Dear Sirs and Madams,

Here are my answers to your questions in the Green Book "Europe Without Smoke" that is translated in Bulgarian and published on the website of Bulgarian Ministry of Health.

Answer to Question 1
According to me, better is the approach of total ban of smoking in all closed public and work places, without any exclusions.

Reasons:
  a) Tobacco is a proven and very effective (though slow) killer; Smoking leads to painful death.
  b) Tobacco causes narcotic addiction to nicotine; this has been already exploited by tobacco manufacturers by adding components increasing this addiction to the cigarettes.
  c) Smoking affects the human immune system leading to increased illness of the smokers as well as of the passive smokers.
  d) Smoking parents and colleagues gives the children/nonsmokers a self-destructive model to follow.
  e) Smokers spend much of their business time in smoking, thus causing negative economic consequences; regular rests of the personnel can still take place by proper Company Internal Rules; Example - McDonald's Restaurants.
  f) In Bulgaria, the level of control for adherence to smoking-related Regulations is almost zero. Some of the bus drivers in the town of Veliko Tarnovo as well as taxi drivers smoke at work without having right to do this or given permission by the passengers; Most of the pubs, cafes and restaurants have more than 50% smokers tables (as required by the Law), non-smoking customers suffer from the non-filtered gaseous products of smoking.
  g) Permitting of smoking in specific categories of places/working environments will lead to non-smokers suffering from compulsory passive smoking even after they have made their choice to keep their health by not smoking and thus proven to be the smarter part of the Humanity; This would compromise the effective Natural Selection of the Better and would keep inheriting bad genes from the next generations.
  h) Smoking is a big ecological problem; If you look around at a Bulgarian city bus station for example, you will see lots of cigarette filters thrown by smokers. No effective (if any) Governmental control and sanctions exists in Bulgaria so far. Cigarette filters are not naturally decomposed by rot bacteria. Smokers promote anti-ecological behaviour and model by polluting both living habitats and wild nature. Thus, you can see not only cigarette filters everywhere but also all other types of garbage, a result of following the "throw-it-away/down" model.
  i) Spouses/intimate couples/groups of friends/colleagues must sit on a smokers table when visiting restaurants/cafes; choosing a non-smokers
table is considered a discrimination; at the end, the non-smokers suffer from cancer-causing smoke - this is unjust, even more - this is a public crime.

Answer to Question 2:
To me, the most appropriate political option for achieving a smoke-free environment is to engage all EU member countries to create smoking restriction Laws. Thorough inspection from the EU is obligatory, especially of the newer EU members, to ensure effective local Governmental control (regular inspections and sanctions if necessary). Corruption practices must cease!

Answer to Question 3:
The aspects reviewed in the Green Book are very comprehensive, congratulations! But I think that there will be at least a few more considerations to take into account when preparing for non-smoking policy. I will name one: addiction. The resistance against the non-smoking policy has deeper roots than one may think. It is not only the personal pride that invokes resistance - many people are really DEPENDANT on nicotine - it gives them a temporary relief (especially when nervous). It has a narcotic effect on the Central Nervous System. Therefore, specialized programmes for tobacco addicts must be considered by all EU member Governments, similar to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. It is very difficult to stop smoking, though it is up to the person. Ask a smoker!

Answer to Question 4:
It is very important to take into account the following two giant factors when discussing non-smoking policy and regulations: The first one - the huge economic interests involved. The tobacco industry will be ready to do much to prevent anti-tobacco legislation, even to do actions that can be categorized as crimes. It is similar to narco wars led in societies similar to the US, Columbia, the 3rd world countries. It is very profitable, multi billion Euros business. And the second one - the addiction. It must not be underestimated else the side effects will be very unpleasant.

I hope that my opinion helped!

Best regards,

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