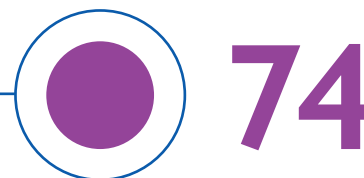


Argentina



Summary of Findings

1. INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The tobacco industry (TI) is not authorized to be a part of the National Tobacco Control Commission convened by the National Ministry of Health. Despite this, the TI, through its front groups, has participated in the discussion on the regulation of vaping and heated tobacco. This interference has included the dialogues around the prohibition of advertising, sponsorship, and prohibition and taxation of tobacco products. There is also evidence of tobacco producers' interference in efforts on the ratification of the WHO FCTC.

2. INDUSTRY CSR ACTIVITIES

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities are allowed by the Argentinian National Tobacco Control Law, and the TI has sustained its CSR activities with a focus on tobacco-producing provinces. The primary goal of CSR activities is child labour eradication, with greenwashing and gender-washing strategies complimenting that core. It is evident that CSR engagement is one of the main approaches employed to strengthen ties with the national and subnational governments.

3. BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY

The TI receives benefits through tax exemptions. These exemptions, intended for medium-sized companies, were granted through judicial channels. There is a judicialization of tax obligations by companies that sell cheap cigarettes; the prices are sustained through the precautionary measures they obtain in order not to pay taxes. The tax discussions involve all the tobacco companies and there are complaints of interference from the big companies to members of the Chamber of Deputies.

4. UNNECESSARY INTERACTION

The participation of policymakers from national and subnational Executive Branches in events (in person and online) financed by the TI has been verified on various occasions. The most intense interaction found between different levels of government and TI is through CSR activities and programs to prevent cigarette smuggling.

5. TRANSPARENCY

Argentina does not have a registry of associations or companies related to the TI. At the national level, the public hearing consultation system makes it easy to monitor the existence of meetings between the government and TI. Monitoring at the subnational level poses a more complex challenge.

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The law governing finances of political parties does not include a prohibition for tobacco companies to contribute funds to the campaigns of pre-candidates and candidates for positions in the legislative and executive branches. At the national level, a gift from a tobacco company to a government official was verified. Encouragingly, there was no evidence of government officials or close affiliates being actively involved in tobacco companies.

7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Argentina does not have codes of conduct, plans, or systems to discourage the interference of the TI in public policies. The National Ministry of Health is the only branch of the government that has partial measures to prevent interactions between public officials and the TI in the design

of tobacco control policies. The Ministry of Health does not have information related to the amount spent on advertising and sponsorship of tobacco products by medium-sized companies. The Ministry of Economy of the Nation by contrast does have updated statistics on tobacco production.

Recommendations

Compared to the Global Tobacco Index 2021, Argentina has the same challenges in many ways in terms of transparency and tobacco control policies. The following recommendations remain necessary to be enacted:

1. Argentina remains one of the few countries that has not ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. It must be ratified.
2. The government should modify and update the National Tobacco Control Law to completely ban all forms of tobacco products marketing, including the prohibition of TI's CSR activities and a better system of monitoring and control of effective compliance. This prohibition of marketing should include traditional and new tobacco products.
3. The Government should develop a registry of companies and associations, including vaping organizations, linked to the TI. This registry should include information about TI lobbyists at the national and subnational levels.
4. The government should develop a code of conduct aimed at officials from all branches, including clear and binding guidelines, thus restricting interactions between public officials and the TI to only when strictly necessary. Also, the law on political parties must prohibit tobacco companies from financing their campaigns. These actions should be taken together with civil society organizations who have no conflict of interest.