

Ukraine's Comprehensive New Tobacco Law Regulates E-cigarettes to Avoid Hooking a New Generation

Across the world, the tobacco industry has successfully attracted new customers in more recent years by using social media-based marketing and other advertising tactics to sell new products including electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and heated tobacco products (HTPs) that appeal to youth. Until recently, ENDS and HTPs were not regulated in the same ways conventional tobacco products are, which face indoor smoking and advertising bans, and on which health warnings are placed. This is concerning, as ENDS and HTPs stand to introduce a whole new generation to a lifetime of tobacco use and nicotine addiction.

To address this problem, the landmark National Tobacco Law #4358 signed by President Volodymyr Zelensky in January 2022 regulates ENDS and HTPs and all novel and emerging tobacco products on par with the 2014 European Tobacco Products Directive. Under the law, both smoking and e-cigarette use will be prohibited in enclosed public spaces. Additionally, the law bans the advertising, promotion and sponsorship of all tobacco products; increases the size of warning labels on cigarettes, as well as on HTPs and e-cigarettes, and bans flavored products. There will also be stronger enforcement and increased fines for violations of smoke-free areas.

To achieve this policy victory, Vital Strategies and Bloomberg Initiative tobacco control partners, including WHO and Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, collaborated with local partners to implement an ambitious media advocacy strategy. This multi-faceted campaign influenced the public's understanding of the need for comprehensive tobacco-free regulations to address both traditional and new products.

Vital Strategies teamed up with the National Public Health Center (NPHC) of the Ukraine Ministry of Health and the non-governmental organization, Life Advocacy Center, to increase public knowledge about ENDS. At the end of 2020, and then again in 2021, we conducted a national mass media campaign titled "No Safe Smoking"—timed to run simultaneously with the Parliamentary hearing of the law in both instances. Evaluated previously by a concept-testing study with Ukrainian smokers and non-smokers, the campaign compared the well-established risks of cigarette smoking with lesser-known risks of electronic devices. The campaign ran on YouTube, Facebook, TV, radio and billboards on railroads and in subway stations in Kiev. In total, it reached around 25 million people.



Population

44.1 million

Smoking Prevalence

40.1% of males, 8.9% of females, 17.8% of boys and 12.1% of girls use tobacco products^{1,2}.

More than 40% of Ukrainian men smoke and approximately 130,000 Ukrainians die from tobacco-related diseases each year. The use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and heated tobacco products (HTPs) is also increasing in Ukraine—especially among youth. In recent years self-reported e-cigarette use rose from 2% in 2017 to 8% in 2020².

1 Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2017

2 Global Youth Tobacco Survey, 2017

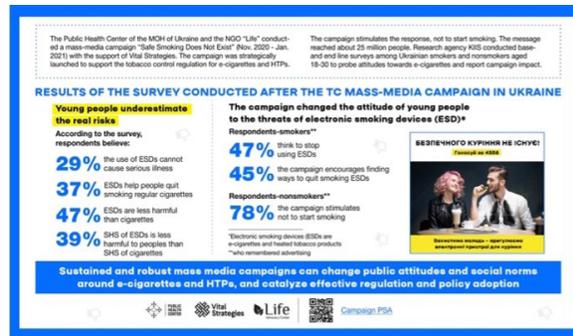
Tobacco Control Case Study: Ukraine

Evaluations showed that 73% of people received new information via the campaign, and that 47% of ENDS and HTP users were motivated to quit as a result. Also, 67% of respondents supported regulating electronic smoking devices at the same level as other tobacco products. The results of the post evaluation were released at the press event with NPHC and members of the Parliament and served as a strong reminder of the need to regulate e-cigarettes and HTPs.

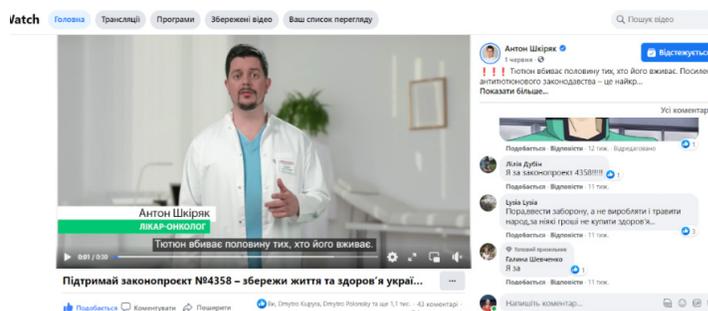
Vital Strategies also funded a complementary campaign featuring a prominent oncologist and public health activist, Dr. Anton Shkiryak. He was identified as an effective messenger and was cultivated to become a policy champion able to engage the medical community. He appeared in the “[Doctor’s Warning](#)” mass media campaign that launched in May 2021 on World No Tobacco Day and then resumed in November, when Ukraine commemorates “Quit Out Day.” The campaign incorporated COVID messaging to warn about the harms of smoking and the use of e-cigarettes and HTPs and had a strong policy message.

In addition, outdoor posters were strategically displayed around the Parliament building reinforcing the media campaign messages to key decision-makers. A public relations firm was also commissioned to promote the need for policy regulation of ENDS and HTPs through debates with tobacco control experts on both television and social media. The message was further amplified on social media through messaging lead by 15 opinion leaders including parliamentarians.

Supported by this strategic communication work during nearly two years of deliberations, the new law was approved on the last Parliament session in 2021. On January 6, 2022, President Zelensky signed this sweeping new tobacco control law that will save lives and protect millions of Ukrainians from the harms of tobacco use.



Top findings from the “No Safe Smoking” post-campaign evaluation



Dr. Shkiryak's messages calling for the new policy



“Doctor’s Warning” campaign billboards in Kiev featuring Dr. Shkiryak

This case study is part of a series highlighting our work in the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use in priority countries.

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. We work with governments and civil society in more than 73 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle their most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale as rapidly as possible. To find out more, please visit www.vitalstrategies.org or Twitter @VitalStrat.