

Barbados and COP11: Turning Innovation Into Public Health Gains

BARBADOS, September 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bridgetown, Barbados (September 15, 2025). The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control's 11th Conference of the Parties (COP11) is happening in just two months, and Barbados has the chance to make a difference.

Barbados' smoking rate is one of the lowest within the Caribbean, which constitutes a milestone in regional public health. Yet, smoking still contributes to 6.1 percent of all deaths in the country, claiming over 100 lives every year. These are preventable losses and there is the possibility to do something. It is all a matter of choice - Barbados can continue following its current anti-smoking policies and maintain the current landscape, or embrace the example from success stories.

A country Barbados could take inspiration from is Sweden. While the European Union (EU) still faces an average smoking rate of 24 percent, Sweden is a clear outlier, with only 5.3 percent of its population smoking. With the EU aiming to be smoke-free by 2040, Sweden has already achieved that milestone roughly 15 years in advance. The country's success is driven by what is known as the [Triple-A Innovation](#) approach, which ensures that alternative nicotine products are accessible, acceptable, and affordable. By giving smokers viable options beyond traditional cigarettes, Sweden has achieved remarkable public health outcomes: 21.2 percent fewer smoking-related deaths, 36 percent fewer deaths from lung cancer, and 31.3 percent fewer overall cancer deaths compared to EU averages.

At the moment, [0%](#) of adults in Barbados use smokeless tobacco products. Not because of lack of demand, but because of lack of access, information and encouragement. Legalizing and regulating products such as nicotine pouches and vaping could help.

At the most recent Conference of the Parties (COP10), several countries, including New Zealand, the Philippines, and Caribbean [neighbours](#) Guyana, and Saint Kitts and Nevis, emphasized the need for evidence-based approaches to harm reduction and smokeless alternatives, with the latest even proposing the creation of a dedicated Working Group on tobacco harm reduction. Building on this existing wave of Caribbean support, Barbados has the opportunity to establish itself as an innovative nation and exercise regional influence towards a smoke-free future with a significant public health impact.

Federico N. Fernández, the CEO of We Are Innovation, a global network that works on the topic of innovation in nicotine, comments, "While the Barbadian government is right to want to reduce

cigarette use, it fails to offer smokers a realistic path out. Innovation can fill the void, since it reflects the diversity of ways that can help people actually quit”.

Tania Rak, the COO of We Are Innovation, says “Barbados can either maintain current policies or lead the region by embracing what works. The key is not prohibition, but evidence-based innovations.”

At the next COP11, Prime Minister Mia Mottley has a choice: to remain silent, or to champion evidence-based and innovation-oriented measures against-smoking. The first option will hardly change anything. The second, on its hand, option can mean saving hundreds of lives every year, and turning Barbados into an important player of Caribbean public health.

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ABOUT WE ARE INNOVATION

We Are Innovation is a dynamic network of individuals and institutions who fervently believe in the power of innovation to drive progress and solve the world’s most pressing problems. With a global presence encompassing over 50 think tanks, foundations, and NGOs, We Are Innovation represents the diverse voices of a global civil society committed to advancing human creativity, embracing new technologies, and promoting innovative solutions. Through our collaborative approach and cutting-edge expertise, we are spearheading transformative change on a global scale. To learn more about our work, visit us at <https://weareinnovation.global/>

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