

Romania



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Industry Participation in Policy Development

In April 2025, in its detailed opinion submitted under the EU's TRIS procedure, Romania opposed Spain's proposed cap of 0.99 mg of nicotine per pouch in its draft regulation on nicotine products. Romania argued that the restriction was disproportionate, lacked sufficient public health justification, and would violate internal market rules by creating barriers to trade. Citing the fact that several EU countries, including Romania itself, allow nicotine pouches with much higher strengths (up to 20 mg), the Romanian government framed Spain's limit as an unjustified departure from mutual recognition principles under Regulation (EU) 2019/515. While Romania's submission was positioned as a legal and technical critique, its effect was to defend the commercial availability of high-strength nicotine products across the EU. This stance aligns with the interests of the tobacco industry (TI), particularly producers of oral nicotine pouches who benefit from weaker cross-border regulation.

2. Industry CSR Activities

Japan Tobacco International (JTI) has been sponsoring a long-standing journalist scholarship program in Romania, *JTI Scholarships for Journalists*, which has trained over 280 Romanian reporters since 2000. Those selected receive expert-led courses on European law and media, and participate in internships with EU institutions, news agencies, and EU representation in Brussels. This initiative has been widely criticized as a strategic move by JTI to shape media narratives and cultivate favorable relationships with future influencers in public policy and

journalism. British American Tobacco (BAT) Romania made a high-profile donation of equipment (150 license plate recognition cameras) to the Romanian Border Police. This joint activity underscores ongoing collaboration between BAT and state enforcement agencies.

3. Benefits to the Industry

Romania continues to provide direct subsidies to tobacco growers under the Transitional National Aid scheme, offering rates of more than €1,600 per hectare in 2024, making tobacco one of the most subsidized crops per hectare. There are no tax breaks or preferential treatment extended to tobacco manufacturers, importers, or marketers beyond standard agricultural payments. These subsidies remain in place despite Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, which discourages any form of government support for the tobacco sector.

4. Unnecessary Interaction

On 14 November 2024, under the patronage of the Romanian Prime Minister, the National Authority for Consumer Protection (ANPC) signed a formal collaboration with major tobacco companies and retail associations to prevent youth access to nicotine products. The agreement was witnessed by high-level officials, including the head of the Prime Minister's Chancellery. Similarly, the Romanian government hosted the official signing ceremony of a collaboration protocol between the ANPC and representatives of economic operators from the tobacco industry. Held at Victoria Palace with the participation of high-ranking government officials, the event marked the formalization of cooperation between Romania's consumer protection authority and major tobacco companies. While

framed as an effort to curb underage access to tobacco and nicotine products, the collaboration has raised concerns about public institutions' endorsement of industry actors whose products are known public health risks.

5. Transparency

Romania's established transparency framework, specifically the Freedom of Information Act (2001), allows citizens and stakeholders to request meeting data retrospectively. However, there is no institutional requirement for proactive disclosure of meeting agendas, attendee lists, outcomes, or minutes. Disclosure happens only if a request is made and approved. Romania does not maintain a legal or administrative framework requiring tobacco companies, their affiliated groups, lobbyists, or actors working on their behalf to disclose their identity, activities, or expenditures. There are no tobacco-specific provisions aligned with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC that mandate registration or reporting by such entities.

6. Conflict of Interest

Romania's broader political finance law (Law No. 334/2006) restricts campaign donations based on size and source, and mandates donor identification and reporting of contributions above a threshold. However, these requirements apply to all donors, not specifically to the tobacco industry, and do not preclude donations from industry entities entirely.

7. Preventive Measures

Although Romania briefly operated a restricted Registry of Interests in 2016–2017, the registry was discontinued after a change in government and has not been reestablished. During 2021–2023, no tobacco company interactions were listed in that registry, even though tobacco firms regularly met with senior officials in private settings. Romania lacks a dedicated code of conduct for public officials when engaging with tobacco industry representatives. No formal or implemented regulatory instruments, whether binding or voluntary, exist to guide officials under Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mandate full transparency in all engagements with the TI, requiring comprehensive documentation and public disclosure of meetings, including agendas, participants, and outcomes.
2. Prohibit any contributions from the TI, including to political parties, candidates, and public officials, to prevent conflicts of interest and undue influence.
3. Establish a binding code of conduct for public officials that forbids the acceptance of gifts, favors, or any form of assistance from the TI or its affiliates.
4. Implement a mandatory disclosure registry obligating TI companies and their representatives to report all lobbying, marketing, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and other non-commercial activities.
5. Institutionalize regular capacity-building initiatives to train government officials on their obligations under Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, with a focus on identifying and preventing TI interference in policymaking.