

13 February 2026

Subject: Tobacco Lobbying and the European Parliament

Dear President Metsola,

We are writing to urge the European Parliament to fully transpose Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) into its Rules of Procedure. The European Union is already bound by the **legal international obligation** to effectively implement Article 5.3 within its institutions; however, it is currently failing to meet those obligations.

When we talk about the tobacco industry, we are talking about an industry like no other, which is **responsible for the premature death of one in two of its consumers**. As revealed by a global report published by the World Health Organization in 2025, Europe now has the **highest prevalence of tobacco consumption worldwide** and is projected to retain this position for years to come. The European Union is therefore among the regions most affected by the tobacco epidemic.

Yet findings¹ show that between 2023 and 2025, **257 meetings** between tobacco industry lobbyists and Members of the European Parliament were officially recorded, and these figures reflect only **declared meetings**. By contrast, the **Smoke Free Partnership**, a public health advocacy group that represents nearly 60 different organisations, recorded only **12 meetings** with Members of the European Parliament, a stark contrast to the **121 meetings that Philip Morris International alone held** in this period.

This unreasonable number of meetings reflects the **absence of effective filtering mechanisms** governing the tobacco industry's access to the European Parliament and a clear failure to comply with the WHO FCTC.

There is a **fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry's interests and public health policy interests**. In the exercise of their mandate, Members of the European Parliament must therefore protect public health policies and regulatory processes from the undue influence of the tobacco industry.

Accordingly, Members of the European Parliament should interact with the tobacco industry **only when, and to the extent that, such interaction is strictly necessary** to effectively regulate the tobacco industry and tobacco and tobacco-related products, where this cannot be achieved without a minimal exchange.

We therefore call for the **inclusion of Article 5.3** of the WHO FCTC in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure. To ensure a **requirement to limit interactions** with any representatives of the interests of the tobacco industry and organisations promoting so-called "harm reduction" products to the strict minimum, and **only where such interactions are strictly necessary** for regulatory purposes. Where unavoidable, these exchanges must be **conducted in full transparency** and limited to the following circumstances:

¹ <https://exposetobacco.org/resource/tobacco-lobbying-influence-in-the-eu/>

1. **Implementation or enforcement of the law**
2. **Collection of strictly technical information required by law.**

Given the EU's current political agenda, including the imminent revision of the **Tobacco Tax Directive** and the forthcoming revision of the **Tobacco Products Directive**, this is an urgent step that is needed to meet not only the Parliament's **legal international obligations** but also to protect the integrity and independence of EU health policymaking from undue tobacco industry influence.

Similarly, taking into account the **Interinstitutional Agreement** of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register and taking into account the lack of a systematic assessment of tobacco lobby meetings pointed out by the European Ombudsman², we consider it appropriate for **the European Parliament to promote a reform** of the Agreement in order to ensure that all EU institutions comply with the legal obligations of the FCTC.

To this end, **a specific registration regime should be introduced for lobbying activities related to the tobacco industry**, requiring adherence to the guidelines of implementation of the article 5.3 of the FCTC and a specific declaration committing to operate exclusively within the practices permitted under this international agreement with EU institutions, bodies and agencies.

We thank you for considering this request and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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² <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/decision/en/179448>