

# Norway

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## Summary of Findings

### 1. Industry participation in policy development

The Ministry of Finance had contacts with the tobacco industry to obtain information and figures relating to illicit tobacco sales/smuggling, etc., as part of assessing the tax level. (This seems to be an annual practice). The Norwegian government did not invite industry representatives to attend policy meetings. The Norwegian delegation to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Conference of the Parties (COP) excluded industry representatives. However, there were instances of industry representatives participating in informal parliamentary meetings. The tobacco industry was allowed to provide responses to public regulatory consultations.

### 2. Industry CSR activities

The Norwegian government and devolved administrations' agencies and their officials did not endorse, support, form partnerships with or participate in industry corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

### 3. Benefits to the industry

The government did not accommodate requests from the tobacco industry for a longer time frame for implementation or postponement of the tobacco control law. However, there are no rules against the government providing preferential treatment to the industry. Norway has not increased prices/taxes of cigarettes and other tobacco products for a long time. Prices are only adjusted in accordance with inflation. The COVID pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions made

it plainly evident that Norwegians purchase much of their tobacco products in neighbouring Sweden (generous quotas). Extreme pressure from the Progress Party, a coalition member of the ruling alliance in parliament, compelled the government to accept price cuts of snus (smokeless tobacco) with 25% in 2021 to reduce the price differences between Norway and Sweden. The tobacco industry is also given preferential treatment at points of entry to Norway where tobacco products, including cigarettes, are available at duty-free shops.

### 4. Unnecessary interaction

There was no evidence that top-level Norwegian officials attended tobacco industry events, nor that the government accepted, supported, endorsed or entered into partnerships or agreements with the tobacco industry. However, there was evidence that the Ministry of Finance accepted assistance from the industry for their tobacco-control activities. There was a case of an inquiry (assessment from the Legal Department) over a Minister's friendly relationship with the Director Corporate Affairs Nordics of Philip Morris (PM), the tobacco company with the largest market share in Norway. The Legal Department concluded that she was likely to be incompetent in matters directly related to PM. However, she was deemed, in principle, not incompetent in decisions of a general character which concerned the tobacco area in general. A year earlier the same politician (a health policy spokesperson in Parliament at the time) accepted accommodation from the tobacco industry during a political and policy fair event.

## 5. Transparency

There was no general requirement for the industry and affiliated entities to register with the government. This makes it difficult to track and trace the industry and its third parties to understand how they work in partnership to subvert and influence tobacco control policies in Norway. The Ministry of Finance does not publicly disclose their interactions with the tobacco industry.

## 6. Conflict of interest

No legislation prohibited contributions from the tobacco industry or any entity working to further its interests to political parties, candidates or campaigns or to require full disclosure of such contributions. No retired senior government officials or current government officials were identified as holding positions in the tobacco business.

## 7. Preventive measures

The government has not put in place a procedure for disclosing the records of interaction with the tobacco industry and its representatives. There was no code of conduct for public officials, prescribing the standards with which they should comply in their dealings with the tobacco industry, with one exception: The Ministry of Health and Care Services (MOH) and its agencies had a clear policy on Article 5.3. The political leaders of the Ministry do not meet with the industry. The administrative and policy staff only meet with the industry when it is necessary for regulatory purposes.

To our knowledge the government did not require the tobacco industry to periodically submit information on tobacco production, manufacture, market share, marketing expenditures, revenues and any other activity, including lobbying, philanthropy, political contributions and all other activities. There was no specific policy to disallow political contributions from the tobacco industry.

## Recommendations

1. Require, collect and publish in a useable format tobacco industry data on profits, taxes, prices, spending on marketing, research and local data on sales of all products.
2. Publish details of all meetings with the tobacco industry and its representatives across all government departments.
3. Regularly raise and maintain awareness of Article 5.3 and how to comply with it across the whole of government.
4. Require the Ministry of Health and Care Services to develop and disseminate, in partnership with devolved administrations, a comprehensive set of rules for public officials, prescribing standards with which public officials should comply in dealings with the tobacco industry and vested interests.
5. Create and ensure a publicly accessible, comprehensive and legally binding lobbying and policy influence transparency register across Norwegian administrations and make it a legal requirement for organisations involved in policy discussions to register and disclose their funding before lobbying. Ensure that organisations failing to register or fully declare funding are excluded from policy discussions.
6. Avoid conflicts of interest by prohibiting the tobacco industry and vested interests from making contributions (monetary or otherwise) to political parties and government officials at all levels. The latter would include offers of assistance, policy drafts, study visit invitations, hospitality and funding. Prohibit public officials from holding positions in, or being seconded to, the industry, or taking up posts with the industry within a defined number of years after leaving public positions (and vice versa). Such policy exists for government officials who want to join PR firms.
7. Give no preferential treatment to the tobacco industry and remove all tobacco products from duty-free shops.