

Honourable Roberta Metsola,

The [Smoke Free Partnership](#) (SFP) is a coalition of over 55 civil society organisations dedicated to policy analysis and advocacy for the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control ([WHO FCTC](#)).

Together with [Corporate Europe Observatory](#) (CEO), we are writing to kindly request a meeting with a member of your cabinet in the coming weeks to discuss how we might best support you in ensuring the transparency and integrity of the European Parliament and its officials when engaging with representatives of the tobacco industry.

### **WHO FCTC Article 5.3**

First and foremost, we wish to draw attention to **WHO FCTC Article 5.3**<sup>1</sup>, which mandates the protection of public health policies from the undue influence of the tobacco industry. This article highlights the critical need for transparency and accountability when interacting with entities whose objectives conflict with public health goals. Strengthening the enforcement of **Article 5.3** within the European Parliament is not just necessary but imperative to preserve the integrity of policymaking and ensure public health remains the paramount priority.

### **Concerns regarding tobacco interference within the European Parliament**

The statistics on tobacco industry interference in Europe are deeply troubling. Reports indicate that during the previous legislative period (2019-2024), Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) held more than 100 meetings with representatives of the tobacco industry according to the Transparency Register Meeting Register.

Alarming, within just six months of the current legislative period (June to December 2024), there have already been 33 such registered meetings. This large number indicates a lack of awareness among MEPs (a majority of which are newly elected) about the obligation to protect policy-making from tobacco industry influence as outlined in WHO FCTC Article 5.3. Moreover, tobacco industry spending on EU focused lobbying activities remains unacceptably high, with the four largest companies collectively investing an estimated €37.6 to €48.2 million between 2019 and 2022. Although data for 2023 and 2024 has not yet been published, estimates suggest that the tobacco industry spends an average of €12.5-€16 million annually.

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<sup>1</sup> [Guidelines for implementation of Article 5.3](#)

For comparison, the seven largest fossil fuel companies spend an average of €12.8 million per year on lobbying activities. This equates to €1.8 million per fossil fuel company versus €3.1-€4 million per tobacco company, highlighting the disproportionately high expenditure by the tobacco industry to influence EU institutions. This alarming trend not only threatens public health but also undermines the transparency and credibility of the European Union.

Additionally, we wish to highlight a concerning example related to the lack of EU transparency. The lobbying group World Vapers' Alliance (WVA)<sup>2</sup> was recently suspended from the European Parliament's Transparency Register. Despite this, WVA representatives reportedly continued to meet with MEPs and, in November 2024, even presented a petition to the European Parliament<sup>3</sup>. This occurred after their suspension from the Transparency Register<sup>4</sup>, raising serious questions about the enforcement of the EU Transparency Register rules and the Parliament's clear wish to avoid unregistered lobbyists influencing decision-making<sup>5</sup>, as well as the standards under WHO FCTC Article 5.3.

### **Supporting your leadership**

Your leadership as President of the European Parliament presents a unique opportunity to prioritise transparency and set a strong precedent in combating (tobacco) industry interference. Enhancing lobby transparency within the European Parliament is critical to maintaining the trust of EU citizens and ensuring ethical policymaking processes. At the same time, it is essential to ensure compliance with international obligations under the WHO FCTC Art. 5.3, which serves to protect public health policies from tobacco industry influence.

We are confident that SFP and CEO, with our expertise in transparency, can offer valuable insights and support in this regard. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss these matters further at a time convenient for your members of your cabinet.


We look forward to your response and thank you in advance for considering our request.

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>2</sup> Tobacco Tactics [World Vapers' Alliance](#)

<sup>3</sup> Follow the Money EU, [Shadow vape lobbying in Brussels](#), newsletter, 25 November 2024, accessed November 2024, Available from LinkedIn

<sup>4</sup> [World Vapers Alliance](#), Lobby Facts profile, accessed November 2024

<sup>5</sup> European Parliament, [Lobby groups and transparency](#)