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Answer given by Mr Hoekstra
on behalf of the European Commission
(10.11.2025)

The proposal to revise the Tobacco Taxation Directive¹ complies with the principle of proportionality as set out in Article 5(4) the Treaty on European Union (TEU)². The proposed amendments do not go beyond what could be helpful to ensure that the internal market functions properly, while ensuring a high level of human health protection.

Increasing minimum EU excise duty rates for tobacco products will contribute to achieving the goals of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. Higher tobacco taxes and prices have been demonstrated to be the single most effective measure to reduce overall tobacco use, particularly by young people and produce additional public health benefits.

It is in the interest of uniform and fair taxation that tobacco related products be subject to a harmonised excise duty framework within the EU. This would also reduce regulatory fragmentation across Member States.

While reduced tobacco demand may impact EU tobacco growers, the effect could be mitigated by switching to other crops, a common practice in agriculture. The common agricultural policy³ support instruments also remain available to them. Employment in tobacco manufacturing has been declining due to automation and mechanisation. To address potential negative effects, Member States could implement retraining programs for tobacco sector workers.

Excise taxes apply when the goods are released for consumption in the EU thus at the level of importers or manufacturers, whereas exports are not subjected to excise duty. Foreign and domestic operators are therefore equally impacted by the increase of EU minima.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32011L0064>.

² https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2016/art_5/oj/eng.

³ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy_en.