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Tobacco Industry Progress Report

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National News

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National News

Romanian Police Intensify Fight Against Tobacco Smuggling.

In the first 11 months of 2025, Romanian police discovered over 142 million cigarettes and 3.4 tons of tobacco, issuing 941 fines totalling RON 7.79 million. Authorities conducted 416 integrated operations, opened 427 criminal cases, and investigated 618 individuals, resulting in the dismantling of 18 criminal groups and the reporting of 488 offenses. Notable incidents include a November 12 raid in Braşov, where around 30,000 cigarettes were seized and a 51-year-old man was placed under preventive arrest for 30 days, and the November 3 “JUPITER” operation in Bihor, which led to the confiscation of 31,200 cigarettes, RON 15,645, and EUR 3,530, with two suspects placed under judicial control for 60 days. Operations continue under prosecutors’ supervision to fully document illegal activities and safeguard state revenues.

Romanian Authorities Crack Down on Tobacco Smuggling.

In early 2026, Romanian authorities intensified operations against illegal tobacco. On January 3, border police in Giurgiu stopped a car driven by a 31-year-old Bulgarian and seized nearly **28,000 cigarettes with Bulgarian tax stamps**, valued at RON 41,700, and opened a criminal case. Separately, in Constanţa, the Organized Crime Brigade, with DIICOT prosecutors, investigated two men, 46 and 54, involved in **exporting over 15 tons of untaxed tobacco leaves using falsified customs documents**. The investigation revealed one suspect, a customs broker, manipulated the system to clear exports, while the other, a warehouse administrator, facilitated storage without proper documentation. On January 8, both were detained, and on January 9, a Constanţa court ordered preventive detention for 30 days. The suspects retain all procedural rights and the presumption of innocence throughout the legal process.

International News

Europe

UK Confirms Nicotine Pouches Lower-Risk but Warns on High Strength.

UK officials have acknowledged that **nicotine pouches are likely lower-risk than smoking**, as they avoid inhaling harmful substances like tar and carbon monoxide, but warned that high-strength products could increase nicotine dependence, particularly among youth. In response to the 20isPlenty campaign, the government highlighted **the need for evidence-based, proportionate regulation and signaled upcoming consultations on flavours, ingredients, packaging, and display**. Campaigners are urging a 20 mg nicotine cap alongside strict age controls, while the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, which will make sales to under-18s illegal and phase in a “smoke-free generation” for those born after 1 January 2009 from 2027, continues through Parliament.

UK Introduces Flat-Rate Vaping Duty from 2026.

The UK government will introduce a **Vaping Products Duty (VPD) on 1 October 2026**, charging GDP 2.20 per 10ml of vaping liquid, nicotine or nicotine-free, with VAT potentially raising the cost to GDP 2.64 per 10ml. HMRC estimates 5.1 million vapers will be affected, with heavier users bearing the largest burden, and revenue projected to reach GDP 565m by 2030 - 2031. The duty aims to curb uptake among youth and non-smokers while maintaining switching incentives for smokers, with mandatory Vaping Duty Stamps required on packaging from October 2026 and all non-suspended products from April 2027. Tobacco duties will also rise by GDP 2.20 per 100 cigarettes or 50g of other tobacco to preserve the vaping-smoking price gap.

USA

Global Tobacco Endgame Gained Momentum in 2025.

Despite challenges in U.S. federal tobacco policy, **2025 marked major progress in the global fight against tobacco**, according to Chris Bostic, Policy Director at ASH. Twelve new U.S. jurisdictions implemented endgame policies, bringing the total to 30, while the Maldives became the first lower- or middle-income country to adopt such measures, expanding coverage to over 1.5 million people. Early results from cities like Beverly Hills and Manhattan Beach are promising. In California and Massachusetts, **more cities and towns passed sales bans and Nicotine-Free Generation bills, with youth-led**

coalitions playing a central role. Globally, the 11th WHO FCTC Conference of the Parties and the EU’s JA-SAFE initiative advanced endgame strategies across 23 nations. ASH hosted its first global endgame summit in Dublin and the second U.S. summit in Chicago, underscoring the growing international momentum, with policymakers and advocates now outpacing the tobacco industry in advancing elimination-focused policies.