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Urgent Call for Advancing Public Health Policies in Tobacco and Alcohol Control

EPHA, together with its most active members dedicated to combating cancer and its risk factors, stands united in expressing our shared concern over the recent, highly concerning and unjustified changes to the European Commission's Beating Cancer Plan implementation roadmap. These updates reveal not only significant delays in the evaluation, revision, and adoption of crucial public health policies but also a worrying absence of clearly defined outcomes and timelines. Key policy initiatives that we previously expected, such as the Tobacco Products Directive, the Tobacco Taxation Directive, and regulations on alcohol products - including detailed consumer information on ingredients and nutritional values, health warning labelling systems, and online marketing strategies - are now strikingly missing from the roadmap, leaving us uncertain about future developments.

The need to advance these promised and long-awaited policies cannot be overstated. Tobacco and alcohol use are among the top risk factors for many of the preventable non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Europe, impacting beyond cancer, and contribute significantly to morbidity and mortality. Delays in implementing evidence-based equitable policies, stricter controls measures, and comprehensive strategies not only undermine efforts to combat cancer but also hinder broader public health objectives aimed at reducing the prevalence of NCDs.

We are grateful for the dedication of our member organisations, such as the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL), European Cancer Organisation (ECO), IOGT-NTO movement, Lithuanian Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition (NTAKK), and Smoke Free Partnership (SFP). Their commitment to these issues has been crucial in maintaining momentum for advocating robust and timely public health policies.

EPHA, along with its members, remains committed in our advocacy efforts to ensure that public health continues to be a central focus in policy discussions and implementations. It is essential that public health not be compromised by conflicts of interest between the profit-driven motives of industries that capitalize on known risk factors and the broader public health needs of the population.

We strongly urge the Commission to fulfil its commitments, by accelerating the revisions and implementations of critical public health policies, and decisively work towards designing and building a healthier future for all.