# Ireland to Raise Minimum Age for Buying Cigarettes to 21 in Effort to Reduce Smoking Rates



Ireland is set to increase the minimum age for purchasing cigarettes to 21, a decision recently approved by the Irish Cabinet. This policy shift will position Ireland as the first member state in the European Union to implement such a regulation. The move comes as part of broader efforts to reduce the smoking rate among adults to below 5%. Currently, 18% of the Irish population over the age of 15 smokes.

The Irish government, spearheaded by Health Minister Stephen Donnelly, has articulated that raising the legal age for buying tobacco products from 18 to 21 targets a critical period when many individuals are at high risk of taking up smoking. This measure is anticipated to decrease young people's accessibility to tobacco through direct purchasing, proxy buying, and social sources. Additionally, Ireland's smoking-related health challenges are significant, with tobacco use linked to around 13% of all cancers in the country and an estimated annual financial loss of 10.6 billion euros.

This legislative adjustment will not influence the current age restrictions on nicotine-inhaling products like vapes, which retain an 18-year minimum purchasing age. The proposed law will also specifically exempt individuals who are presently 18 to 20 years old from these new restrictions.

The initiative reflects ongoing public health efforts dating back to Ireland's pioneering smoke-free workplace laws enacted 20 years ago, reinforcing the country's commitment to combating tobacco use and its associated health impacts.