



United Kingdom

IMPACT ASSESSMENT



The FCTC opens doors, gives us a basis with which to have conversations that might otherwise have not been had or would have been difficult to arrange. FCTC serves as the foundation for our approach to tobacco control and it has helped us make the case for comprehensive tobacco control.

Introduction

The impact assessment for the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) was conducted in the UK from 18 to 21 January 2015. The international team consisted of representatives from the independent Impact Assessment Expert Group established by the Conference of the Parties. The team met senior leaders of government agencies, academia and NGOs involved in the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

Key facts

The UK was among the first of the WHO FCTC Parties to introduce comprehensive **smoke-free legislation**, effective from 2007



The UK was one of the first WHO FCTC Parties to introduce **standardized** packaging



Key tobacco control milestones

2004

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ratifies the WHO FCTC

2007

Introduction of a comprehensive smoking ban

2011

(Re)introduction of Duty Escalator*

2013

Signing of the WHO FCTC Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products

2015

Introduction of plain/standardised tobacco packaging

15.8% 
of the UK population smokes

17.7%
of men and

14.1% 

of women are current tobacco smokers



Text warnings cover

30%

of the front and pictorial warnings cover

40%

of the back of smoked tobacco products



82.5%

of the retail price of tobacco products consists of tax. UK tobacco prices are among the **highest** in the world

*The UK tobacco tax escalator automatically increases tobacco taxation by a growing percentage above the rate of inflation every year.



The FCTC sets out standards for tobacco control across a wide range of areas from restricting tobacco promotion and exposure to second hand smoke to regulation of tobacco ingredients and control of illicit trade... It sets a gold standard in tobacco regulation by reflecting on best practices in each area.

Key observations

- The observation of Article 4.7 of the Convention has enabled civil society in the UK to take a clear role in tobacco control activities, both nationally and internationally. With respect to the tobacco industry, the WHO FCTC created opportunities for the government and civil society organizations to pursue tobacco control objectives with less hindrance.
- The UK has succeeded in significantly curbing industry interference. While in the past the government used to align standards to the industry codes, implementation of WHO FCTC Article 5.3 made it very difficult for the tobacco industry to engage with the different levels of government.
- Article 6 of the WHO FCTC continues to be very important for the UK in implementing price and tax measures to reduce the demand for tobacco. Article 6 serves as a key reference document in the elaboration of tax policies. It has also enabled various non-health governmental departments, such as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), to view tobacco control in a more holistic way.
- The UK is among the first Parties to the WHO FCTC to implement a comprehensive smoking ban. Article 8 has helped

the UK expand the scope of its smoke-free legislation. As of 2015, smoking in private vehicles carrying children under the age of 18 is prohibited in England and Wales. In Scotland, a 2016 mass media campaign on smoking at home was also based on Article 8 of the WHO FCTC.

- In the UK, plain/standardized packaging came into force in 2016. Articles 11 and 13 of the WHO FCTC played a critical role in driving policy action on tobacco product packaging.
- The WHO FCTC has also been used to defend against legal challenges to existing smoke-free legislation as well as packaging regulations. The High Court has made specific references to the UK being a Party to the Convention and to Article 8 of the Convention. Articles 11 and 13 were cited by the UK government in front of the High Court as part of their justification for the implementation of plain/standardized packaging in a lawsuit filed by Phillip Morris International (PMI) and British American Tobacco (BAT).
- The UK has managed to secure unified engagement for tobacco control across various government agencies and political parties after WHO FCTC ratification. As a Party to the Convention, there has

been an increased recognition of legal obligations to tobacco control. This has ensured that these requirements are taken into account throughout the decision-making processes at all levels of government. The WHO FCTC is a unifying force that gives a common language to policy-making and implementation at all levels in the UK.



Outcomes

- ✓ Served as a guide in reshaping government officials' relations with the tobacco industry, maximizing transparency of interactions and denormalising the industry.
- ✓ Reinforced collaboration between sectors and increased recognition of the potential of the WHO FCTC in promoting tobacco control policies.
- ✓ Increased civil society participation, engagement and overall accountability in tobacco control.
- ✓ Application of smoke-free legislation as part of WHO FCTC implementation.
- ✓ Facilitated progressive escalation of health warnings and served as the supporting legal framework for the introduction of standardised packaging.
- ✓ Facilitated a progressive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS).
- ✓ Served as a resource in supporting government's position in court cases.
- ✓ Helped the UK become a leader in tobacco control across Europe and the rest of the world.