

French smokers, at 10 euros a pack, may finally think twice

4 July 2017

The cost of lighting up at a French sidewalk cafe may finally dissuade even the most ardent smoker, if Prime Minister Edouard Philippe gets his way.

With 80,000 tobacco-related deaths in France each year, "doing nothing is not an option," Philippe said Tuesday, announcing a plan to raise the price of a packet of cigarettes to 10 euros (\$11.3) from the current seven euros.

Tobacco "is the leading cause of preventable death, and daily use is growing among adolescents," the premier said in a speech to parliament.

Philippe did not give a timeline for the price hike, which he said would be accompanied by "a merciless fight against traffickers who undermine this policy."

French [smokers](#) already pay some of the highest [prices](#) for cigarettes in the European Union, surpassed only by Britain and Ireland.

Around 80 percent of the cost of a pack goes to the government in tax, bringing in 14 billion euros in revenue each year.

An estimated 16 million people smoke at least occasionally in France—about one in three aged between 15 and 85.

Last year, the government introduced neutral cigarette packets covered with graphic health warnings.

President Emmanuel Macron, elected in May, said on the campaign trail that he was open to raising the price of a packet of cigarettes to 10 euros, but he also urged neighbouring countries to follow suit to avoid smokers shopping around for deals.

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