

## Transcript – Deadly Industry: Challenging Big Tobacco – Ep. 2, S.1

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**Louis**

Welcome to Deadly Industry: Challenging Big Tobacco. A weekly podcast from the Tobacco Control Research Group at the University of Bath. We are an international and award-winning group that investigates the tactics used by Big Tobacco to maximise its profits at the expense of public health. The evidence we produce helps society to hold this deadly industry to account.

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**Multiple speakers**

The health issues are

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massive.

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Globally, each year, tobacco kills nine million people. That's the equivalent of wiping out the population of London each year. Corporations are out for profit. Anything that is going to harm those profits is going to be unpalatable to them. This is a massive issue globally because if you look at global deaths just for corporate products, cause between a third and two thirds of all global deaths.

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**Louis**

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In this episode, we're going to explore tobacco regulation, the laws that help reduce tobacco related death and disease and what the tobacco industry does to undermine and circumvent these laws. We'll be discussing the early days of regulating cigarettes and the introduction of laws like plain packaging. Plus, we'll talk about the future of tobacco product regulation and how this relates to newer products like e-cigarettes and heated tobacco.

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I'm joined today by Britta Matthes and Karen Evans-Reeves, both research fellows at the Tobacco Control Research Group. Welcome, both of you. Hi. So let's kick off, you know, with the basics. Karen, what actually is tobacco control regulation? And why is it so necessary?

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**Karen**

So, tobacco control to me, is any kind of policy or regulation that we put in place in order to kind of reduce the burden of tobacco use. So things like advertising bans, smoke free policies in public places so you can't smoke in doors anymore. Plain packaging for tobacco products. So where we used to have really beautiful branded, packets, we don't do that anymore

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in this country at least. Sort of banning also misleading descriptors on products so things like lights and milds are not in the UK, at least not there anymore. Anything that makes tobacco less affordable. So raising taxes on tobacco products, minimum age of purchase, things like that, and also sort of trying to, reduce the impacts of the illicit trade of tobacco.

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So policies that we can put in place to reduce illicit trade. And then the real big one is sort of keeping the tobacco industry out of policymaking as well.

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**Louis**

So why is it so important to regulate tobacco in this way?

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**Karen**

So tobacco use kills 8 million people every year. And that's, you know, a product that's used exactly as intended, exactly as described. And you're purchasing this product and it can kill you. And I think sometimes we can become desensitised to hearing oh it causes 8 million deaths. But if you really stop and kind of think about what that means, 8 million people die using a product that they're using exactly as the manufacturer intends you to.

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It's insane.

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**Louis**

Yeah, it's an almost inconceivable number. Yeah. Are these laws effective at helping reduce that burden?

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**Karen**

Yes. I think they are. So if you look to countries that have the most kind of comprehensive tobacco control policies in place, have the lowest smoking prevalence and lower smoking prevalence means less kind of disease, less death. So what I mean by comprehensive tobacco control policy means that more policies basically. So there's ad bans. There's plain packaging. There's high taxes.

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High taxes are meant to be considered the most effective way of driving down smoking prevalence. So the more tobacco control policies there are in the country, the lower the smoking prevalence, the less deaths.

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**Louis**

What are some of the countries that are doing well at regulating tobacco?

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**Karen**

Well, you know, you don't want to sound biased, but the UK, Australia, New Zealand, I should say actually that New Zealand was set to become really kind of world leading by introducing a filter tip ban. But upon a change of government in the last year, they've actually gone back on that policy now. And so it's really disappointing for the world of tobacco control, where we would have had a country that banned the filter tips and filter tips.

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So kind of been described as the biggest fraud of the century in terms of the fact that they don't actually reduce, any of the health, harms of, of smoking tobacco. So filters don't actually offer any health benefits. So it's really disappointing that that has happened. But yeah, those are still the countries that are kind of leading the way I would say.

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**Louis**

Britta let's bring you into the conversation at this point. So how much progress has been made around the world in adopting decent tobacco control policies?

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**Britta**

There has been significant progress at the global level and in advancing control policy. So if we, for example, look at like the environment, which is one of the policies, Karen has already described in 2007, according to the WHO, there were only ten countries in the world that had a comprehensive ban. So, for example, and that you are not allowed to smoke in indoor public places, at workplaces and public transport and so on.

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When we then look at the most recent data, which I think is from 2022, there are in 74 countries in the world. And so that is a massive increase. And we could see something similar, for example, with graphic health warnings. There are now over 100 countries in the world with really strong, large and pictorial health warnings. And Karen already mentioned, Karen already mentioned plain packaging and which was first introduced by Australia in 2012.

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And since then a lot of other countries have been moving into that direction. And we now have and 25 countries in the world that have adopted plain packaging, and there are several other ones who are in the process and met to adopt and such a policy as well, in other areas. So in the comprehensive TAPS ban, and it has been a bit less, or it has been a bit more complicated.

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**Louis**

Can I just ask you to

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clarify that Britta, what is a comprehensive TAPS ban?

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**Britta**

So a comprehensive TAPS ban. And so I think we didn't clarify what TAPS are. So that is tobacco advertising and their promotion and sponsorship. So it really when we look at the at the advertisement, it kind of is about banning all kind of direct and indirect advertising of tobacco products. When we look at promotion that is about, for example, giving out free samples, and so on.

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And then when we look at sponsorship, this is really about, banning tobacco companies from sponsoring for example, and music events or, and festivals or something, something like that, or really sports events, that is also something, something that we have where that we have seen. And so so far, there are 66 countries in the world that have a comprehensive TAPS band.

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So it is a bit less than there then compared to then the packaging and also the smoke free environment. And so there is a bit more progress to be made there. And also when we then look more at the taxation, which as Karen already mentioned, is a key policy, and we actually know that it is the most effective policy that helps us to bring down smoking rates and that is one where progress has also been slower.

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And right now we have 41 countries that that have and met or that are compliant with the WHO and FCTC, which so far only covers 12% of the world population. So only 12% of the world population live in a country that is compliant with the kind of best practice and recommended by the WHO FCTC.

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**Louis**

So just to clarify, that's the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, right? Yes. Global piece of regulation, or treaty that that we used to regulate the industry. You've mentioned there, the adoption of different tobacco control policies around the world. How does the industry respond to this kind of regulation? Presumably they're not happy about it.

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**Britta**

Yes, that is that is true. And the industry is indeed considered the biggest barrier to tobacco control programs in the world. And, well, why do they do that? And the answer is pretty simple, I would say,

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because any policies that threaten to or that that would bring down smoking rights threaten their profits. So they are not happy about that.

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And we know that they will use a lot of different strategies trying to avoid the policy from being adopted or try to weaken the policy, try to reframe the discussion around a policy or so in order to achieve their preferred outcome. And that can be not to have a policy or a different policy that is more kind of fair or that fits more with their interests.

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And if we, for example, look then at the different elements of the policy process, for example, with the problem definitions or how is the problem perceived. And the industry often makes an effort to reframe it as if it is an individual problem, act as if we need to kind of address the individual problems, for example, that people and that people who smoke that it is an individual problem rather than it being linked to, for example, their efforts of targeting really aggressively and measure the population through advertising and so on.

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**Louis**

So they make it all about personal choice rather than the sort of systemic issues at play caused by the industry?

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**Britta**

Exactly. So that, we can often see that it, you know, it should be up to the individual and whether they want to smoke a cigarette or whether they don't want to smoke a cigarette, which is an, you know, an interesting argument. But at the same time, I think we also need to remember that when one, for example, looks at the evidence, from smokers or from people who smoke, that many of them would actually like to stop.

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And so we can then ask if somebody is addicted to and smoking cigarettes or is addicted to nicotine, do they really have a free choice to go to the shop and buy a product and or not to do that? Is that a free choice? Somebody who is addicted to nicotine? Anyway, going back to the, to the policy process

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so we can also see then when it is about different policy option, because when we have a policy and problem that has been identified, there can be different solutions to that. So different ways of addressing a problem. And we know that the industry has made a huge effort to, for example, advocate for self-regulation, saying that that is something that is much more effective than having policies implemented.

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by the state. We can also see that they work with a lot of different organisations, to generate pressures on policymakers, for example, to influence the decision on policies. And I'm sure that Karen will talk about it a bit more in the context of the plain packaging but I also wanted to mention that it doesn't stop once the policy is adopted.

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And that is something that we sometimes forget in the discussion, I think, within tobacco control, because once the policy exists, well, we then also need to see that it is properly implemented. And we know that the industry also does a lot of things to try and then weaken the policy, to exploit loopholes and to make sure that it is not implemented as it is meant to be implemented, meaning that then it is not as effective as it could be.

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**Louis**

That's quite an intimidating array of tactics that the industry employs there to undermine regulation.

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**Britta**

One tactic that we can see in a lot of cases are also lawsuits. So legal tactics, maybe most prominent is the case of Australia and the plain packaging, that delay the implementation of plain packaging by several years.

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**Louis**

Thank you Britta. Karen, moving back to you for a minute. So is this a just a contemporary issue with the industry or have tobacco companies been doing this for a long time?

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**Karen**

Well, they've been doing it for a really long time and they're well-rehearsed at it. So the first kind of time that we're aware of that the tobacco industry sort of started up with all these tactics would have been as soon as the evidence emerged that smoking was linked with lung cancer, and those research papers came out in the early 1950s.

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And then as soon as that happened, you saw these, tobacco executives or CEOs of companies in the US sort of scrambling for a response because they were concerned that smokers were going to give up smoking in their droves and that, again, as Britta just mentioned, their profits were going to nosedive, because who wants to use a product that's going to kill you,

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right? So they all met up in, in New York in 1953, December came up with a plan about how they were going to solve this problem, how would they going to keep their customers? And essentially they created a machine disguised as a research center to create research, to try and get to the bottom of the smoking and health problem.

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And that's how they advertised as well. But they were never intending on getting to the bottom of the smoking and health problem. They wanted to find out what are the possible causes could there be for lung cancer and publicise the hell out of those basically. So they kind of came up with this plan with the help of a PR company called Hill & Knowlton.

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And their first step almost instantly was to publish this massive advertisement called the Frank Statement in. I think it was in over 400 newspapers in the US. And in the Frank Statement, they started to cast doubt on the science that had just been published, linking, you know, smoking with cancer. And so it created doubt in loads of people's minds.

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Imagine you're using a product that you think might be harmful, and then these big, powerful people come out, they publish things in newspapers. It's everywhere. And you think, oh, actually it's fine. Maybe, maybe it's fine. Maybe the science is bogus. It's almost like the start of fake news and they did that and spent years, decades reassuring people and casting doubt on the science.



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And then it was wasn't until the 1990s. So the late 1990s, where a US judge ruled that that research center, it was called the Tobacco Industry Research Center and then they renamed it some years later, but essentially that entity had to be disbanded because it had done nothing to get to the bottom of the health issues. All it had done was create PR to cast doubt on science and keep people using tobacco products.

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So they started straight away, you know, in the 1950s, as soon as that, as soon as we started to know that the products were harmful and they've done it ever since. And so that particular tactic is around casting doubt on the science. But they were also paying politicians and influencing any kind of policymaking situation to look for voluntary agreements instead of being regulated.

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But yeah, I always like that kind of example because it kind of paints it as sort of raw as it was then, and then obviously over time, their tactics have become more sophisticated and insidious. But essentially it's all aimed at the same thing to stop people who use their products. They don't want those people to give up.

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They don't want to lose them because they need that money. They're there for profit.

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**Louis**

So how are they using similar tactics today? Is there an example you could give us?

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**Karen**

So I think, a piece of work that I was involved with a few years ago was around plain packaging policy here in the UK, and it was an interesting time for us actually, as a group, because we had just set up [tobaccotactics.org](http://tobaccotactics.org), which was or still is, a website where we were publishing kind of in real time tactics of the industry and third parties.

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So people or groups operating, as if they were independent entities, but actually are some way financially linked to the tobacco industry. We were publishing information about things like that on

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this website. And then in 2011, or sorry, I should say, in 2011, we were conceiving of the website was actually published in 2012, but during that time, the government announced that they were going to consult on plain packaging proposals.

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And at that time.

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**Louis**

So that's the reduction of all that kind of marketing imagery from the packages?

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**Karen**

Yeah. So removing all the branding, standardised colours, standardised fonts, the sticks were all meant to look the same as well, the cigarette sticks, any kind of, tobacco brand name on the sticks was all meant to be in the same sort of standardised font as well, essentially making them really unsexy and unattractive, aimed at kind of stuff, things like young people starting to smoke, and stopping the packet from acting as a piece of marketing, because once all the kind of ad bans are introduced

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the packet really is the last piece of marketing that the industry have, like visible piece of marketing for tobacco products. Yeah. So all of that was, was happening and then this plain packaging, consultation was announced. So a consultation is where the general public and interested parties can respond to a government policy and say whether they think it's a good idea or not, and also present evidence either for or against it.

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And almost as soon as that was announced, the industry went mad and the third parties associated with the industry. We were getting all these headlines in newspapers and Britta touched on this a little bit, and they were saying things like, plain packaging is going to kill the economy, the illicit trade is going to go mad. This is a slippery slope.

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You know, it's cigarettes this week. It's going to be alcohol next week. Maybe further down the line it's going to be baked beans. Everything's going to be in plain packaging. And it kind of it just escalated from there. So as a research group with the fact that we were launching [tobaccotactics.org](http://tobaccotactics.org),

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it was a really good time for us to kind of put that website to the test, because we were then publishing information about who these people were, who the voices were, that we were hearing, how they were linked to the industry.

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For example...

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**Louis**

Was that a challenging environment to be working in? That sounds like it could be intimidating.

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**Karen**

100%. Yeah. I think it was kind of new territory for us, and we did get pushback and we did receive freedom of information requests. We did receive complaints. It wasn't necessarily linked entirely to plain packaging, but, you know, and we, we can't say for sure that it was definitely the industry that was, doing those things to us,

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but we did receive pushback at that time.

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**Louis**

Yeah. You mentioned freedom of information request. Could you just explain what that is and how exactly would you be subject to that?

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**Karen**

So because we work at a university, it's sort of a considered public body and all public bodies is subject to freedom of information legislation. So the industry tends to use freedom of information requests in a, kind of disingenuous way. And this is well documented in the literature as well. They use it to kind of slow down progress.

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So it's another way to kind of delay and disrupt any kind of policy process. And they don't just do it to government bodies, they also do to the people doing the research as well. And obviously for researchers that aren't really familiar with that having happened before. So I was a young career researcher at the time. It is very intimidating.

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**Louis**

So what happened in the end with the plain packaging case after this kind of industry interference and intimidation?

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**Karen**

Well, again, as Britta said, it's a really important point to make that policies still get implemented, but they take such a long time to go through so that, you know, I've really just touched on what's happened at the start of plain packaging. But there were two subsequent consultations the industry submitted to them. And for want of a better word, third parties sort of flooded those consultations with submissions.

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There was also a massive controversy where the Conservative Party hired a PR person to help them through the next general election, but this particular person also was working for Philip Morris at the time. And, plain packaging, the consultation, the first consultation had just come to an end. We were expecting plain packaging to appear in the Queen's Speech, and then all of a sudden it didn't.

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And we think what's happened? And then, lo and behold, we then find out about this PR person who's effectively got the ear of the Prime Minister. I should say at that time, the Prime Minister had denied that he had ever been lobbied by this man on plain packaging. What happened in the end is that Australia had gone ahead with plain packaging, and evidence was beginning to emerge about the effectiveness of the policy.

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And so an evidence review was commissioned and the results of that was sort of irrefutable, really, that it works as a policy. And so the UK government, even though it wasn't announced in the Queen's Speech, it did then have to go ahead and implement the policy. But again, as Britta's alluded to, one of the things that the industry does then they still don't give up.

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So then after we said, yes, okay, we're going to go ahead, we're going to do this. Legal challenges came and I should say that in the ruling, in one of the rulings against the legal challenges which found in favour of tobacco control and against the industry, some of our research was mentioned in that used as kind of evidence that that the industry was just kind of being, as they always are, sort of interfering to it for their own gain.

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And then since then there have been attempts to undermine the policy with things like filter innovation. So one of the things that was not part of the legislation or featured very smally was the actual filter tips on cigarettes. And as I've already mentioned, they're kind of a massive fraud anyway, because they don't reduce the health harms from cigarette smoking.

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But what the industry did was, innovate in a way where they made recessed filters, so they cut out holes in the filters, and then were marketing them in the retail press. So the last place at the industry's allowed to market is in trade press that go to retailers, to advertise what products are available that they can sell to their customers.

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And in those adverts were suggesting that these filters were cleaner, maybe healthier. So appealing to those kind of smokers that actually might have smoked other products that they would have thought were cleaner, that now weren't available anymore. And now also the fact that flavourings have been banned, they are using those, they're using other products so menthol scented products like, filter inserts, you can get these tiny little circulars or cylindrical menthol inserts that you can push into these recessed filters.

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**Louis**

So that's a way of circumventing.

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**Karen**

Absolutely.

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**Louis**

Right.

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**Karen**

Yep.

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**Louis**

Britta, Karen's talked a bit there about industry interference in plain packaging legislation. There's a more recent bill going through UK Parliament, which is the Tobacco and Vapes bill. Can you tell us a bit about that? And whether the industry is interfering in that bill too?

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**Britta**

Yes. Of course. So, in October last year, I think it was that then Prime minister Sunak announced plans of the Government to introduce a new policy which would contain what we call a generational ban and in the policy that is now being discussed, it is basically about anybody who's turning 15 this year, so in 2024, or is younger will never be legally sold any tobacco products.

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And so if that policy was adopted, it looks as if the UK would be the first and country in the world to have such a policy in place. And as you can imagine, from what we have already been discussing, the industry is not so happy about that.

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**Louis**

So obviously we've had a change of government since the introduction of that bill. Is it still on track?

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**Britta**

Well, it seems like it. So, I mean, the bill had been moving quite quickly, so there was a consultation, I believe, between now and November. And in the end of, in the end of last year and then the bill was

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introduced into Parliament. That was then also the first readings, and it was then already at committee stage.

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And when elections were called by the Prime Minister we had then seen in July that the that the Bill was in fact included in the King's Speech. Of course, at the moment we don't know many details that I mean, I don't I don't want to say too much now because I don't know, we will probably release this later

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so we don't know what the situation then will be.

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**Louis**

So obviously this is an ongoing policy moving through Parliament so there's not too much we can say. But just as a final point, presumably there's concerns here about the industry may try to interfere with this policy introduction.

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**Britta**

Yes, there are. And we have already seen some instances where the industry has interfered a lot with that has, for example, been revealed through the work of investigative journalists. So a lot of that is not what we can, you know, just see. So which I think also makes an interesting point about how difficult it is to also study, and to find out about some of the tactics of the tobacco industry.

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And so what we have been seeing so far is that there are a lot of arguments and tactics that are pretty similar to what we have already discussed before. So we can see that there are arguments about how this policy will not work, how it is not enforceable. Also, a lot of arguments around how illicit trade is going to increase.

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And we can see in terms of the tactics, we can see that, there is you know, they have participated in the consultation and, they have made efforts to lobby MPs and also members of governments. There were also some legal threats and so on. So quite a lot of tactics that, that we have already seen before.

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But it also seems that there are some differences. And so far, I mean, we speak now on the 12th of September and there have, for example, been no kind of really big campaigns or what Karen was said was referring to as in the case of plain packaging, when there was a lot of noise that was made.

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So we haven't seen anything like that so far. But as we as we said, it is an ongoing process, so we don't know what will happen within the next, within the next month.

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**Louis**

Yeah. So watch this space. I think this will be a really interesting story to revisit.

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**Karen**

So here in the UK we've been really permissive about harm reduction.

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**Louis**

So harm reduction, that's the idea that a product that is less harmful than cigarettes, for example, could reduce the burden of death and disease if people start using that product. Is that right?

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**Karen**

Yeah, absolutely. And it opens a whole can of worms. And it's a very kind of divisive, topic in tobacco control.

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**Louis**

So these new products which touch on this idea of harm reduction, presumably there's interest in regulating these products. Now is the industry concerned about this?



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**Karen**

Yeah, definitely. Because ultimately it's their profits again, isn't it. So if smoking rates are falling and they've got these new products then they're going to need people to kind of use these products in order to maintain any kind of profit. And so regulating those is going to be unacceptable to the industry. So I'd imagine that we would see the same sort of tactics over again.

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And one of the things that really kind of strikes me is the rhetoric of the industry when they talk about who these products are aimed at. So they say that they're aimed at smokers, current smokers, and they want smokers to if they can stop using cigarettes or tobacco products and move to these, e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products.

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But if that was the case, then as soon as we no longer have those, that cohort, then there would be no new users. And so they need new young users to take up these products in order to keep their profits going, to keep making money so their business doesn't tank. So I find it really disingenuous when they're saying that they're not marketed or not aimed towards new users.

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And I think just on an ad hoc level, like at a personal level, when you walk down the street, you can see that it's not current smokers or not just current smokers that are using these products, lots of young people using them. Also, if you look at the kind of environmental impact of some of these products so, single use vapes are really popular amongst youth also they amazing flavours and things as well.

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And so these regulations that are coming into potentially or potentially coming in to sort of ban flavours, certain flavours and, single use vapes, they're really popular against the key demographic for the industry. So they're obviously going to come and try and stop it from happening.

00:31:34:17 - 00:31:47:18

**Louis**

We've talked quite a lot here about regulation in the UK, which is a high income country. Do we see a difference in industry tactics surrounding regulation in low-middle income countries?

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00:31:47:20 - 00:32:09:09

**Britta**

This is a really important question, because I think we also should not forget that currently around 80% of all people they smoke live in low-and-middle income countries. And we also know that the progress of, tobacco control and policies that we have, we have already discussed, it tends to be slower and also weaker in low-and-middle income countries.

00:32:09:15 - 00:32:42:20

**Speaker 3**

And also if we look at smoking rates, I mean, we have already touched upon and that smoking rates, have declined globally, but there are still some, particularly LMICs that are still grappling with very high smoking rates. So I think it is very important that we look at also what the industry is doing in low-and-middle income countries. Anna Gilmore already touched up on the policy dystopia model that the group has developed to capture industry tactics and arguments.

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And it is worth noting that that model, is based on the literature that existed at that time, and that was predominantly literature, on high-income countries. So I think at some point we counted it and saw that over three quarters of the studies that were included in the model were from high income countries, and there were only a little bit over 10%, from low-and-middle income countries.

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So it is, of course, really important to then also look at whether these, tactics and arguments are actually the same in low-and-middle income countries. So to look into this and see if the policy dystopia model also adequately captured what is happening in low-and-middle income countries, we conducted a study that was based on interviews with advocates and researchers in eight different low-and-middle income countries.

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The study was published in BMJ Global Health in 2021, and what we did find was that the PDM was generally fit for purpose, so that it really captured industry tactics and arguments but there were also some nuances that we felt were quite LMIC specific. So when we look at the industry arguments, we could see that we had,

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00:33:59:22 - 00:34:24:19

Speaker 3

so with the arguments, a lot of participants told us how the industry was using arguments linked to the country's development. So saying how this policy is introduced that will negatively affect the country's development. At the same time, there were also arguments which were quite interesting about how there might be evidence from high income countries that this policy would work.

00:34:24:21 - 00:35:03:05

But it was then argued that, well, that doesn't mean that it is working in our context in the low-and-middle income countries for X, Y, and Z reason. With the tactics we also found that, you know, there were a lot of the tactics we heard about that we also know very well from high income countries. But one of the really interesting findings was that when we look at reputation management, in high-income countries it is often about efforts to rehabilitate the industry's tarnished image in many contexts and in low-and-middle income countries it is more about building and also maintaining a favourable image.

00:35:03:17 - 00:35:32:22

So participants, for example, told us about a wide range of CSR activities like building cancer wards, building a library, renovating a police station, also sponsoring an art exhibition and religious festivals, and so on. And we also heard about a lot of instances where the industry tried to partner with the government in difficult times or in times of crisis, like giving out drinking water during a drought or offering the government support.

00:35:33:02 - 00:35:54:17

In the case of or in the context of the social conflict. And we have seen a lot more of that during Covid 19, for example. And actually not only in low-and-middle income countries. So overall, I would say that industry strategies are similar across the world. But of course, the industry makes an effort to tailor its strategies to specific context.

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And we do think that there are some that appear more common in low-and-middle income countries.

00:36:01:01 - 00:36:21:09

**Louis**

Thank Britta, it's really interesting to hear the ways that tobacco companies are tailoring this kind of interference depending on their on the national context. What can we do about this, Karen? Like

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what solutions are out there to prevent this kind of industry interference from current and any future policies that we might want to introduce.

00:36:21:11 - 00:36:44:20

**Karen**

So I think we've already learned quite a lot. And I think kind of the work of this group and also, you know, colleagues across the world as part of this project that we were involved in a really important and kind of fundamental to starting to deal with this kind of influence and undermining that the industry has managed to do for so, so many decades now.

00:36:45:08 - 00:37:12:01

So outing the tactics, outing the arguments that they use so that when they come up again, because, you know, as we've just been talking about the same sort of arguments come up, tweaked, same sort of tactics come up slightly different. So the more kind of out there they are in terms of, you know, people are aware that these things have happened before and they can recognise that they're happening again.

00:37:12:01 - 00:37:36:01

That will go some way to kind of reducing the validity of those arguments by the industry. It's really important to kind of get those messages out there that, look, they've done this before and they're doing it again, and it's important to get those messages to the right people. So as well as sort of informing the general public, you kind of need to get those messages to policymakers and to government MPs, things like that.

00:37:36:03 - 00:38:12:01

Also, we do have tools at our disposal. So one thing that we haven't actually talked about in much detail here, but the FCTC has an article in it called article 5.3, which is meant to protect all kinds of policymaking or particularly health policymaking from the vested interests of the tobacco industry. And we're getting quite good at health departments, understanding that you shouldn't work with the industry in order to make policies, because, you know, they attempt to water them down and attempt to make them more palatable to the industry.

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But other departments working within governments are somewhat less savvy, particularly in, in lower-middle income countries and things like that. And so I think business departments, trade departments, for example, they will also, you know, need to try and implement 5.3 as well so that they don't engage with industry for policies that would affect their profits.

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00:38:36:18 - 00:38:41:21

**Louis**

So you mentioned the FCTC there. Could you just explain a bit more about what that what that is?

00:38:41:23 - 00:39:07:09

**Karen**

Yeah. So the World Health Organization, I think it was back in the early 2000s, created a treaty for the world's first public health treaty, and it's called the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. It's a really unsexy name. And we call it the WHO FCTC for short. And basically it's brought I think there are now 182 countries that are signed up to it.

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And the premise is that all citizens have a right to health and a right to be protected from the harmful effects of tobacco and within this framework or FCTC, there are a number of recommendations or articles, as they're called, that relate to different sort of policy areas. So, you know, advertising, smoke free places, taxes, industry interference, and it's almost like a rulebook that countries can use to implement tobacco control policies across the world.

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And it's also a fantastic network, so that people involved in tobacco control can really talk to each other and learn from each other. And I think that's another important way to stop the industry. Well, it's the most important way of stopping the industry from undermining regulations and countries being able to learn from each other so that we're putting the most effective policies in place to kind of stop them off their game.

00:40:10:13 - 00:40:19:11

**Louis**

So, Karen, if it's one thing, do you think it's important for people new to this topic to take away? What would it be?

00:40:19:13 - 00:40:46:15

**Karen**

Corporations are out for profit, and anything that is going to harm those profits is going to be unpalatable to them. And so they will do what they can to stop any regulation that's going to affect their profits. And there's an irreconcilable conflict between public health and corporate profits when it comes to harmful commodities such as tobacco.

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00:40:46:17 - 00:40:50:21

**Louis**

Karen Evans-Reeves and Britta Matthes, thank you very much for joining me today.

00:40:50:23 - 00:40:52:18

**Karen**

Thank you.

00:40:52:20 - 00:41:20:24

**Louis**

And as usual, all the sources for today's discussion will be available in the show notes of the episode. We'll be back next week, where we'll be joined by Tom Gatehouse and Andy Rowell to investigate some specific cases of tobacco industry interference and policy influence from the Tobacco Control Research Group. You've been listening to Deadly Industry: Challenging Big Tobacco, hosted by Louis Laurence, produced by Kate White and edited by Sacha Goodwin.

00:41:21:01 - 00:41:34:16

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