

Georgia

Overall score:

77

Summary of Findings

1. Industry participation in policy development

The tobacco industry intensively participates in policy development processes. This business has strong support from the economic arm of the Government and Parliament. Keen supporters and lobbyists of the tobacco industry include the Ministry of Economy and the Office of Business Ombudsman of Georgia.

2. Industry CSR activities

The tobacco industry is not allowed to organize CSR activities or support any physical or judicial person. Georgia has no regulations regarding charity. This means that it is possible for tobacco companies to make donations as long as there is no promotion of their company or their deadly products. During COVID-19, all transnational tobacco corporations working in Georgia (BAT, Japan Tobacco International [JTI] and Philip Morris International [PMI]) donated to the special StopCov Fund at US \$30,000 each, and in the process promoted their business although they are responsible for the death of 11,400 Georgians every year.

3. Benefits to the industry

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development has a special state program called "Produce in Georgia" which has supported production of local tobacco since 2014.

4. Unnecessary interaction

Unnecessary interaction between the tobacco industry and governmental officials or Members of Parliament happens and they have direct and unlimited relations and communications.

5. Transparency

No transparency exists in the relations between the tobacco industry and state institutions. A draft Decree on "Protecting the State Policy Related to Tobacco Control in Public Institutions and Establishing the Rule of Communication of State Servants with the Tobacco Industry" was prepared in June 2018. However, the draft still awaits the approval of the Georgian government. The reason for this delay is the tobacco industry's broad influence on the government.

6. Conflict of interest

A former Minister of Economy owns a local tobacco manufacturing company and influences the current government to create a profitable environment for his business. Relatives of current government officials hold positions in the tobacco business.

7. Preventive measures

No preventive measures exist yet. The government has not adopted or implemented a code of conduct for public officials, to prescribe standards for dealing with the tobacco industry.



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Recommendations

1. Adopt the draft Governmental Decree on "Protecting the State Policy Related to Tobacco Control in Public Institutions and Establishing the Rule of Communication of State Servants with the Tobacco Industry" as soon as possible.
2. Disallow participation of the tobacco industry in public health policy setting and implementation.
3. Ban and de-normalize CSR and charitable activities from the tobacco industry.
4. Disclose all records of meeting with the tobacco industry.
5. Implement a code of conduct for public officials to guide them when dealing with the tobacco industry.