

An Analysis of the Anti-Smoking Movement in the United States and the Czech Republic

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The server asks the patrons waiting for a table if they want a seat in the smoking section or non-smoking section. The patio is filled with cigarette smoke, and the tables each have an ashtray. A glance down the street and people stand outside of businesses in large groups, puffing away on cigarettes. These observations were common in the 1990s in the United States (US). Times have changed since then and this is no longer a common sight. Once one takes a flight over the Atlantic Ocean that is no longer the past. Today smoking sections and cigarette breaks are alive and well in the European Union, including the Czech Republic.

### **Anti-Smoking in the United States**

The US has been pursuing anti-smoking goals since the 1960s. The World War II era was the last time the US fully supported smoking. According to Goodman, during the war soldiers were given cigarettes for free from the tobacco companies. It was seen as the patriotic thing, a great way to support “our boys.” After the war, information on the harmful effects of cigarettes was released. In an article published by Tobacco.org, the first ad run by tobacco companies to defend their product aired in 1954 in response to Reader’s Digest’s article from 1952 “Cancer by the Carton.” The original article brought research on the relation between lung cancer and cigarettes to the public. The tobacco company’s response ad claimed that the companies had their customers’ lives in their best interest, specifically saying, ““We believe the products we make are not injurious to health.” Despite the tobacco companies’ efforts, the government moved forward on regulation of tobacco. In 1965, the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act was passed, requiring each pack of cigarettes to have a warning label of “Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health” printed across it. The label was not required on advertising, however.

The first regulation on the advertising of smoking/tobacco products on television was passed in 1967. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports, “Federal Communications Commission rules that the Fairness Doctrine (an attempt to ensure that all coverage of controversial issues by a broadcast station be balanced and fair) applies to cigarette advertising.” This meant any station broadcasting cigarette commercials needed to give the same amount of air time to anti-smoking PSAs. Many stations did not want to deal with the time and money loss from this rule and thus advertising on television dwindled. By 1971, all smoking advertising was banned from television and radio. Despite all of the regulations made on US soil, Cigarettes were rationed to soldiers overseas in Vietnam. The Vietnam War was the last time the U.S. Government would support the smoking habits of the soldiers, and the CDC reports cigarette rations for soldiers were banned in 1975 following the war. By the 1990s, every year or two there was a new policy or regulation on tobacco and the anti-smoking movement began to make serious progress.

The tobacco regulation from the 90s onward generally covered where advertising can and cannot appear, and where smoking is allowed. In 1992, the Federal Trade Commission began cracking down on television appearances. So-called “accidental” appearances were not tolerated, such as packs of cigarettes left on tables, or ads in backgrounds not blurred out to the point of unrecognition. According to the CDC, tobacco campaigns were banned from sporting events when televised in 1995. While smoking advertisements were disappearing off the airwaves, the smoke itself was clearing out of the offices. Department of Defense (DOD) led the way by putting a ban on smoking in all DOD workplaces in 1994. Three years later, President Clinton (who began work on campaigns against smoking in 1996) gave an executive order to make the federal workplace smoke-free.

For workplaces not under that order, the shift to going smoke-free relied on state and private regulation. As of 2013, Americans for Non-Smokers' Rights reports that 27/50 states in the US have gone smoke free in non-hospitality workplaces, with 22 of those banning smoking in bars and restaurants as well. Many cities not in those states have gone smoke-free at workplaces, bars, and restaurants. The laws on tobacco have generally remained the same. The minimum age to buy tobacco in the US is 18, though the CDC lists four states with a minimum buying age of 19 to prevent high school students from obtaining tobacco. Some states are looking into raising the smoking age to 21. Medical News Today reports that New York is the latest state to look into the change. The US is experiencing a preventative movement, hoping to stop young citizens from ever starting smoking.

There are many campaigns running today for anti-smoking targeting teens and children. Nick News, a popular news show on Nickelodeon, one of the US' popular children's channels, puts out stories that young viewers can relate to and understand, has been covering those campaigns heavily. In 2013, Nick News' E! covered a campaign in Colorado titled "Kick Butts Day" where children participated in various anti-smoking activities. Teenagers are also being targeted as they approach the legal age of tobacco purchasing. Magazines, such as Seventeen magazine, have sections on their website specifically to help teens avoid smoking and quit smoking if they have started. Television channels such as MTV air PSAs against smoking. College campuses are also joining the anti-smoking efforts. Americans for Non-Smokers' Rights released a new list of campuses that have banned cigarettes that includes a list of over 1,150 campuses committed to the title of smoke-free. The US is working to prevent young people from ever beginning tobacco use.

The US has come a long way in its 50 years of anti-smoking efforts. The CDC reports great progress on states banning smoking in workplaces, restaurants and bars, many anti-smoking campaigns are circulating throughout the media, and advertising of tobacco products has nearly been eliminated. The US timeline for anti-smoking is a promising one based on its past progress.

### **Anti-Smoking in the Czech Republic**

The Czech Republic, along with the rest of the European Union (EU) has been working against smoking. Information on efforts to go smoke-free pre-democracy in the Czech Republic is difficult to find. One can assume that information on the subject under communist rule was not often publicized. What is known, and reported on by the European Commission, is that 1989 brought publicized change to tobacco regulation and policy to the Czech Republic and Europe.

The first few years of democratic rule in the Czech Republic, then Czechoslovakia, included major changes on advertising. The European Commission reports the EU banned Tobacco advertising and sponsorship on television in 1989, under the Television without Frontiers Directive. As the new country neared the end of its second decade, the Czech Republic passed both media-related regulation along with the first location-based regulation. According to the European Commission, the EU banned all cross-border advertising of tobacco in 2003. The ban still stands today and covers print media, internet, and radio while also including the television ban previously mentioned. This prevents events such as the Olympics, and other sporting games from advertising tobacco because of the multi-country viewing areas. In 2007, the original ban on television advertising for tobacco was revised to cover all forms of audiovisual communications.

Americans for Non-Smokers' Rights' latest international timeline for the Czech Republic begins in 2006, with a ban on smoking in schools, theatres, cinemas, sports halls, and state administration offices, as well as bus and tram stops that went into effect on the first of the year. The ban was followed a month later by a bill to restrict indoor smoking in workplaces, including restaurants. The bill was put to a vote in 2008, but was shot down quickly. *Mlada Fronta Dnes*, a Czech newspaper, reported on the issue and quoted Petr Hajek, the spokesperson of the President of the Czech Republic, saying "...up to today, nobody has proved the impact of smoking on mortality and fatal diseases respectively." Despite having all sorts of proof of the mortality and fatal diseases, that line seemed to work, seeing as the bill fell shortly after.

After making so much progress in less than 20 years, the efforts towards a smoke-free country seemed to be stunted after 2008. Following Hajek's comment, polls from the European Commission showed people of the Czech Republic began doubting the good of smoking bans. The European Commission, which is in charge of the EU's regulation, began putting out reports battling the myths of negative side-effects of bans. The main worries revolved around the economy. The citizens began to worry that the economy would suffer if tobacco production and sales fell, and that the country's trade would be effected greatly. There was also worry that the restaurant business would also take a hit if people were no longer allowed to smoke inside. Though many of the European Commission's press releases implied negative views of the ban and anti-smoking, there was no direct proof after the original poll. One can assume that the European Commission put out the myth-busting publications for a reason, though. With all the backlash and lack of care for the anti-smoking movement, there was a greater need for more information on the effects of smoking.

The EU heads most anti-smoking campaigns in the EU countries. The largest campaign is titled “Ex-Smokers are Unstoppable.” The European Commission lists the campaign targets as 25- to 34-year old smokers, which accounts to 28 million Europeans. The campaign not only urges smokers to quit by using information on the harm smoking causes them, but also uses positive information for quitting. Videos explaining how fast one’s lungs begin fixing themselves after quitting is just one example of that information. In addition, the campaign covers the dangers of tobacco and works to reinforce the EU’s efforts to go smoke-free. Commercials, Youtube videos, and publications for “Ex-Smokers...” appear across Europe, including the Czech Republic. The EU has recruited celebrities to join the force, including the Barcelona soccer team which appeared in the posters. Uniquely, the campaign also has its own application for smart phones titles “iCoach,” a digital coaching tool to quit smoking on the users own pace. The campaign began in 2011 and has no projected end. Along with this major project, Commissioner Borg came up with “World No Tobacco Day,” where it is requested that everyone resists tobacco products for one day. With the great efforts of the EU, public opinion in the Czech Republic is turning once again according to the polls conducted by local media.

The public is now looking towards a smoke-free country. Recent polls and reports show a positive opinion on the idea of furthering smoking bans. The Czech news agency conducted a poll reported in the Prague Daily Monitor that revealed three quarters of Czechs over 18 would like to ban smoking in pubs. With another bill proposed to ban smoking in workplaces, including pubs and restaurants, which will be put to a vote in 2014, a successful outcome seems processing. Bardsley of the Prague Post has reported on the support of the ban, with a good deal of support after so much information has been released on the benefits of the bill. The Czech

Republic has made great strides in its almost 25 years in going smoke-free. With the help of the EU, and persistent government, the end goal can be in sight.

### **Comparison**

The US and the Czech Republic seem to have a great deal of similarities in their anti-smoking efforts, with a few key differences. The Czech Republic's timeline is almost like a shrunken version of the US', seeing as one is almost 25 years in the making, while the other is about 50 years or so. Both countries cracked down on advertising first, taking on the corporations making the cigarettes before the smokers themselves. At different points in their progress, the opposition to anti-smoking efforts denied any proof that there are negative health consequences. The major difference in that event was that when the US had its deniers, the findings on ill-effects of tobacco were still new. In the Czech Republic, the statements made against the findings occurred in 2008. Despite the findings on the negative effects of tobacco constantly being proven over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, somehow it is still an argument over if cigarettes harm or not, and is used against anti-smoking efforts.

The US and Czech Republic both have expansive campaigns on anti-smoking, but the US has moved on to preventative campaigns for the younger population, while the EU targets current smokers and urges them to quit. At this point in 2013, the biggest difference in the two for anti-smoking would be the ban of smoking in location. As previously stated, the restaurants in the Czech Republic are still asking, "Would you like to be seated in the smoking, or non-smoking section?" US tourists in the Czech Republic can be heard complaining of their clothes and hair stinking of cigarette smoking after sitting in a bar. So many states have banned smoking in all workplaces including restaurants, that the issue of smoke is a whole other foreign matter. A bill is currently being pushed to change that, but currently the US, which has a great deal of

states banning smoking in all workplaces, is ahead in that issue. In the end, the US and the Czech Republic are steadily on the same path to being smoke-free countries.

While currently the differences in the progress to go smoke-free are obvious when noticing just how many ashtrays there are in a Czech restaurant, or how clean the air is in a US bar. In the future, one can only hope there will be no difference as cigarettes disappear from both cultures. The analysis of the progress made by the US and the Czech Republic to pursue smoke-free countries reveals that both are following similar paths on slightly different timelines.

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