

Heavy-smoking Bulgaria eyes extending ban

14 December 2011

The government of tobacco-addicted Bulgaria proposed Wednesday a total ban on smoking from June 1 in enclosed public places, including cafes, bars and restaurants, its press office said.

The small Balkan country, home to the European Union's second-heaviest smokers after Greece, banned the habit in all [government buildings](#), public transport, trains, cinemas, schools and kindergartens in 2005.

But bars, cafes and restaurants were allowed to have separate smoking and non-smoking sections, while establishments smaller than 100 square metres (around 1,100 square feet) could choose for themselves.

The proposed new ban, which needs to be approved by parliament and is the second government attempt after a previous effort failed in April 2010, will close this loophole.

"The measure aims to limit smoking and its harmful effects on health as cigarettes are a key risk factor for many socially significant diseases -- oncological, heart and pulmonary," the government proposal said.

[Health ministry](#) data show that some 3.0 million Bulgarians, or about 44 percent of the total population, are regular smokers.

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