



'VAT ON DEFIBS PUTTING LIVES AT RISK' – IRISH HEART FOUNDATION

The Irish Heart Foundation has called for action to remove VAT on defibrillators as soon as is allowable under EU law, and changes in EU legislation will finally give the Government the power to abolish what the charity has condemned for years as "a tax on saving lives".

Despite the medical devices saving scores of lives in Irish communities each year, EU tax rules have left the State with no option but to impose the top rate of VAT on them. This means that organisations such as sports clubs and community groups must fork out almost €300 extra for a defibrillator costing €1,300 and up to €100 more in VAT each time pads and batteries are replaced.

The Irish Heart Foundation has written to Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, urging him to ensure a VAT exemption for defibrillators can be introduced as soon as possible after EU Finance Ministers agreed amendments to a directive which gives member States more flexibility in setting certain VAT rates.

"The latest statistics for 2020 show that out of 2,638 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests recorded in Ireland, just 164 patients survived," said Irish Heart Foundation Director of Advocacy, Chris

Macey. "The earlier an AED is applied, the better a person's chances of surviving a cardiac arrest. For every minute without CPR or defibrillation, your chances of survival decrease by 10%.

"TAX ON SAVING LIVES"

"So, the more public access there is to defibrillators, the more lives can be saved. And the higher the cost of these devices, along with pads and batteries that must be regularly replaced, the less likely sports

and community organisations will be able to afford their purchase and upkeep. In these circumstances, it's no exaggeration to say that VAT on defibrillators is a tax on saving lives."

Macey said that whilst the directive must now go back to the European Parliament before it is formally adopted by EU Finance Ministers, the Department of Finance should undertake all work necessary to ensure an exemption is introduced at the earliest date possible.

"We know that Minister Donohoe has specifically recommended that defibrillators and other emergency medical and rescue equipment be included in these VAT reforms. So, we are hopeful he will ensure this measure is prioritised in his department," he noted.

"Since this tax remains in place every day, lives are being put at unnecessary additional risk, particularly the lives of people living with undiagnosed heart conditions and people with conditions such as heart failure who do not have implantable devices."



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Macey, insists that everyday
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