



Smoke-free Class Competition

A European programme for smoking prevention in schools

Best practice guide



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1 Introduction

Smoke-free Class Competition (SFC) is a universal smoking prevention programme for pupils aged 11-14 years. The main aims of SFC are

- to delay or prevent the onset of smoking
- to motivate adolescents already experimenting with smoking to stop
- to engage adolescents in creative activities related to the subject "non-smoking"
- to help to de-normalise youth smoking in Europe.

SFC is conceptualised for implementation in schools. Participating classes decide to be smoke-free for the duration of up to six months. They report on their (non)smoking regularly. At the end of the competition period, successful classes can win attractive prizes in a lottery.

The concept and materials can be easily integrated in many different subjects in schools. The implementation of SFC is not time-consuming, yet it can offer a perfect platform to deal with smoking related issues on more in depth basis if schools like to do so.

The idea of SFC was born in Finland where a competition for smoke-free classes was offered for the first time in1989. In 1997, thanks to a funding of the European commission, SFC was transferred to other European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Wales). From 1997 to 2008, implementation of SFC was funded by European Commission. During these years, area of implementation grew to more than 20 countries. SFC has become an integral part of the school curricula in many countries and a network of partners implementing SFC in their countries established giving the partners the opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other. This guide condenses these experiences to make "best practice" available to all participating partners as well as to institutions interested in SFC or planning to start implementing SFC.

Therefore, this best practice guide aims to

- give an overview on theoretical background of SFC
- summarise basic principles and rules, used material as well as established accompanying components
- describe some country-specific modifications and variations in implementation
- explain different possible models of dissemination and cooperation
- provide a checklist of necessary and helpful steps for implementing SFC
- report on evidence of evaluation

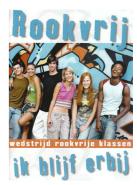
In the annex, an exemplary version of core material is provided in English. This guide is illustrated by competition's material from various countries of the last years.

2 Empirical and theoretical background of SFC

The concept of SFC is based on empirical findings and theories on determinants of the onset of smoking in adolescents. Empirical data show:

- More than 80% of smokers started smoking before the age of 18. The probability of becoming a regular smoker after adolescence is relatively small (Kandel & Logan, 1984).
- Mean age of onset for smoking the first cigarette lies between 11 and 14 years in Europe (Godeau, Rahav, & Hublet, 2004).
- Early onset of smoking is one of the most important predictors for later smoking. The
 earlier pupils start to smoke, the more likely they become regular smokers in future years
 (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1994; Breslau & Peterson, 1996;
 Chassin, Prochaska, Rose, & Sherman, 1996)
- There is also a positive correlation between smoking and experimenting with other psychoactive substances (Lewinsohn, Rohde, & Brown, 1999).
- Even young smokers quickly develop symptoms of dependence and often fail to stop smoking (DiFranza et al., 2000; DiFranza et al., 2002; DiFranza et al., 2007).
- Peer smoking is major risk factor for adolescent smoking (Conrad, Flay, & Hill, 1992; Kobus, 2003).
- Many adolescents overestimate the rate of smoking in adolescence. The perceived prevalence of peer smoking is even more associated with smoking of adolescents than actual prevalence (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1994; Reid, Manske, & Leatherdale, 2008).

In the conceptualisation of SFC, these findings are incorporated: SFC targets adolescents just before the high risk age for starting to experiment with smoking, it aims to delay or prevent smoking initiation as well as the transition from experimental to regular smoking and methods used account for social influences of smoking and correction of norms. The methodological approach of SFC relies on the following theoretical models for behaviour modification:



- Learning theory: Positive reinforcement enhances the probability of producing a given behaviour. By rewarding smoke-free classes with prizes, the desired behaviour – to remain smoke-free – becomes an attractive and worthwhile behaviour. The student's commitment to stay smoke-free is documented and amplified by contract management (i.e. signing a class and/or individual contract), a well established strategy in behaviour modification.
- Social learning theory/model learning: Since classes are smoke-free, classmates as especially relevant peers for adolescents serve as influential models for non-smoking behaviour.
- Theory of planned behaviour: Subjective norms are one determinant of behavioural intent. Following the social influence approach, interventions should focus on realistic

perceptions of the prevalence of smoking and should target to correct misperceptions. In SFC, by highlighting that the entire class or at least the vast majority of pupils is smoke-free social norms are corrected and established towards being smoke-free as normative within the peer group.

Developmental psychology: The competition's emphasis is laid on (especially positive)
consequences in near future (like potentially winning a prize in a lottery) while traditional
information approaches rely mainly on negative long term health consequences of
smoking. Therefore, the developmentally characteristic orientation towards presence of
adolescents is taken into account.

The competition incorporates several criteria of successful smoking prevention programmes: focussing attention on norms of use, commitment not to smoke by contract management and an interactive delivery of the programme (Cuijpers, 2002; Tobler et al., 2000).

3 Target group



SFC was developed for adolescents in the high risk age for starting to smoke. In most European countries this is at the age of 11 to 14 years. The primary target group are therefore pupils aged 11 to 14 years. Teachers of participating classes are also targeted by defined material to enable them to coordinate the competition in their class. By several means (e.g. brochures or meetings) it is also possible to target parents to enhance their engagement and parenting in the issue of non-smoking.

4 Basic principles and rules, material and components

Although the competition has some flexibility regarding the national rules so that details can be developed to suit the needs and circumstances of individual countries, a **set of basic principles and rules** is the same in each country:

- Participation is voluntary, i.e. classes decide themselves to participate and to be a non-smoking class for a period of six months.
- Pupils sign a class contract and an individual contract promising not to smoke during the competition. The contracts serve to underline their commitment.
- The competition is based on self-control and self-management of the pupils, i.e. the responsibility for the control of smoking lies mainly with the pupils themselves: pupils monitor their smoking status and report regularly whether they have smoked or not.
- Regular smoking is not accepted.
- Classes which refrain from smoking for that period of time are rewarded. They participate in a national prize draw, in which they can win a number of attractive prizes.
- Participation is free of charge for classes.

Each country develops **print materials** for recruiting and registering classes and for the conduction of the competition in the class with the class contract being the core document (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

Besides this, a number of participating countries develop teachers' and/or pupils' brochures, some countries produce parents' brochures or a quiz to add to the regular assessment (see Table 2), newsletters during the competition serve to inform classes on activities that could be carried out during the competition, a CD-ROM with supporting material and most countries also use the internet with campaign specific website, partially also used for registration or feedback.

A European-wide website can be found at www.smokefreeclass.info.



Table 1. Text of the class contract

We take part in the Smokefree Class Competition. We agree to remain smoke-free for the entire period of the competition, [insert dates].

Signature of the pupils			
Signature of the teacher			



Figure 1. Exemplary class contract

Table 2. Exemplary quiz questions to be added to the regular assessment of smoking

More and more tobacco is growing in Africa and Asia. What is right?

- a) In a lot of countries also children have to work in the cultivation of tobacco. They get quite little money for this hard work.
- b) The tobacco plants are sprayed with toxic agents to fight vermins. This poison is also dangerous for the harvesters who are often not able to afford protective clothing.
- c) Whole forests are cleared for the tobacco harvest.

Cigarette manufacturers add ingredients such as cacao, liquorice and ammonium to tobacco. Do you know why?

- a) Because the risk for cancer can be decreased by these additives.
- b) To make the smoker getting dependent from tobacco more quickly.
- c) To decrease the cost for producing cigarettes.

Imagine, an adolescent start smoking about five weeks before his 14th birthday. He smokes every day half a package of cigarettes. How much money will he have spent by his 18th birthday? (Imagine a package of cigarettes costs 4 Euro and calculate 365 days per year).

_ Euro

In which country all materials for the Smokefree Class Competition are printed in two languages?

- a) Iceland
- b) Switzerland
- c) Wales (in Great Britain)

As **prizes**, classes can be awarded both with cash prizes and with common activities for the entire class. The latter may be class trips, vouchers for common activities (e.g. canoe trip, water park, rope course, bowling, music or dancing workshops) or other goods prizes (e.g. rucksacks, pencil cases). Local sponsors offering activities for adolescents might be won over to support the competition.

Several countries incorporate further **components** in the framework of SFC:

- Classes are motivated and awarded for creative activities like smoke-free slogans, songs, videos, role-plays, or other activities to promote non-smoking and health.





Some countries implement these activities as voluntary supplements without any further specification, others as a defined part of the competition with given topics.

- SFC in a given school year is conducted under a specific annual theme. Examples are "Tobacco and environment", "Passive smoking", "Smoking in movies" or "Smoke-free schools".
- Countries use the European dimension of SFC for bringing pupils from different countries together, i.e. they arrange an exchange with classes from other partner countries.

5 Modifications

Due to the diversity of participating countries, details regarding rules and materials may be tailored to the different needs and cultural circumstances in the various countries:

- Time frame: Most countries are running the competition for six months from November to Mai, but due to organisational aspects in schools some differ somewhat in the duration of SFC (e.g. only 5 months) or the period (e.g. January to June). There are different time schemes for regular monitoring and feedback. In some countries classes are requested to monitor their smoking behaviour on a weekly basis, in others the intervals are broader. Feedback is usually required on a monthly basis.

Definition of "smoke-free": Countries differ in the criteria to be fulfilled by a smoke-free class. In some countries, the complete class has to be smoke-free to register for and stay in SFC, in others there is a tolerance level until which smoking is accepted (e.g. at least 90% of the class has to be smoke-free) and some countries have different "arms" in the competition with classes being at 100% or a lower percentage smoke-free. The Netherlands has got good experiences with the "no increase"-rule especially in pupils with lower socio-demographic status, i.e. in these classes the rate of smoking has to decrease or stay the same during the competition.



- **Regulations for prizes**: Most partners have one concluding prize draw after the end of the competition, some have additional "smaller" prize draws and incentives during the competition period, e.g. after three month.

6 Models of dissemination and cooperation

SFC is disseminated in various ways in the different countries. One aspect is the **reach**, i.e. in some countries SFC is offered nationally (e.g. Finland, Iceland), while in others SFC is conducted in specific regions (e.g. Italy, UK); some have started in selected regions and extended the reach stepwise to a national basis (e.g. Germany).

Organisations involved in the coordination of SFC include the following:

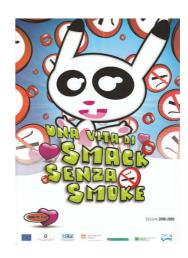
- Governments, Ministries of Health and/or Education or subordinate agencies (e.g. Wales, Spain)
- Local or National Associations for Health Promotion, funded by governments and others (e.g. Belgium)
- NGO's or other non-profit organisations working in the field of Health Promotion, funded by different sources (e.g. Finland, The Netherlands, Germany)
- Universities (e.g. Poland)

Funding for SFC arises from different sources, e.g.:

- Public funds
- Foundations (e.g. Cancer, Heart or Lung Associations)
- Health Insurance Companies
- Tobacco Control Funds

All partners agree to decline any direct or indirect funding from tobacco industry.

Usually, institutions responsible for implementation of SFC **cooperate** with other regional or local partners in the education and/or health system (e.g. Local Education/Health Authorities) who assist in recruiting and supporting classes during the competition. For networking and public relations, partners are linked to other stakeholders in the field of tobacco control and prevention (e.g. national representatives of ENSP). Some partners involve VIPs with a high affinity to adolescents as testimonials (e.g. from sports or music, committing to be smokefree).



7 Checklist for implementing SFC

The following steps are recommended to be taken when an institution wants to conduct SFC:

- ✓ Funding is applied for and approved.
- ✓ Decision about the reach of the implementation (regionally or nationally) is taken (it is recommended to start on a regional basis).
- ✓ Responsible institutions (e.g. Ministry of Education) have approved the implementation of the competition (if necessary).
- ✓ National, regional and local partners from the field of (health) education and tobacco control are contacted and considered to build up a cooperating network.
- ✓ Concept and time schedule for preparation and implementation are devised.

Conceptual aspects to be decided on in the preparation of the competition:

Determination of time frame	✓ Overall duration of the competition		
	✓ Interval for assessments of smoking in the class		
	✓ Interval for feedback to the main partner		
Definition of "smoke-free"	☐ Entire class has to be smoke-free		
	☐ Tolerance rule: X% has to be smoke-free		
	☐ No increase rule: Percentage of smokers has to		
	remain stable or to decrease		
Material to be produced	Mandatory:		
	✓ Class contract		
	✓ Registration		
	✓ Feedback		
	✓ General information on SFC for teacher		
	Optional:		
	□ Poster		
	□ Parent brochure		
	☐ Pupil's brochure		
	□ Newsletters		
	□ Quiz		

	☐ CD-ROM with supporting information and material
	□ Website
	☐ Give aways
Number and kind of prizes;	☐ Cash prizes (number and amount)
acquisition of sponsors where	☐ Goods prizes (number and kind)
required	☐ Activity prizes (number and kind)
	☐ Consolation prize (number and kind)
	□ Certificate
Additional components	☐ Creative activities
	☐ Specific annual theme
	☐ Fostering contact to classes from other countries

Recommendation for time schedule with further tasks for preparation and implementation (assumed time frame for competition November to April):

May to July	Drafts, layout and production of print material
August to October	Announcement of the competition in schools
September to November	Registration of classes, sending out of material to participation classes
November to April	Conduction of SFC with regular feedback
May to June	Prize draw and prize ceremony

8 Evaluation

Up to now, four evaluation studies on the effects of SFC on smoking have been published (Crone et al., 2003; Schulze, Mons, Edler, & Pötschke-Langer, 2006; Vartiainen, Saukko, Paavola, & Vertio, 1996; Wiborg & Hanewinkel, 2002). Results indicate that the competition might have a short-term effect and be able to delay the onset of smoking. Furthermore, SFC could be shown to be cost-effective (Hoeflmayr, 2006; Hoeflmayr & Hanewinkel, 2008).

It has been questioned whether participation in SFC could cause negative side effects like bullying and stigmatization of smokers (Etter & Bouvier, 2006; Etter & Bouvier, 2007; Kairouz, O'Loughlin, & Lague, 2009; Hanewinkel et al., 2007). Results of a recent study reveal that participation in SFC – even if the class has to drop out of the competition – does not increase the probability of bullying in the class (Hanewinkel, Isensee, Maruska, Sargent, & Morgenstern, 2009).

A list with publications on SFC can be found in the annex.

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Annex

- A1 List of publications on SFC
- A2 Core material in English
 - A2.1 Information for teachers
 - A2.2 Class contract
 - A2.3 Information for parents
- A3 Questionnaire for process evaluation

A1 List of publications on SFC

List of publications on SFC in peer reviewed journals:

- (1) Crone MR, Reijneveld SA, Willemsen MC, van Leerdam FJ, Spruijt RD, Sing RA. Prevention of smoking in adolescents with lower education: a school based intervention study. J Epidemiol Community Health 2003; 57(9):675-680.
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A2.1 Information for teachers

Thank you for entering the Smokefree Class Competition. The competition aims

- to encourage pupils to remain smoke-free by discouraging experimentation with tobacco;
- to help experimenters not to become regular smokers;
- to show clearly that smoking is not the norm;
- to encourage discussion about the benefits of remaining smoke-free.

Target group

The main group at which the programme is aimed comprises pupils aged 11 to 14. The choice of that group was given by existing surveys which show that most adult smokers started to smoke at an early age.

Please note: The Competition is not a programme which is intended to help your pupils to stop smoking. It is aimed at classes where the majority of pupils do not smoke.

The rules of the Competition

The pupils vote on whether they want to enter the Competition. Before that it is agreed with the class whether it wants the voting to be open or secret.

- The pupils will sign a class contract which should be displayed in the classroom.
- The pupils can sign an individual contract.

[to be adapted to the chosen time schedule for monitoring and feedback:]

- Once a week the pupils report whether they have smoked during that period or not. The pupils should be allowed to decide whether that weekly information is public or secret. If public, these declarations about smoking should take place during a short meeting of the class. If the anonymous option is chosen, then the pupil places a cross on a list if it has smoked. The teacher or a pupil will then count how many pupils smoked.
- A sticker shall be attached to the contract at the end of each week during which the class has not smoked.
- A feedback shall be given at the end of each month during which the class has not smoked.
- A prize draw is held at the end of the Competition to choose the winner from among the classes which successfully finished the Competition.

Particular problems and how to handle them

- What happens if pupils smoke? [depending on the definition of "smoke-free", here: 10% tolerance]
 - The aim is to achieve that no-one in the class smokes. But there is a limit of tolerance up to 10% of the class may smoke without the class suffering any repercussions. If less than 10% of the class smoke the class should not be disqualified, i.e. that is acceptable.
- Should the class be informed of the limit of tolerance? We would recommend that, in the case of a class where smokers already exist, this information should be provided in order to avoid undue pressure being exerted on the smokers by the non-smokers. That information would seem to be unnecessary in classes where there are no smokers.

- The honest of the pupils
 In this project the teachers are not detectives and do not investigate whether their pupils
 smoke or not. The responsibility lies with the pupils.
- What happens when a new pupil joins the class? If that pupil already smokes, it should not be included in the 10% who may smoke.

- Peer pressure

Peer pressure is one of the more important factors in the taking of various substances and young people need a lot of self-awareness and self-esteem to refuse to smoke, since this risks the loss of acceptance by their peers. In the period of the competition, it's about using group pressure in a positive sense. If you, as teachers, notice any symptoms of negative pressure you should discuss this with the class immediately. If the negative peer pressure continues, the class must leave the Competition. Negative peer pressure is unacceptable.

A2.2	Class contract
We ta	ke part in the Smokefree Class Competition. We agree to remain smoke-free for the

entire period of the competition, [insert dates].	
Signature of the pupils	
Signature of the teacher	
re lie i i e e e e e e e e	

[field for each week of the competition's period, being numbered and labelled with dates; to be marked after the weekly assessment of smoking]

A2.3 Information leaflet for parents

Dear parents,

from November to April, the class which your child attends will take part in an international programme to prevent smoking – the Smokefree Class Competition. This programme is being coordinated by [partner] and supported by [funding].

The aim of the Competition

The main aim of the Competition is to delay or prevent boys and girls of school age starting to smoke. We are mainly interested in pupils who do not yet smoke and as part of this programme we want to motivate them to remain non-smokers.

In addition, we want to convince pupils who are experimenting with smoking to stop and in that way to prevent them from becoming regular smokers.

The course of the Competition

The class will decide whether it wants to be a non-smoking class within six months. At least 90% of the pupils in each class will decide – by way of an open or secret ballot – whether to take part in the Competition. Each week the pupils will declare – openly or in secret – whether they smoke or not. The classes in which pupils refrain from smoking during the stated period will take part in a draw in which they can win attractive prizes – as the main prize a trip to another European country.

How can you support your child?

You can support your child in many ways:

- by showing approval and treating your child's decision seriously; pointing out that not smoking is a better way of life
- taking part in creative projects under the theme Health promotion and Non-smoking in schools
- finding local sponsors (e.g. working jointly with other parents) who could finance the prizes for your child's class or school

Selected information concerning "passive smoking" by children

Passive smoking is very dangerous – especially for children. The children of parents who smoke are more exposed to the risk of:

- the sudden death of the newborn infant
- middle ear infections
- infections of the respiratory tract
- and many other health hazards.

How you can protect your child against passive smoking?

- Do not smoke in the home
- Do not smoke in the presence of your child
- Do not smoke in the car

As parents you have considerable influence over your children – you can use that in a positive way. Research shows that clear rules regarding smoking in the home can help

children not to start smoking. Children of parents who do not agree to anyone smoking in their home have decreased risk to start smoking themselves. In addition, they are not exposed to environmental tobacco smoke.

Please note: It is not our aim to put smoking parents `on the spot´ so to say. From research we know how difficult it is to give up smoking even when you want to. Even if you smoke, you can support your child as someone who openly talks about their smoking habit.

If you want to quit smoking, you can find the help in [respective contact address, e.g. helplines].

Information about the Smokefree Class Competition can be obtained from: [contact details]

А3	Questionnaire for process evaluation
Som	e information about you (this is an anonymous survey, you do not have to give your name)
1.)	How old are you? Years old
2.)	Your gender?
3.)	Your smoking status? Non-smoker Smoker Ex-smoker
4.)	If you smoke regularly or occasionally: How do you understand your function as a teacher in the competition concerning to your own smoking behaviour? I commit myself also not to smoke for the entire period of the competition I commit myself to a self-defined restriction of my smoking, e.g. not to smoke in the school. I do not commit myself to anything since it is a competition of the class.
Som	e information on the class which took part in the competition
5.)	School grade
6.)	How many pupils are in the class?
	boys girls
Que	stions about the competition
7.)	Did your class complete the competition successfully? Yes No, the class dropped out
8.)	If your class dropped out: Did you continue to address the issue of non-smoking? Yes No
9.)	Did you carry out the <u>weekly assessments</u> on smoking in your class? Yes, always Yes, mostly (more than 50% of the competition's weeks) Yes, but only rarely (less than 50% of the competition's weeks) No, never
10.)	Were the materials (class contract, brochure, leaflet etc.) helpful for the conduction of the competition?

 11.) In addition to the participation in the competition itsel further activities on non smoking and health promotion. Yes No 		class engaç	ge in	
12.) Did you involve parents in the competition?	okers at ho		the issue	
Please estimate: How much time did you spend altog these activities involving the parents? hours.	gether durin	g the comp	etition on	
13.) How many parents were interested in the competition All Most Some None	n?			
14.) To what extent did you experience the competition a	s a supplen	nental work	kload?	
15.) We are interested in your opinion on the competition Please mark the answer which applies best to your of	•	What do y	ou think?	
	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't agree	I don't agree at all
The competition is appropriate to delay of the onset of smoking.	1	2	3	4
The competition is appropriate to reduce smoking.	1	2	3	4
The concept of the competition is appropriate to reach the target group (pupils in the age with a high risk to start to experiment with smoking).	1	2	3	4
It is easy to implement the competition into my everyday work in the school.	1	2	3	4

16.) How useful were the main rules of the competition? Please mark the answer which applies best to your opinion. Quite Not useful Very useful A bit useful useful at all Participation is voluntary Class contract (pupils sign a contract to be smoke free during the competition period) Weekly assessment of smoking status in the class Regular feedback to the competition's head office Competition is based on self monitoring of pupils (pupils are trusted to tell the truth, no external control) 17.) Do you think that the competition led to negative group pressure (bullying, mobbing) on smoking pupils? No, never Sometimes Often **Always** No smoking pupils in the class 18.) Do you think that the competition led to <u>negative group pressure</u> (bullying, mobbing) on non-smoking pupils? No, never Sometimes Often Always No smoking pupils in the class 19.) Do you think that the competition led to positive group pressure on smoking pupils? No, never Sometimes Often Alwavs No smoking pupils in the class 20.) How many pupils cheat in the weekly assessment? None Number: 21.) If pupils of your class smoked: In your opinion, how often did they conceal from their class mates that they smoke? Never Sometimes Often Always No smoking pupils in the class

22.)	If pupils of your class smoked: In your opinion, how often did they conceal from <u>you</u> as their teacher that they smoke?
	₁ Never
	Often
	Always
	No smoking pupils in the class
23.)	Compared to the time before the competition started: Did the competition influence the class climate?
24.)	Should the competition be offered again next school year?
	, Yes
	No 2
25.)	Would you participate again in the competition?
	Yes
	No
	I don't know yet
26.)	Would you recommend your colleagues to participate in the competition?
	Yes
	No Property of the control of the co
,	Which overall score do you assign to the competition?
	Very good
	Good Mederate
	Moderate Poor
	□ Solution
28.)	Do you have a smoking ban for pupils in your school?
	, Yes
29.)	Do you have a smoking ban for teachers in your school?
	Yes
	No la

Thank you very much!



www.smokefreeclass.info