Czech Republic

67

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Industry Participation in Policy Development

The Government Office is preparing a document to reduce the prevalence of smoking. The draft includes proposals for changing packaging and points of sale, ranging from minimal adjustments to stronger measures such as plain packaging and restricting sales to specialized stores with advertising bans. The tobacco industry (TI) has been regularly invited to negotiations, and its school-based program appeared in the draft. The document does not address taxation, as a separate proposal is planned, meaning fragmentation of tobacco control continues. The Czech Republic still lacks a comprehensive tobacco endgame strategy.

The Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry and Trade, and Ministry of Agriculture continue to prioritize industry interests, opposing control measures that could affect business operations, such as standardized packaging, bans on advertising at points of sale, sales in licensed stores, and reducing cigarette affordability.

2. Industry CSR Activities

There were no documented cases of government support for TI-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities during the reporting period. However, ministries are not required to disclose their meetings or interactions with the TI.

3. Benefits to the Industry

In May 2025, the Senate discussed the Lobbying Act, set to take effect on July 1, 2025. However, the law was weakened by 21 amendments promoted by interest groups. The Ministry of Justice received no funding or staff to oversee compliance, and key lobbying channels, including parliamentary assistants, members of government advisory bodies, and regional or municipal officials, were exempted from reporting requirements. The definition of a lobbyist is limited to those who are registered, which allows unregistered intermediaries to bypass the rules. A planned legislative trail intended to disclose meetings, lobbyists, and their clients was scaled back, leaving the public with minimal transparency. Reports revealed that several amendments were drafted directly by interest groups, raising concerns about undue influence and weakened accountability.

4. Unnecessary Interaction

The Confederation of Industry and Transport of the Czech Republic includes a TI representative on its Board of Directors, which provides indirect access to government and economic policy forums. Although the Confederation is officially non-governmental and non-political, it plays a significant role in tripartite economic policymaking, giving industry interests a platform with decision-makers. Additional links exist through investment ties, since BH Securities, whose chief economist advises the prime minister, offers investments in Philip Morris shares. While the Board's full membership list is not publicly available, Philip Morris is known to have been a member.

5. Transparency

The Czech Republic lacks a formal system for disclosing or registering TI entities, affiliated organizations, or lobbyists. This measure is recommended under Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC. While draft legislation exists, there is not yet a mandatory registry or transparent mechanism in place.

6. Conflict of Interest

There is no prohibition on political contributions from the TI or its affiliates to political actors in the Czech Republic. In addition, there is no mandatory disclosure regime requiring these contributions to be recorded or publicly reported. Although reform efforts are underway, no formal legal framework has yet been established to address these gaps.

7. Preventive Measures

The Czech Republic has not yet put in place a procedure that requires disclosure of detailed records of interactions between government officials and the TI, including agendas, attendees, minutes, and outcomes.

The national government has not instituted a policy that explicitly disallows the acceptance of contributions, gifts, offers of assistance, policy drafts, or study visit invitations from the TI or its affiliates. Existing regulations remain general and non-binding, and they do not fully align with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC and its guidelines on preventing industry interference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Disclose all records of interactions with the TI and publish details of all contacts with the industry on government websites, including for members of interdepartmental working groups on comprehensive tobacco control.
2. Implement a clear procedure within the Ministry of Health to document and publish all interactions with the TI in line with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC.
3. Require disclosure of all incentives provided to the TI.
4. Prohibit the appointment of individuals recognized as representatives of the TI to public office.