

WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Article 5.3

“In setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law.”

Dutch officials, minister, consult regularly with Big Tobacco

In October 2011 a Dutch documentary, '[Minister van Tabak](#)' ('Minister of Tobacco'), revealed long-running and extensive contact between Dutch Government* officials, including the minister of health, and the tobacco industry and its partners, in violation of Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and its Guidelines.

In the programme, Alexander van Voorst Vader, a lobbyist for the roll-your-own tobacco sector, reported that he had regular contacts with civil servants from the Ministry of Health and also with the Director-General of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. He also reported regular contact with Minister of Health Edith Schippers, both in her current role and before she took on that post.

Minister Schippers response to the documentary included:

'There is contact when it is believed to be necessary ... Since the start of the present government there have been acquaintance meetings with Philip Morris, the SSI (which represents tobacco companies, except PM), VNK (representing the roll-your-own industry) and the platform on Points of Sale Tobacco (PVT). This was because of a change in contact persons on both sides. In addition, there was a working visit of civil servants to a tobacco factory (...) and there was a meeting at the civil servant level with Japan Tobacco International on a number of technical issues related to information on tobacco ingredients ... Once a month there is telephone or mail contact, usually initiated by the industry.'

In its Five-year Implementation Report to the WHO in April 2010, the Dutch Government stated that it had taken no official steps to implement FCTC Guidelines on Article 5.3, but that it tried to act within the spirit of the guidelines.

Recommendation 2.2 of the Article 5.3 Guidelines states: “Where interactions with the tobacco industry are necessary, Parties should ensure that such interactions are conducted transparently. Whenever possible, interactions should be conducted in public, for example through public hearings, public notice of interactions, disclosure of records of such interactions to the public.”

In their 2011 report [Dutch Tobacco Control: Out of Control?](#) a group of NGOs recommends that the Dutch government:

- Develop a clear policy for civil servants to prevent interference by the tobacco industry, including strict conditions under which consultations with the tobacco industry may be conducted. Currently, the tobacco industry is routinely consulted on tobacco policy issues. No measures to protect tobacco control policies from the influence of the tobacco industry have been taken.
- Inform the general public about meetings and other contacts with the tobacco industry and its representatives, and what the meetings were about. This should be done in an accessible way, for instance on a government website. At the moment, the Government does not proactively inform the public about its contacts with the tobacco industry.

** The Dutch Government fell in April 2012.*

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