

The European Tobacco Control Report 2007

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The European tobacco control report describes the tobacco control situation and the status of tobacco control policies in the WHO European Region as at late 2006; reviews progress following the adoption of the European Strategy for Tobacco Control (ESTC) in 2002; and establishes a baseline for monitoring implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in the Region. The document presents an overview of the situation regarding tobacco use and related harm in the WHO European Region during the period 2002–2006 and of Member States' policy responses and implementation of national tobacco control measures in line with the recommendations of the ESTC.

Lessons learned and challenges faced during the policy-making process are illustrated by several short national, regional and subregional case studies attached to the Report.

Summary

The document presents an overview of the situation regarding tobacco use and related harm in the Region during the period 2002–2006, and of Member States' policy responses and implementation of national tobacco control measures in line with the recommendations of the European Strategy for Tobacco Control (ESTC)). The lessons learned and challenges faced during the policy process are also illustrated by 15 short national, regional and sub-regional case studies which are attached to the Report.

Between 2002 and 2006, most Member States made significant progress in relation to banning advertising, increasing the size of health warnings, strengthening product regulation and, to a certain extent, raising taxes on tobacco. The price of tobacco products rose by an average annual rate of 6.8% above inflation between 2001 and 2005 in the European Union (EU) countries –good progress when compared to the previous annual rate of increase of 2.7%. The data are less encouraging in the countries in the eastern part of the Region where, in some cases, tobacco became cheaper over this period. Most countries still do not earmark tobacco taxes for tobacco control.

Since 2002, major developments have also occurred in the area of smoke-free policies.

Several countries have introduced bans on smoking in public places which for the first time extended to bars and restaurants. These restrictions were led by the example of Ireland and Norway (2004). Nearly 20 countries have passed stricter laws covering smoking in bars and restaurants, and currently, nearly two thirds of countries have bans or restrictions on smoking in most indoor public places – a substantial improvement since 2001.

Since 2002, 24 Member States have reinforced legislation on direct advertising by either passing new laws or implementing existing provisions. EU Directive 2003/33/EC (4) totally banned advertising in the press, on the radio and in the sponsorship of sporting or cultural events with cross-border effect from 31 July 2005. Advertising remains less regulated in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), although there has been notable progress in most countries since 2002

There have also been significant developments in the regulation of tobacco products. Since December 2002, EU Directive 2001/37/EC (5) has required EU tobacco manufacturers to disclose the nature and quantities of all the ingredients used in tobacco

products. In 2006, 32 countries and, in particular, the EU are regulating the levels of tar at 10 mg per cigarette, nicotine at 1 mg and carbon monoxide at 10 mg in cigarettes, a decrease compared with the 2001–2002 levels of 12 mg of tar and carbon monoxide per cigarette and 1.2 mg of nicotine per cigarette.

The CIS countries and those in south-eastern Europe (SEE) in the main still set higher levels: 1.2–1.4 mg for nicotine and 12–16 mg for tar per cigarette.

In 2002 the average size of warning labels was less than 10% of each large surface of the pack.

This has now been increased more than threefold in the 32 countries that have transposed or adopted EU Directive 2001/37/EC (5). In the 14 other Member States (mainly CIS and SEE countries), health warnings are still usually less than 10% of the largest surface. Misleading descriptions on tobacco packs are prohibited in EU countries and in some SEE and CIS countries.

There has been marked progress in restricting the sale of tobacco products to minors. Currently 34 countries ban the sale of tobacco products to young people aged under 18 years and 10 countries to young people aged under 16 years.

There are still some major weaknesses in policy in many countries, particularly concerning restrictions on indirect advertising, the introduction of smoking cessation in the national health care system and, above all, in combating smuggling. In the western part of the Region the fight against smuggling has had some success, especially in reducing the supply of illegal tobacco products

The Region, in general, has made a significant contribution to the negotiation and entry into force of the WHO FCTC. By 15 December 2006, 40 countries in the WHO European Region and the European Community had become Parties to it.

In conclusion, although smoking prevalence has in general stabilized in the WHO European Region and is decreasing in some countries, it does not yet present a clear diminishing trend.

WHO Member States need to continue and in many cases accelerate their implementation of the baseline recommendations outlined in the ESTC. Governments and society need to use the current momentum to create a turning-point in combating the tobacco epidemic in the Region.