

Stronger tobacco control policy in the Netherlands would save thousands of lives

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A new study shows that 145,000 deaths could be averted in the next 30 years in the Netherlands by implementing stronger tobacco control policies. This set of policies, as recommended by the MPOWER report of the World Health Organisation, consists of increasing tobacco taxes to 70% of the retail price, bans on smoking in workplaces and public places, a complete marketing ban, well-funded tobacco control campaigns, graphic health warnings, youth access laws, and comprehensive cessation treatment.

The study, published online today in the journal *Addiction*, is an output of the European Commission funded project "Pricing Policies and Control of Tobacco in Europe" and uses the SimSmoke Tobacco Control Policy [Simulation Model](#). Developer of the SimSmoke Model Dr David Levy, from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation: "The implementation of MPOWER recommended policies could be expected to show similar or even larger effects in other countries which currently have weaker policies than the Netherlands."

Implementing stronger tobacco control policies is an obligation under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which was ratified by the Netherlands in 2005. However, instead of implementing stronger tobacco control policies, the current [Dutch government](#) plans to minimize them. From next year the Dutch government will no longer fund mass media campaigns about smoking. Reimbursement of pharmacological support for [smoking cessation](#), introduced last January, will end in 2012. Shortly after her appointment, the Minister of Health

decided to reverse the smoke-free legislation in small bars without employees, reintroducing smoking in these venues. Moreover, the Dutch government is not planning to increase [tobacco taxes](#), strengthen the ban on tobacco marketing, or implement graphic health warnings on cigarette packets. The government will also no longer provide funding to the Dutch Expert Centre on Tobacco Control STIVORO.

Lead author Dr. Gera Nagelhout, from STIVORO and Maastricht University: "We understand that budget cuts are necessary in times of global economic recession. However, several of the [tobacco control](#) policies from MPOWER do not cost any money and are very effective. SimSmoke predictions show that 41,000 of the predicted 145,000 lives saved between 2011 and 2040 can be achieved by increasing tobacco taxes alone. The increased revenues from tobacco taxation can be used to continue reimbursement of smoking cessation medications, which can save another 38,000 lives."

Provided by Wiley

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