

Turkey

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Summary of Findings

1. Industry participation in policy development

The tobacco industry has a voice in policy development in Turkey.

Mr. Riza Tuna Turagay (previously a public official), board member of British American Tobacco Turkey (BAT) was appointed as Vice Minister of Commerce by Presidential Decision in Turkey in January 2019.

The tobacco industry is represented in two large industry organizations, the Turkish Exporters Assembly (the Vice Minister of Commerce was a member of the Tobacco Sector Board in 2018) and The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey. Both organizations publicly declare that they participate in the Economic and Social Council of the nation and “submit opinions and comments to the political power, to concerned ministries and parliamentary commissions regarding laws and regulations in draft form or in force,” and “perform consultative functions, with specialization committees made up of experienced academicians and upper-level bureaucrats of concerned public and private agencies.”

2. Industry CSR activities

Philip Morris Sabancı Cigarette and Tobacco Inc. (PHILSA) and Japan Tobacco International Turkey (JTI Turkey) donated almost 7 million TRY to the National Solidarity Campaign which is for supporting Turkey’s actions against the threat of the coronavirus.

3. Benefits to the industry

There are pending regulations like implementing the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Article 5.3 since 2004.

Concerning plain packaging law, “compliance with the provision that the health warnings in the unit package of tobacco products placed on the market shall not be partially concealed or covered by the banderole” was postponed until June 30, 2021. As of today, no technical specifications ruled to enable this provision.

In Turkey, the fixed tax is imposed automatically twice a year on tobacco products in line with producer price inflation. The minimum fixed and fixed tax amounts for cigarettes and some tobacco products did not increase in the revaluation rate for the first six months of 2021, while the special consumption tax rate was reduced from 67% to 63%.

In 2020, the government supplied investment incentives in the form of either VAT or customs duty exemption to 25 domestic tobacco companies. With these incentives, a total of 468 tons/year of waterpipe tobacco products, 1,575 tons/year production capacity of cigarettes and other tobacco products, 12, 161 billion macaron, 410 tons/year macaron paper, 4.6 billion/year cigarette filters, 6,780,000 pcs/year marpuç (flexible tube for waterpipe) and 51,738,000 pcs/year sipsi (mouthpiece for waterpipe) production capacity was created.

In November 2020, official investment and production incentives for the tobacco industry were omitted from legislation. However, in February 2021, government incentives were

re-established for the tobacco industry between Feb 17, 2021, and Dec 31, 2025.

4. Unnecessary interaction

Top level government officials including the commerce minister attended social functions and events like presenting awards to tobacco industry representatives for their success in exports/sales.

5. Transparency

The government does not publicly disclose its meetings or interactions with the tobacco industry. Any industry interference can only be noted through media monitoring by civil society actors.

It should be noted: SCT obtained from sales of tobacco products corresponds to approximately 9% of all tax revenues. The material weight of cigarettes in the CPI basket (2020) was 5.7%.

There is no requirement for the disclosure or registration of tobacco industry entities, affiliated organizations, and individuals acting on their behalf including lobbyists.

6. Conflict of interest

The government does not prohibit contributions from the tobacco industry or any entity working to further its interests to political parties, candidates or campaigns, or require full disclosure of such contributions.

There is no evidence of retired senior government officials working in the tobacco industry, nor any record of current government officials holding positions in the tobacco industry.

7. Preventive measures

Law No. 4703 requires the tobacco industry to periodically submit information on tobacco production and manufacture. Revenues are in the scope of Tax Procedure Law. Any other activity, including lobbying, philanthropy, political contributions and all other activities are not allowed by Law No 4207. However, the government does not have a program or plan to consistently raise awareness within its departments on policies related to Article 5.3. Moreover, despite FCTC rules, the government does not publicly disclose its meetings or interactions with the tobacco industry.

Recommendations

Turkey should implement and enforce FCTC Article 5.3 and adopt a sincere tobacco control implementation.