

World No Tobacco Day 2022: awards for tobacco control in the WHO European Region



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On 31 May, World No Tobacco Day 2022 focuses on how tobacco throughout its lifecycle pollutes the environment we live in and damages the health of people.

Each year, WHO presents awards to organizations and individuals who promote and enforce tobacco control in the Region. WHO carefully selects the recipients in recognition of their long-term commitment and outstanding contribution to research, advocacy, health promotion and capacity-building in these areas.

World No Tobacco Day offers an opportunity for WHO to recognize these achievements while raising awareness of and building support for tobacco-control measures globally. The following 6 organizations and individuals from the Region are being commended for their outstanding contributions to the fight against tobacco use.

The NCDC is a key institution in Georgia that works on tobacco-control policy-making, monitoring, awareness-raising and capacity-building. It was the co-author and a strong supporter of the country's tobacco control law, which entered into force on 1 May 2018. The NCDC also works to increase the availability of cessation services, and successfully established a toll-free quitline that operates 7 days a week.

The NCDC is the first institution in Georgia to direct its efforts towards tackling the influence of tobacco on the environment, including through the establishment of a special unit dedicated to this topic within the frame of the national health-promotion programme in 2018. It has carried out numerous activities in this area, including a clean-up event to raise awareness about cigarette butts as a pollutant, awareness-raising visits to schools, and the development of a policy option to mark packages of tobacco products with filters as single-use

plastic products.

During her work in Parliament from 2015 to 2021, Ms Ainuru Altybaeva collaborated closely with the Ministry of Health and advocated strongly for public health initiatives aimed at reducing tobacco use in the country. She was instrumental in countering strong tobacco industry lobbying and opposition, and in advancing the interests of public health through public discussions, round tables and conferences.

Notably, Ms Altybaeva led a group of members of parliament in the development of a strong tobacco control law (No. 121), which was vigorously debated for more than 3 years in both Parliament and the media before being adopted on 15 September 2021. The law's adoption is considered by national and international partners to be a major victory for tobacco control in Kyrgyzstan.

[Nofumadores.org](https://www.nofumadores.org) is a nongovernmental organization devoted to protecting the rights of non-smokers and sensitizing the population and politicians to tobacco control. The organization has operated since 2004 with minimal financial resources, but with the great dedication, enthusiasm and altruism of its board of directors, it has managed to become one of the major players in the tobacco-control movement in Spain.

Its campaign to gather signatures in support of smoke-free beaches is among its most outstanding actions related to the environment. The petition, signed by more than 330 000 people and organizations, was delivered to both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Ecological Transition. This ensured that the new Spanish waste law, adopted on 4 April 2022, includes a clause which empowers local councils to impose fines of up to €2000 for smoking on beaches. Since [Nofumadores.org](https://www.nofumadores.org) began its campaign in 2018, the number of smoke-free beaches in Spain has multiplied by 6, reaching 525.

Furthermore, in 2021 [Nofumadores.org](https://www.nofumadores.org) led a campaign that gathered the support of 151 organizations across the globe to urge the municipality of the island of La Graciosa to break the agreement it signed with a large tobacco company. The company had used the island to greenwash its image while encouraging a switch to heated tobacco products.

[Nofumadores.org](https://www.nofumadores.org) continues to engage and work with Spanish law-

makers to advance the agenda of a tobacco- and nicotine-free future using the Endgame Declaration for Spain 2030 as its main roadmap.

Mr Hans Stöckli began the Tobacco-Free Kids initiative to ban tobacco advertisements targeting minors in Switzerland. In his role as chair of the initiative's committee, he efficiently coordinated the broad alliance of health organizations supporting it. His force of will, motivation and political knowledge helped the initiative to gain momentum and ultimately collect more than 100 000 signatures in favour of putting it to the popular vote. Following a difficult campaign in which opponents received huge support from the tobacco industry, the initiative won the popular vote on 13 February 2022.

The outstanding commitment of Mr Stöckli is a powerful example of leadership in the country's anti-tobacco movement, and the successful campaign is an historical step forward in tobacco prevention and health promotion in Switzerland.

Ms Lada Bulakh, one of the leaders of the anti-tobacco movement in the Ukrainian Parliament, is the primary author of the tobacco control law No. 1978-IX, for which she advocated for almost 2 years. The law was adopted in December 2021 and came into force in January 2022. It introduces European requirements for the protection of the population from the harms of tobacco in accordance with European Union (EU) Directive 2014/40/EU and the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), and regulates heated tobacco products and electronic nicotine delivery systems similarly to tobacco products.

Ms Bulakh has also actively participated in the Committee on Public Health, Medical Assistance and Medical Insurance in the Verkhovna Rada. Her commitment, motivation and strong support for public health initiatives have enabled her to withstand fierce opposition from the tobacco industry while creating a policy environment that allowed Ukraine to strengthen its tobacco-control legislation for the first time in 9 years. These accomplishments will further protect young people from the harms of tobacco and nicotine products.

Dr Mateusz Zatoński, who died in January 2022 at the age of 34, was a talented academic whose policy-informing research has already made a notable impact. As a research fellow at the University of Bath's TCRG, he led the team researching tobacco industry influence on national and global policy, and developed ways to address this. His

work on the UK Tobacco Industry Interference Index prompted policy discussions in the devolved nations.

Dr Zatoński's passion for eastern European social and political history, and his work with institutions in Poland and other EU countries, brought a broad European perspective to his research. His work has had significant impacts across Europe through the TCRG and via the Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP) and International Tobacco Control (ITC) projects.

Dr Zatoński worked to denormalize the tobacco industry by exposing its efforts to undermine menthol legislation and circumvent the EU's menthol flavouring ban, by highlighting the risks of new flavoured products, particularly to young people, and by showing how the industry attempted to harness the COVID-19 pandemic for its own ends. Despite his passing, his work will continue to support tobacco-control efforts in Europe and inform revisions to legislation.

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