use electronic cigarettes regularly only in the rarest of cases - regardless of the flavours available. At the same time, there are no indications - not least in view of declining sales figures for conventional tobacco products - that the increasing spread of e-cigarettes will lead to an increase in tobacco consumption.

The health risk of e-cigarette use compared to smoking continues to be significantly overestimated among the German population.^{iv} BVTE CEO Jan Mücke criticised that misleading statements by political leaders increase consumer uncertainty: "Instead of fuelling fears with false claims and misguided demands for bans, e-cigarettes should finally be promoted in Germany as an opportunity to minimise risks for smokers."

Blanket demands for a Europe-wide ban on disposable e-cigarettes are also no contribution to an objective discussion. Ecological concerns must be responded to with comprehensive take-back systems, which some manufacturers have already installed. In addition, rechargeable versions of some products are already available. Compliance with the protection of minors must also be consistently guaranteed for disposable products and the sale to minors must be strictly sanctioned.

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ⁱ German Cancer Research Center: E-cigarettes and tobacco heaters - an overview, Heidelberg, Heidelberg 2020, p. 29.

ⁱⁱ A. McNeil et al.: Nicotine vaping in England: an evidence update including health risks and perceptions, London, September 2022, pp. 1248-1250.

ⁱⁱⁱ Daniel Kotz et al.: Discussion on the article Effectiveness of e-cigarettes in tobacco cessation. A comparison with nicotine replacement therapy and no use of evidence-based support in the German population, Deutsches Ärzteblatt v. 27.1.2023, p. M-58.

^{iv} Federal Institute for Risk Assessment: Special E-cigarette. BfR Consumer Monitor 2019, p. 13.