



## **Joint Action on Tobacco Control 2 (JATC 2)**

Agreement n°: 101035968 - JA-01-2020 - HP-JA-2020 / HP-JA-2020-2

Work Package 9 – Best practices to develop an effective and comprehensive tobacco endgame strategy (Objective 9.3)

### **Case studies on potential best practices:**

#### **Towards a smokefree generation in 2040**

##### Summary

The National Prevention Agreement “A healthier Netherlands” launched in 2018 addresses the three largest causes of the burden of the disease in the country: smoking, problematic alcohol consumption and overweight. It was agreed with a broad representation of different stakeholders, including patient organisations, care providers, health insurers, municipalities, sports associations, businesses, funds, educational institutions, civil society organisations and central government. As part of this agreement an ambition for a smoke-free generation in 2040 was set. Specifically, this means that no child will take up smoking in 2040 and only 5% of adults will still smoke, and there will be no more women who smoke during pregnancy. The measures focus on creating a tobacco and smoke-free environment, helping people to quit smoking, and making buying cigarettes or tobacco as unappealing as possible. The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) monitors progress to see whether the measures taken are sufficient, which will allow to adjust or introduce new measures.

The case study builds on JATC-2 WP4 [M4.3-M4.4 Guidance on how to identify best practices in tobacco control in Europe](#). It has not been formally assessed as a best practice. Formally assessed best practices are available in the [EU Best Practice Portal](#).



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## Context and justification

In the recent years, the Netherlands has moved to the forefront in tobacco control and in the tobacco endgame approach, that is very different in 2009-2012, when political climate was unfavourable towards tobacco control, existing smoke-free laws were weakened, most of the government's tobacco control operations were closed and the national coordinating tobacco control organisation was disbanded.<sup>1</sup> Historically, industry lobby was very influential and stable. In 2014, the Dutch Alliance for a Smoke-free Society (Alliantie Nederland Rookvrij; ANR) was established by the Dutch Cancer Society, Dutch Heart Foundation and Lung Foundation Netherlands, ANR developed a 'Roadmap towards a Smoke-free Generation' and combined its publication with a mass-media campaign in 2015. A step-by-step approach was used to motivate more societal partners to contribute and join the alliance and speak out in favour of the campaign. In 2016, the Youth Smoking Prevention Foundation took the government to court for violating Article 5.3. Yearly Smoke-free Generation Awards were given to recognise the work done by municipalities and their representatives to promote the smoke-free message. Since 2016, public support to the Smoke-free Generation was studied yearly.<sup>1</sup>

In 2017, a new government came to power and ANR's lobby succeeded in having the 'Smoke-free Generation' featured in the coalition agreement that was the starting point of the new cabinet's policy agenda: "We support the goal of creating a Smoke-free Generation and will therefore increase excise duty on tobacco". Paul Blokhuis, the new State-Secretary for Health was found to be a strong champion for tobacco control, which provided the long-awaited window of opportunity. A National Prevention Agreement (NPA) was signed by over 70 organisations in 2018.<sup>1,2</sup> One of three sub-agreements within the NPA is the ambition of a Smoke-free Generation in 2040. In the NPA, it is justified noting that smoking is among the three largest causes of the burden of diseases; hundreds of children still become addicted to smoking every week; smoking is by far the most important, avoidable, cause of morbidity and death and it is clearly connected to the demonstrable differences in health between, and among, different population groups in the Netherlands. An overarching justification is provided by providing practical examples of what a healthier Netherlands would look like in 2040.

## Overall goal and specific objectives

A smoke free generation in 2040:

- 0 % prevalence among youngsters aged 18 and below
- 0 % prevalence among pregnant women
- max 5% prevalence amongst the adult population

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<sup>1</sup> Willemsen MC, Been JV. Accelerating tobacco control at the national level with the Smoke-free Generation movement in the Netherlands. *NPJ Prim Care Respir Med*. 2022 Dec 23;32(1):58. doi: 10.1038/s41533-022-00321-8.

<sup>2</sup> The National Prevention Agreement <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2019/06/30/the-national-prevention-agreement>

## Methods

When developing the NPA, the government sought concrete commitment from civil society organisations through a process of ‘thematic round tables’, of which tobacco was one.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco industry representatives were not allowed to be involved in the process. The signed NPA included a broad package of policy measures, which have been further extended since its publication. These include:

- Plain packaging of tobacco products since 2020; plan to implement plain packaging for e-cigarettes and cigars by 2025
- Display ban in supermarkets since 2020, all other points of sale since 2021.
- Reduction in point of sale tobacco and nicotine products; online sales ban since July 2023; ban on sales in supermarkets July 2024. by January 2026 we plan to restrict the sales of e-cigarettes to speciality shops and for all tobacco and nicotine products will plan to restrict the sales to speciality shops by 2032
- Registration obligation for speciality shops by Jan 2025.
- Flavour ban e-cigarettes Jan 2024.
- Several tax raises for tobacco products, in 2020, 2023 and last april 2024.
- Ban on nicotine pouches with more than 0,034 mg nicotine since November 2021
- Smoking ban for outdoor education facilities since August 2020.

Examples of non-legislative actions by others:

- Quit smoking support free of charge by health insurance companies
- Special quit smoking initiatives in 38 low social economic districts
- Voluntarily smoking ban in outdoor playgrounds, petting zoos, sport facilities and outdoor health care grounds.
- Online campaign by doctors against vaping

In 2022, ANR was reorganized and renamed into ‘Health Funds for Smoke-free’ (Gezondheidsfondsen voor Rookvrij; GvRV) into an open network approach, where independent tobacco control ‘coalitions’ (comprising of multiple individual organisations) work around a specific theme such as smoke-free environments, smoke-free sports, health care, smoke-free schools and generic advocacy.<sup>1</sup>

## Coordination and implementation responsibilities

Every organization is responsible for its own actions. Using the National Prevention Agreement, government, the business community, and the healthcare, welfare, education and science sectors can take on these challenges through public-private partnerships, binding agreements and the adoption of innovations.

## Involvement of target population and stakeholders

A broad representation of different stakeholders, and multisectoral approach, is integral to the agreement. Health and supervisory authorities on national and regional level have roles in the development and implementation of the measures.

## Outcomes

In 2024, the first evaluation was carried out<sup>3</sup> by calculating whether the 2040 ambitions would be achieved based on the progress so far. It calculated the situation in 2040 both with and without the agreements. The agreements will result in slightly fewer smokers in 2040 than if there had been no agreements. According to the calculations, around 10% of adults will still smoke, exceeding the ambition of 5% or less. Without the agreements, this would be 13%. Also, 4% of children aged 12–16 will still smoke, despite the ambition to reduce the number of young people smoking to zero by 2040. More measures are necessary to achieve the ambition. RIVM has proposed as an example additional price increases to be introduced on top of the previously agreed increases.

## Monitoring and evaluation

The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) monitors progress to see whether the measures taken are enough to achieve the aims set in NPA.

## Sustainability and funding

The government attributes resources up till 2025. The current government is continuing the ambition of smoke free generation in 2040. However it has to deal with tight budgets and is currently studying priorities in tobacco control. The enforcement of measures taken in the past years has a big impact on the capacity of the enforcement agency.

## Equity and ethical principles

The network and the working groups adhere to the Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC by not accepting participants from entities that are affiliated with the tobacco industry or front groups.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rivm.nl/en/news/national-prevention-agreements-impact-on-smoking-overweight-and-problematic-alcohol>