

JOINT POSITION STATEMENT

13/10/2025
Anderlecht, Belgium

Joint position Statement on E-Cigarettes by Belgian Respiratory, Cardiology, Endocrine, Oncology, Paediatrics, Radiology, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Oto-Rhino-Laryngology, Urology, Thoracic Surgery, Surgery and Gastroenterology Societies

Dear Minister Frank Vandenbroucke,

In the after-math of the recent PANO report on the e-cigarette and in light of the impending legislative proposal on limiting the flavours for these devices, we — the Belgian Respiratory Society (BeRS), the Belgian Lung Foundation (BeLF), the Forum Vlaamse Longartsen (FVL), the Belgian Society of Cardiology (BSC), the Belgian Working Group on Heart Failure (BWGHF), the Belgian Working Group on Preventive Cardiology (BWGPC), the Belgian Board of Oncology (BeBO), the Belgian Academy of Paediatrics (BAoP), the Vlaamse Vereniging voor Gastroenterologie (VVGE), the Belgian Society of Radiology (BSR), the Vlaamse Vereniging voor Obstetrie en Gynaecologie (VVOG), the Belgian Endocrine Society (BES), the Société Belge d'Urologie (SBU), the Royal Belgian Society for Oto-Rhino-Laryngology, Head and Neck Surgery (B-ORL), the Vzw Vlaamse Werkgroep Hoofd-en-Halstumoren (VWHHT), the Belgian Society of Medical Oncology (BSMO), the Belgian Section of Thoracic Surgery (BeSTS), the Belgian Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (BeSTRO), and the Royal Belgian Society of Surgery (RBSS), — wish to clarify our shared position.

We fully endorse the position of the European Respiratory Society (ERS) as expressed in their official statement (Eur Respir J, 2024; 63: 2301808) that there is insufficient independent, high-quality evidence to confirm that e-cigarettes or other new tobacco products are significantly less harmful in the long term. Many studies suggesting otherwise are funded by the tobacco industry. It has been well established that these products — including nicotine-free variants — contain harmful substances such as heavy metals and volatile organic compounds, which can negatively affect multiple organ systems, particularly the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Chronic repetitive exposure to e-cigarettes also disrupts the gut barrier, increases the susceptibility of the gut to bacterial infections, and triggers gut inflammation.

Although some patients spontaneously mention e-cigarettes as a tool to quit smoking, we continue to advocate for evidence-based first-line treatments such as varenicline, nicotine replacement therapy and support from certified smoking cessation counsellors. E-cigarettes, in exceptional cases, may be considered as a temporary step, and only

when integrated into a medical supervised and structured vaping cessation plan. It should never be acceptable to replace one harmful addiction by another.

We are deeply concerned about the growing popularity of e-cigarettes among young people — driven largely by adding flavours and using marketing strategies that deliberately target this age group. The immature adolescent brain is especially vulnerable to addiction, something the tobacco and vape industry exploits to the fullest. Moreover, dual use (combining both e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes) is common, resulting in compounded exposure to toxic substances. We therefore call for strict legislation, including the recent ban on disposable vapes and the proposed prohibition of flavours. We also support broader regulations to limit marketing, sales and the availability of other nicotine-containing products (e.g. heated tobacco, nicotine pouches, and snus), combined with rigorous law enforcement. In the current debate about allowed flavours, our position is unequivocally restrictive. Permitting additional flavours contradicts scientific evidence and public health interests. We must also reject any form of association with, or endorsement of, the tobacco industry — including the approval of flavoured products. As aptly stated in the ERS declaration: **lungs are made to breathe clean air.**


Finally, with the support of the BeRS, BeLF, FVL, BSC, BWGHF, BWGPC, BeBO, BAoP, VVGE, BSR, VVOG, BES, SBU, B-ORL, VWHHT, BSMO, BeSTS, BeSTRO, and RBSS we will continue to back educational campaigns, such as the “Vaping? Your Choice!” initiative, aimed at raising awareness in Belgian schools. Through such efforts, we remain committed to building a smoke- and nicotine-free generation.

Sincerely,

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