

Czech lawmakers ban smoking in restaurants

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Czech lawmakers voted Friday to ban smoking in cafes and restaurants starting next May, following in the footsteps of much of Europe, but the chain-smoking president still needs to sign off the decree.

"I hope we side with the civilised [countries](#)," Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka said ahead of the vote in the lower house of parliament.

Eighteen other European countries already have such a law, which would come into effect in the Czech Republic on World No Tobacco Day 2017.

The bill still needs approval from the senate and President Milos Zeman, a chain-smoker. Last year he said he probably would not use his veto.

Smoking has already been outlawed in most public places in the country since 2005.

Electronic cigarettes will be exempt from the ban, and smokers will still be able to light up on cafe and restaurant terraces.

Seventy-eight percent of Czechs back the measure, according to a recent opinion poll in the country of 10.5 million people.

The EU member has 2.3 million smokers, including around 250,000 minors. Some 18,000 Czechs die every year from smoking-related causes.

All EU countries have adopted measures to protect citizens from

exposure to tobacco smoke but national measures differ considerably in extent and scope.

Some of the strictest measures have been introduced in Ireland, Britain, Greece and Spain.

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