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## Tobacco Industry spent almost €20 million to influence EU policymakers, new report finds.

- In 2022, the tobacco industry spent up to €19 million in lobbying activities at the EU level, a 28% increase from 2021, reaching a new all-time high.
- Tobacco Industry representatives held a total of 6 high-level meetings with European Commission officials.
- The report comes two months after the European Commission further delayed the release of the proposal on smoke-free environments.

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, <<04/04/2024>> - The **Smoke Free Partnership**, a coalition of more than 55 NGOs working on tobacco control at the European level, published its annual infographic on "[\*Declared Tobacco industry presence in the EU policy-making environment\*](#)". The analysis aims to shed light on the human and economic resources the tobacco industry and its allies can count on to lobby the EU institutions.

The 2022 data (latest available year) shows that the tobacco industry spending on lobbying activities increased by 28% compared to 2021, amounting to €19 million, a new all-time high. Looking at the human resources employed, while the total number of declared lobbyists slightly decreased, going down from 236 to 229, the number of lobbyists accredited to the European Parliament increased by 30%, from 43 to 56. Similarly, the number of meetings between tobacco industry representatives and Commission officials amounted to six in 2022.

“€19 million declared in the transparency register is just the tip of the iceberg. Big Tobacco in the EU is winning as they delayed the revision of the Tobacco Tax Directive and Council Recommendation on smoke-free environments. The tobacco industry is directly responsible for killing around 100 million people over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The very same so-called legitimate industry that profits from getting their users addicted to

products from adolescence will be responsible for one billion people who will die from tobacco over the 21st century<sup>1</sup>, declared **Lilia Olefir, SFP Director**.

These lobbying activities and the tobacco industry's interference in policy-making go against the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), which the EU and its Member States signed. Article 5.3 of the Convention clearly states that "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". By holding six meetings in a year with tobacco industry representatives, the European Commission violated this provision. As declared by the **EU Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly** in a letter sent to the Commission's President referring to the 2020-2021 period, "these meetings not only took place with senior staff within the Commission (Commissioners, Heads of Cabinets, and Directors-General) but also with staff at lower levels".

This money seems to be well spent: the report comes two months after the Commission has, again, indefinitely delayed the release of its proposal on smoke-free environments. This file joined the increasingly large group of tobacco, alcohol, healthy food, and environmental measures the Von der Leyen Commission did not take further. "Despite the progress achieved in Europe, we are witnessing an unprecedented defeat of public interest over the profit of tobacco companies. Tobacco industry interference remains the largest obstacle to the implementation of effective tobacco control policies in Europe and worldwide. This goes to the detriment of the Europeans' health", added **Olefir**.

SFP hopes all EU Institutions will adopt the necessary measures to mitigate the tobacco industry's disproportionate influence, with a primary focus on prioritising the health of all European citizens over any commercial interests.

*### PRESS RELEASE ENDS ###*

## **ABOUT SMOKE FREE PARTNERSHIP**

SFP's vision is a world free from the death and suffering caused by tobacco consumption. SFP's mission is the effective implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). To this end, the SFP works with decision makers to ensure that tobacco control receives adequate political attention at EU level and to promote tobacco control information and policy research at EU and national level, in collaboration with other EU health organisations and tobacco control networks. It also aims to ensure FCTC implementation globally and is working to release EU funding for tobacco control to counter poverty in developing countries.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/smoking>