

# Norway



## Summary of Findings

### 1. INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

According to the Minister of Health and Care Services, most Norwegian parliamentarians are aware of the importance of WHO FCTC Article 5.3. Former MPs have a “Golden Key” which gives them unimpeded access to the national assembly to lobby. Although the Norwegian government does not invite tobacco industry (TI) representatives to attend policy meetings, there are instances where industry representatives participate in informal parliamentary meetings with the Progress Party. The TI was allowed to provide responses to public regulatory consultations.

In addition, the Ministry of Finance has yearly contacts with the TI to discuss information relating to illicit tobacco sales and smuggling as part of assessing the tax level.

### 2. INDUSTRY CSR ACTIVITIES

On the occasion of the 2022 World No Tobacco Day, with the theme “Tobacco: Threat to our Environment”, Philip Morris Norway (PM Norway) launched a campaign on limiting plastic litter associated with cigarette butts, and that they are seeking the cooperation of businesses and municipalities to make it happen.

Norway is a leading voice in the UNEP’s Plastic Treaty negotiations and a member of the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) for a Plastic Treaty. During the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Plastic Treaty in Paris, the HAC issued a statement calling “for binding provisions in the treaty to eliminate and restrict unnecessary, avoidable, or problematic plastics, as well as the plastic polymers, chemical constituents and plastic products that are of particular concern due to their adverse effects on the environment and human health.” Cigarette butts are avoidable and harmful plastics, and the draft Treaty must include a ban on cigarette filters.

### 3. BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY

The Center Party’s parliamentary group, a member of the coalition in power, rejected the government’s proposal for a generational ban on tobacco as well as a ban on flavours in snus.

The visit of the Minister of Research and Higher Education to the farmers/snus producers, in defiance of his partners in government, is by itself a hand held out to the TI.

Tobacco products are still sold in tax-free shops at points of entry and exit.

### 4. UNNECESSARY INTERACTION

Snusbonden - Norwegian tobacco farmers (the first tobacco farmers in 28 years) and snus producers - invited and received the visit of the Minister of Research and Higher Education to voice their opposition to the proposed ban on the online sale of tobacco products. They fear they will go bankrupt if the ban is introduced. The minister hails from the Center Party, which is very friendly with farmers in general, and the tobacco farm is located in his electoral district. He is also a daily snus user. The minister met the farmers in defiance of his partners of the Labour Party in government, just two days before the Parliamentary Health Committee was to consider the proposal contained in the Public Health Report (*Folkehelsemeldingen*). An invitation was extended to the Agriculture and Food Minister from the same political party.

### 5. TRANSPARENCY

The biggest Norwegian newspaper, VG, revealed that former members of parliament have a “Golden Key” to the parliamentary building even after their term of office is over, giving them unlimited and unrestricted access to their former colleagues without having to enter their name into the visitors’ register. Former representatives of the *Storting* (Norwegian

Parliament) can come and go as they please, for life. That arrangement also applies to those who work as lobbyists. At the time of the disclosure, at least 50 former MPs with free and perpetual access to the *Storting* were working as lobbyists to influence policy on behalf of the TI, seafood and other powerful organisations. These former politicians are also free to bring many guests into the National Assembly.

## 6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Progress Party (FrP) is the most TI friendly party in the Norwegian political landscape. They have systematically endorsed a liberal tobacco control policy. The Progress Party argues that informed individuals have the right to make their own decisions – for good or bad - without any interference from the government. After the launch of the draft tobacco control strategy, they vowed to prevent its implementation. They openly invited the TI to Parliament even when other parties adhere to the provisions of the WHO FCTC.

Recently, the national broadcaster, NRK, revealed that an FrP politician borrowed money from the communications director of Swedish Match and from a senior adviser of a PR agency

which has Swedish Match on its client list. Said politician was advocating for the introduction of tobacco-free snus – which Swedish Match is the producer – into the country.

## 7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

MPs from the Red Party (Rødt) and Socialist Left Party (SV) suggested the creation of a lobby register but did not win the support of the majority. Back in 2020, the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) recommended that Norway introduce rules, principles and guidelines for how members of the political leadership should have contact with lobbyists and other third parties seeking to influence government processes and decisions, and to increase transparency about the purpose of such contacts.

A publicly available lobby register containing information about who is in contact with whom, which matter is relevant, and who the lobbyist represents, should be available to citizens both when it comes to parliamentary representatives and the political leadership in the ministries and in the Prime Minister's office.

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## Recommendations

1. Incorporate WHO FCTC Article 5.3 into the Tobacco Control Act to protect tobacco control policy from all commercial and other vested interests of the TI.
2. Create a publicly available and accessible lobby register to guarantee full transparency when it comes to the TIs interactions with MPs.
3. Ensure the continued de-normalisation of the TI and tobacco use.
4. Require that the TI disclose their sales volumes, profit margins, product contents, and advertising and promotional activities to improve transparency.
5. Place a levy on the TI's profits to fund tobacco cessation and tobacco control advocacy programmes across the country, as well as the management of tobacco waste.
6. Rescind the 'Golden Key', which allows former MPs with unrestricted access to Parliament. This will prevent former MPs from taking advantage of the opportunity to lobby with parliamentarians, on behalf of the TI and other industries with products that are harmful to health and the environment.
7. Ban cigarette filters to protect both health and the environment.