

EUROPEAN POUCH ACCESSIBILITY INDEX

2026

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CONSIDERATE
POUCHERS

INTRODUCTION

In the race to make Europe smoke-free, nicotine pouches have emerged as a pivotal tool for public health. However, as we approach 2026, the continent faces a regulatory crossroads. While some nations have embraced the Swedish experience, utilizing oral nicotine to drive smoking rates toward historic lows, others are constructing legislative barriers that threaten to undo decades of progress in harm reduction.

The findings of this index reveal a starkly divided Europe. High-performing nations have successfully distinguished nicotine pouches from combustible tobacco, recognizing that adult smokers require accessible, flavored, and affordable alternatives to successfully transition away from cigarettes. In these jurisdictions, consumers are empowered to take charge of their own health through clear digital and physical access.

Conversely, a wave of unfounded skepticism is currently sweeping through many European capitals. We are witnessing a trend where states misclassify these tobacco-free products as tobacco, or attempt to utilize “novel food” or medicinal classifications to enforce de facto prohibitions. These restrictive policies do not protect public health; instead, they protect the status quo of cigarette consumption by removing the most effective off-ramps for smokers.

Many of these hostile regulations are fueled by alarmist narratives from health authorities that prioritize speculative fears over empirical reality.

Vague warnings regarding youth uptake often ignore the data showing that regular pouch use remains concentrated among former adult smokers. It is essential to champion a Europe where science-based policy replaces prohibition, and where every smoker has the right to choose a less harmful path.

THE ADVANTAGE OF ACCESS:

Empowering the European Consumer

Countries that achieved an A or A+ in this index are leading the way in European harm reduction. For citizens in these top-ranked nations, the benefits of a sensible regulatory framework are clear:

- **Differentiated Policy Frameworks:** By accurately distinguishing pouches from tobacco, these states can provide consumers with honest education regarding relative risks.
- **Economic Incentives for Health:** Risk-proportionate taxation ensures that pouches remain a more affordable option than lethal cigarettes, financially rewarding those who make the switch.
- **Retention through Variety:** Protecting flavor options is essential for ensuring that former smokers do not return to tobacco, as taste is a primary driver for long-term cessation.
- **Uninterrupted Supply Chains:** Robust online and retail accessibility ensures that smokers in rural or underserved areas are not left behind in the transition to safer alternatives.
- **Supporting Local Innovation:** Fair point-of-sale rules allow independent retailers to serve their communities without the crushing weight of tobacco-monopoly restrictions.

When states choose misclassification and prohibition, they fail their most vulnerable citizens. Innovation is the only viable route to a smoke-free Europe.

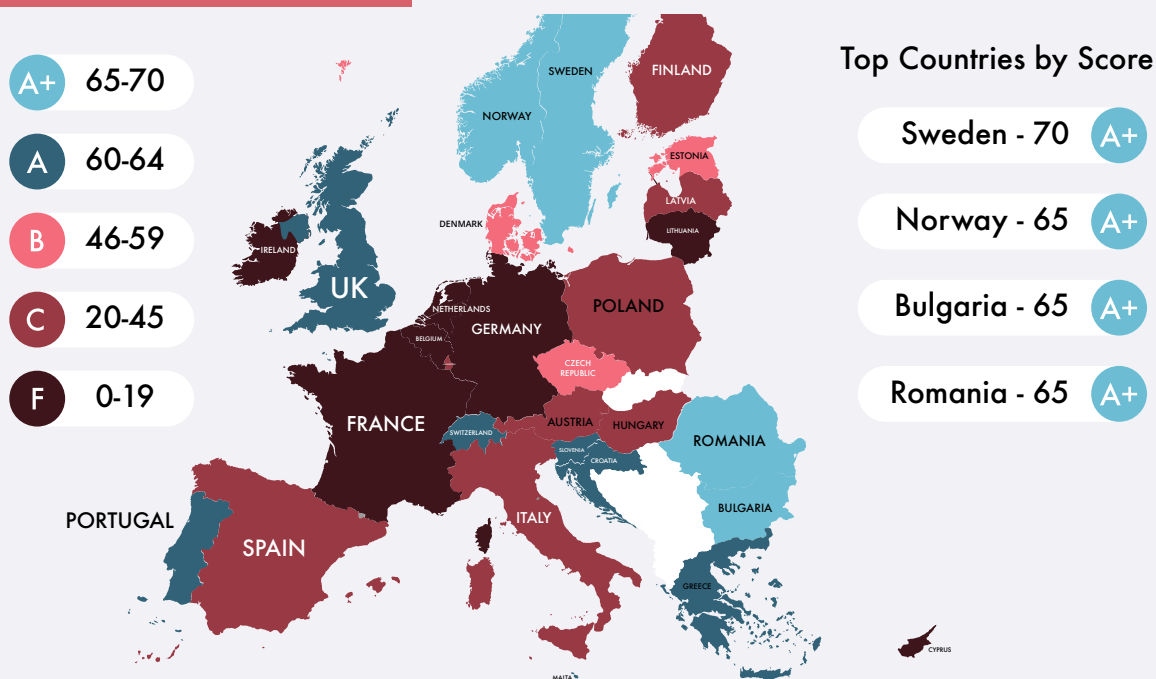
METHODOLOGY

To ensure total transparency, this index uses a 70-point maximum score based on an equal-weighting formula. Each of the seven categories is worth a maximum of ten points, reflecting the interconnected nature of accessibility. For instance, a failure to properly classify pouches often leads to a “domino effect” of flavor bans and punitive taxation.

The Seven Evaluation Pillars:

- 1. Tobacco Classification:** Does the state correctly distinguish tobacco-free pouches from tobacco products?
 - No = 10 pts | Edge cases (refers to a state that does not clearly fit into a “Yes” or “No” category because its regulatory environment is currently in a state of transition or uncertainty.)= 5 pts | Yes = 0 pts
- 2. Flavor Freedom:** Does the state allow a full range of non-tobacco flavors?
 - No Restrictions = 10 pts | Partial/Proposed Ban = 5 pts | Total Ban = 0 pts
- 3. Registry Hurdles:** Has the state implemented restrictive directories or registries that limit product variety?
 - No = 10 pts | Pending/Uncertain = 5 pts | Yes = 0 pts
- 4. Tax Parity:** Are pouches taxed at lower rates than combustible cigarettes?
 - No (Lower) = 10 pts | Pending Hikes = 5 pts | Yes (Parity) = 0 pts
- 5. Digital Availability:** Are adult consumers permitted to purchase products via age-restricted online platforms?
 - Yes = 10 pts | Restricted = 5 pts | No = 0 pts
- 6. Retail Inclusion:** Is the product sold in general retail locations rather than limited specialty shops?
 - General Retail = 10 pts | Specialty Only = 5 pts | Prohibited = 0 pts
- 7. Nicotine Caps:** Does the state refrain from imposing arbitrary, non-scientific limits on nicotine concentrations?
 - No Caps = 10 pts | Proposed/Low Caps = 5 pts | Ban = 0 pts

OVERALL SCORES:



COUNTRY	TOTAL SCORE	FINAL MARK
Sweden	70	A+
Norway	65	A+
Bulgaria	65	A+
Romania	65	A+
UK	60	A
Switzerland	60	A
Greece	60	A
Malta	60	A
Portugal	60	A
Slovenia	60	A
Croatia	60	A
Denmark	55	B
Estonia	55	B
Czechia	50	B
Finland	45	C
Poland	45	C
Italy	45	C
Latvia	45	C
Austria	40	C
Spain	40	C
Hungary	25	C
Luxembourg	20	C
Ireland	15	F
France	5	F
Cyprus	0	F
Lithuania	0	F
Germany	0	F
Belgium	0	F
Netherlands	0	F

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Juan Rafael Taborcía Escuela is the Global Spokesperson for Considerate Pouchers, an international advocacy group representing the rights of nicotine pouch users.

Previously, Juan Rafael served as the Research and Social Media Lead for ViOne Media, where he authored global daily news reports and managed the network's international digital presence. He also studied Entrepreneurship at Universidad Francisco Marroquín, where he also worked leading the creation of innovative educational programs for international students from over 15 countries and issuing press releases for Spanish legacy media. Furthermore, he oversaw admissions management at Universidad de las Hesperides.

An entrepreneur at heart, he has co-founded multiple startups since the age of 19. Today, he represents Considerate Pouchers globally, advocating for a healthier smoke-free future through innovation and consumer choice.

DATA INTEGRITY & REPORTING PERIOD

This Index represents a legislative snapshot as of **February 1st, 2026**. All scoring reflects laws currently in force or formal legislative proposals and “Edge Cases” introduced prior to this date. Any regulatory changes or judicial rulings occurring after February 1, 2026, will be reflected in subsequent editions of the Index.



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