



Key Amendments in the Proposed Law on Protection from Smoking in the Republic of North Macedonia: Implications for Businesses

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Publisher: JPM | Partners
Delta House, 8a Vladimira Popovića street
www.jpm.law
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Design and prepress: JPM | Partners
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In January 2026, a new Draft Law on Protection from Smoking was introduced in the Republic of North Macedonia, signalling a potential shift toward a significantly stricter regulatory regime governing tobacco and nicotine products. The proposed amendments introduce a number of far-reaching measures that are expected to have a considerable impact on companies operating in the sector.

One of the most notable amendments is the complete prohibition of the production, import, distribution, sale, and placing on the market of tobacco and nicotine products containing flavours or aromas. The scope of this restriction is particularly broad, covering all tobacco and nicotine products, including cigarettes, electronic cigarettes and e-liquids (with or without nicotine), heated tobacco products, as well as smokeless tobacco and nicotine products.

Such a prohibition may have significant implications for businesses operating in the sector. In particular, uncertainties remain regarding the treatment of products that have already been imported, produced, and distributed prior to the entry into force of the new rules. In many cases, companies have already paid customs duties and other charges in connection with the import of these products, while additional costs have been incurred for the production of goods intended specifically for the Macedonian market, as well as for their distribution to retail outlets and placing the products on the market.

At present, it remains unclear whether these products will be allowed to remain on the market for a limited period, be subject to withdrawal, or otherwise fall under transitional arrangements. The absence of clear guidance on this issue raises practical and financial concerns for companies. Furthermore, while the current legislation already prohibits smoking in enclosed public spaces—a rule that is retained in the proposed law—the new draft introduces stricter requirements for smoking areas in hospitality establishments. Under the existing framework, smoking has been permitted on terraces, which in practice were frequently enclosed with glass panels on all sides. The proposed law would significantly narrow this possibility by allowing smoking on terraces only if they are open on at least three sides and physically separated from areas where smoking is prohibited.

In addition, the prohibition on smoking in enclosed spaces would be expanded to explicitly include electronic devices and alternative nicotine consumption products. The rule would therefore apply not only to traditional tobacco products but also to electronic cigarettes, heated tobacco devices, and other products containing tobacco and/or nicotine, as well as devices used for their consumption and smoking accessories. These changes are likely to require hospitality establishments to undertake structural and operational adjustments in order to comply with the revised spatial requirements.

The draft law further proposes significant restrictions on the locations where tobacco and nicotine products may be sold. Retail sales would be prohibited in a wide range of locations, including markets and fairs, hospitality establishments providing accommodation or food services, beach areas and recreational parks, and any open spaces during cultural, sporting, or other public events. Sales would also be banned within the premises of healthcare institutions, social welfare institutions, educational institutions, cultural and recreational facilities, sports organizations, as well as in buildings housing state authorities or local government bodies. In addition, the draft law introduces a ban on online sales of tobacco and nicotine products and related devices.

The draft law further introduces additional restrictions on the marketing and promotion of these products.

Taken together, the proposed measures represent the most comprehensive tightening of tobacco control rules in recent years. It remains to be seen, however, what the final version of the law will look like once it completes the legislative process and is adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

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