

Italy

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Summary of Findings

1. Industry participation in policy development

There is no law in Italy that controls the influence of the tobacco industry in setting or implementing public health policies in relation to tobacco control. The government allows the tobacco industry lobby to represent the company point of view on issues relating to the tobacco sector and in particular to increase knowledge relating to new generation products, without setting public health policies. The Italian delegation to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Conference of the Parties (COP) excludes industry representatives, but they were included in the past (2012, 2014).

2. Industry CSR activities

Few “socially responsible” tobacco industry activities were conducted in Italy, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. Philip Morris International Italy (PMI Italy) produced, in collaboration with the Arpae Emilia-Romagna, antiseptic preparation for the hands to be donated to the Health Authorities of Emilia-Romagna Region. “Liotru d'autore by glo” is a cultural project with the patronage of Catania municipality realized in collaboration with British American Tobacco (BAT) Italy which donated an artwork (November 2019).

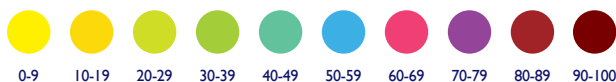
3. Benefits to the industry

There is strong opposition of ministries and parliamentarians to increase taxation to tobacco products, recently to heated tobacco products (HTPs). The excise taxes of HTPs in Italy are one-fourth that of conventional cigarettes and this benefit has been recognized

to HTPs because of their alleged consideration of products with a lower health risk. However, besides the current evidence from the scientific literature, the Italian Ministry of Health (MoH) in early 2019 also failed to recognize the reduced toxicity and reduced risk of HTPs compared to conventional tobacco, under the same conditions of use. This notwithstanding, the proposed amendment to the decree 18/2020 to substantially increase the taxation of these products did not pass and current legislation foresees a negligible increase in taxation by 5% each year. In general, HTPs, although they are tobacco products, enjoy regulatory benefits (besides fiscal benefits). Additionally, there was a delay—orchestrated by PMI Italy—in the publication of the report of the National Health Institute on HTP.

The Italian Ministry of Environment decree of 15/02/2017 provides that the tobacco industry can autonomously promote information campaigns or other initiatives aimed at making consumers aware of the harmful consequences for the environment deriving from cigarette butt litter.

There are also still some incentives like a high level of tobacco product quantity allowed to be brought into Italy from a country both outside and inside the European Union: International travelers are allowed to bring into Italy tobacco products (800 cigarettes; 400 cigarillos; 200 cigars; 1 kilogram of pipe or cigarette tobacco) within the EU/Italy duty free.



4. Unnecessary interaction

In the recent past (2016), the Prime Minister at the time, Matteo Renzi, participated as the guest of honor to the inauguration of the plant of Philip Morris in Bologna, after placing the first stone of the plant in 2014. Recently, there is no evidence that top-level Italian officials attend tobacco industry social functions, but in some circumstances local political figures took part in social events in which the industry was involved, especially in Emilia Romagna where the PMI plant is based.

It is well known the “fruitful” collaboration between different tobacco companies and the Finance Police in the fight against smuggling or illicit trades, with several donations (Apple iPads from PMI, an app and cars from BAT, training programs from Japan Tobacco International [JT]).

PMI Italy was committed in the enhancement and sustainability of Italian tobacco growing through an agreement with the Ministry of Agricultural, Food, Forestry and Tourism Policies.

5. Transparency

The ministries and their agencies do not publicly disclose any meetings or interaction with the tobacco industry, not even where such interactions are strictly necessary for regulation. Only the MoH officially discloses meetings with the tobacco industry. The Ministry of the Economic Development requires rules for the disclosure or registration of tobacco industry entities. No other ministries considered such rules.

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. Consequently, tobacco industries made several donations to foundations of the main Italian parties.

In two cases retired government consultants or officials formed part of the tobacco industry, but no current government officials and relatives hold positions in the tobacco business including consultancy positions.

7. Preventive measures

Very few preventive measures were implemented by the Italian government. In order to formulate a code of conduct for public officials the only measure implemented by the government was a letter sent by the MoH to main scientific medical societies alerting not to receive funds from the tobacco industry.

The government requires the tobacco industry to provide annually information on tobacco production, manufacture and revenues for each tobacco product through the EU-CEG (Common Entry Gate), but other data are not requested.

According to public information the Italian government does not have procedures in place for disclosing the records of interactions with the tobacco industry. The Italian government has no programs to raise awareness within its departments on policies relating to FCTC Article 5.3 Guidelines which, although it is in Italy a governmental legislation, are largely unknown by governmental staff outside the MoH.

Finally, the Italian government has not put in place policies to disallow the acceptance of all forms of contributions from the tobacco industry.

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The excise taxes of HTPs are one-fourth that of conventional cigarettes which benefits the tobacco industry as it gives recognition to HTPs as products with a “lower health risk”. ”

Recommendations

The current approach of the Italian government, besides some actions of the MoH, does not align with the World Health Organization (WHO) FCTC treaty and does not respect the spirit of Article 5.3. Several actions are urgently needed by the Italian government in order to comply with Article 5.3 of the FCTC:

1. Regularly implement programs to raise awareness on Article 5.3 of the FCTC and its guidelines within the departments and staff of the Italian government, in order to inform about tobacco industry interference.
2. De-normalize and regulate unnecessary interactions with the tobacco industry, including “socially responsible” activities. In particular, Italian Ministries should not permit the tobacco industry to autonomously promote information campaigns or other initiatives. The Ministry of Environment should abandon the support for the campaigns on cigarette butts implemented by the tobacco industry.
3. Increase the transparency in the interactions with the tobacco industry by recording and disclosing all the meetings and other interactions between tobacco industry representatives and government officers.
4. Increase transparency of sponsoring contributions to political parties in general and ban tobacco industry donations, as well as sponsorships or other contributions, to political parties and their candidates.
5. Define specific rules for the tobacco industry, require the tobacco industry to periodically submit information on the financial report on lobbying, philanthropy and contributions to political parties and their foundations and scientific societies.
6. Rely on independent conflict-of-interest-free research when making laws, supporting research which is directly and indirectly independent from the tobacco industry.