

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002133/25
to the Commission
Liesbet Sommen (PPE)
(28 May 2025)

Subject: Rise in THC and smart vapes on the European single market

There has been a worrying increase in the number of illegal e-cigarettes (vapes) on the European single market, including products that do not comply with EU standards. Some contain more nicotine than declared, or are sold as being nicotine-free when they do in fact contain nicotine. In addition, inferior combustion mechanisms in certain appliances lead to elevated concentrations of heavy metals such as copper, mercury, cadmium, zinc and lead — which pose serious health risks, especially for young people.

Two new trends are also worthy of note: Smart vapes, which are linked to gaming devices that reinforce addictive behaviour (a combination of gaming and nicotine addiction), and THC vapes, which allow the psychoactive compound THC from cannabis to be consumed in a cheap, discreet and odourless way. Despite bans in many Member States, these products are widely available.

1. The current regulatory framework is clearly inadequate. What is the European Commission doing to address the growing availability of illegal and harmful vapes among teenagers in the internal market?
2. Is the Commission considering funding research into the health impact of vape products through Horizon Europe?
3. Why has no revision of Directive 2014/40/EU on tobacco products been proposed yet? When will the Commission take action to address these worrying developments?

Submitted: 28.5.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(22 August 2025)

1. Directive 2014/40/EU ⁽¹⁾ regulates electronic cigarettes and refill containers. Member States must ensure that these are placed on the market only if they comply with the directive and all other relevant Union legislation such as the General Product Safety Regulation ⁽²⁾. The increasing availability of electronic cigarettes among young people is being considered as part of the Commission's ongoing evaluation of the tobacco-control framework, including concerns regarding young people's access to novel tobacco and nicotine products. Furthermore, Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA ⁽³⁾ considers tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) to be a drug ⁽⁴⁾ and requires trafficking in drugs to be punishable as a crime.
2. Through Horizon Europe ⁽⁵⁾, the Commission is supporting research projects on the impact and understanding of addiction to illicit substances, including THC. Horizon Europe offers a variety of funding opportunities for health research through competitive calls that are broadly defined and opened for innovative approaches to address specific call requirements ⁽⁶⁾.
3. The ongoing evaluation of the tobacco-control framework involves considering a wide array of scientific, market and regulatory developments, including the emergence of new products and evolving marketing practices. The evaluation follows a structured and evidence-based approach in line with the Better Regulation guidelines. The next steps will depend on the findings of the evaluation.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2014/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States concerning the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products and repealing Directive 2001/37/EC: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/40/2023-10-23>.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2023/988 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on general product safety, amending Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Directive (EU) 2020/1828 of the European Parliament and the Council, and repealing Directive 2001/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Directive 87/357/EEC: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/988/oj>.

⁽³⁾ Council Framework Decision 2004/757/JHA of 25 October 2004 laying down minimum provisions on the constituent elements of criminal acts and penalties in the field of illicit drug trafficking, http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_framw/2004/757/2022-08-18.

⁽⁴⁾ See the definition in its Article 1(1)(a) and the reference to the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances, under which THC is scheduled.

⁽⁵⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en.

⁽⁶⁾ All information about currently opened and upcoming funding opportunities for further research on THC and vape products, can be found through the EU Funding and Tenders Portal <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>.