

22nd July, 2014

Dear Dr Chan,

As their representatives, we write to you on behalf of European users of electronic cigarettes. We are unpaid, unfunded and independent of any industry. As vapers ourselves, this letter is a frank expression of our personal experiences and perspective.

We ask that the current situation, all the sound and the fury surrounding electronic cigarettes, be considered from the viewpoint of the millions of Europeans who have adopted them. The unfettered access that we have enjoyed so far has been a fundamental reason for their success. It has enabled us to transit from smoking towards an infinitely less dangerous way of consuming nicotine. Some of us have then decided also to stop using e-cigarettes. Others have continued to use them, but without nicotine. Yet others, whilst having completely substituted smoking with their use, prefer to continue consuming nicotine but without the dangers associated with burnt tobacco. And then there are those who have reduced their tobacco consumption, with e-cigarettes filling the void left by unsmoked conventional cigarettes.

Smoking is a complex phenomenon and there is no single way to help smokers change their behaviour. Until recently, we had little choice. Like most smokers, we found medicinal options, the gums, patches and psychotropic substances as well as the behavioural support, to be often unpleasant and certainly ineffective. The electronic cigarette has allowed us to tailor its use to our individual tastes and needs. If you were to constrain it so that it were available in a single format that could only be used in a prescribed way, then at a stroke you would make it as ineffective as the medicinal options have been over the past 30 years.

Personal Vaporisers, e-cigs, electronic cigarettes or whatever they are called, have given millions of smokers a choice and control they never had before. The freedom to choose! That is what has made the difference for us; the ability to take our time, to choose our devices, to develop preferences for flavours. All of which we have paid for from our own pockets and purses. Let us examine perhaps the most controversial issue of all: flavours.

We are constantly being told that flavours exist only to entice new consumers and especially the young towards smoking. They excite so much fear amongst those who advise you! But listen to our experience, to what we know and understand about these flavours that are so important for us, the adults who use them. They have allowed us to create a distance between the deadly habit we had and the far healthier one we have adopted or are moving towards. It is the presence of flavours, be they bubble-gum or vanilla, that makes the possibility of returning to smoking so unlikely for those of us who have completely adopted the product, because for most of us the taste of burnt tobacco has become nauseous.

It is in the interest of public health that smoking be eliminated from society and vapers are the example of how this can be achieved. We are growing in number at a rate no-one predicted. The reason is that the market is vast and exciting, encouraging the development of products that are ever more effective. These more evolved products do not, however, interest the tobacco industry's



subsidiaries. Their interest is almost entirely limited to devices that resemble traditional cigarettes, products that do not appear to deliver nicotine very effectively, that are expensive to use and are not very appealing. Moreover, being essentially disposable, they cause environmental damage by producing tons of electrical waste.

Yet we find ourselves faced with a future where only this part of the market, with its outdated, relatively inefficient and expensive products, would be open to us. It would be akin to asking all current smartphone users to throw away their high tech devices and rely only on landlines. This simile applies just as well to the notion of vapers returning to smoking.

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of this revolution. The impact of what could be proposed at the COP6 meeting in October would see its end. A revolution no-one dreamt of during all the preceding decades of tobacco control. An unexpected revolution that all costs must not be curtailed.

This letter comes to you from smokers, ex-smokers and their families. We are mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. We have children and grandchildren. We have no vested interest, no one is paying us and no one is coercing us. We write to you with our hearts on our sleeves, with nothing to hide. We are the vapers of Europe and we ask you listen to us to recognise that we are the way for you to reach your goal. With little official involvement, we are changing the face of smoking across Europe.

Please allow us to continue doing so. To do so through snatched conversations in bars and cafés. Through quick chats on the street with interested smokers who stop us to ask about our devices. With the support of our families and friends who gratefully welcome the ensuing health benefits and appreciate the absence of passive smoking. Let us and the smokers willing to try e-cigarettes regain control of our lives without unnecessary and costly intervention.

Science will eventually answer the questions that remain, but the only one that matters now is:

Are electronic cigarettes helping millions of smokers to turn to a much less dangerous practice?

The answer can only be;

Yes!

Please do not succumb to unjustified fear, otherwise the WHO, by crushing this magnificent risk reduction opportunity, would condemn millions to an early death.

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Mabe

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for and on behalf of the Independent Vapers' Associations and Organisations of Belgium, Netherlands, France, Spain, Denmark, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary.

