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Tobacco control in Europe

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John Britton in his excellent report (May 4, p 1588)¹ concludes that the effect of commercial vested interests remains a major barrier to progress in Europe, but believes that all European countries now prohibit sale or distribution of tobacco to people younger than 18 years. Unfortunately this is not correct. Some countries (Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Macedonia, the Netherlands, and large parts of Switzerland) are lagging behind.² Especially in central Europe the influence of the tobacco cartel is still powerful.³ While the Netherlands plan to raise the age limit for purchasing tobacco to 18 years of age in 2014, Austria sticks to the age limit of 16 years. There is no reason why minors in Austria are different from other European countries and mature enough to buy tobacco, except for business interests of the tobacco industry and of tobacconists. Not even the age limit of 16 years is controlled in Austria, which had one of the highest smoking rates in 15-year-old teenagers.⁴ In Germany and other European countries, smoking rooms cannot be entered by minors. In Austria the use of solariums is forbidden until the age of 18 years, but access to smoking rooms is free without any age limit.⁵

I declare that I have no conflicts of interest.

References

¹ Britton J, Bogdanovica I. Tobacco control efforts in Europe. *Lancet* 2013; **381**: 1588-1595. [Summary](#) | [Full Text](#) | [PDF\(1482KB\)](#) | [CrossRef](#) | [PubMed](#)

² Wikipedia. Smoking age: Europe. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smoking_age#Europe. (accessed June 8, 2013).

³ Neuberger M. Failure of tobacco control in Central Europe. *Occup Med Health Aff* 2013; **1**: 109. [PubMed](#)

⁴ WHO. Social determinants of health and well-being among young people: Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) study: international report from the 2009/2010 survey. Chapter 5, risk behaviours. http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/167425/E96444_part2_5.pdf. (accessed July 15, 2013).

⁵ Pletz H, Neuberger M. No borders for tobacco smoke in hospitality venues in Vienna. *Atmosphere* 2011; **2**: 171-181. [PubMed](#)

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