

# Cash cuts increase smoking death risk for world's poor, study says

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Proposed funding cuts within the international body responsible for tobacco control will leave the world's poorest countries more vulnerable to smoking-related diseases, a study suggests.

As many as 80 countries from the [developing world](#), such as Paraguay, Rwanda, and Kyrgyzstan, could effectively be excluded from the forum tasked with reducing global tobacco use should the cuts go ahead.

The [World Health Organisation's Framework Convention](#) on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is considering cutting its funding for delegates from poorer countries to attend meetings.

Parties to the FCTC are currently meeting in Seoul, South Korea. The conference is the main forum for tackling smoking-related diseases and is attended by policy makers and [health officials](#) from around the world.

The changes to FCTC funding could leave millions in the developing world, where the number of smoking deaths is rising, exposed to unrestricted [tobacco use](#) and promotion.

Cuts to travel support for delegations from low and lower-middle income countries will threaten the participation of over 80 countries in future FCTC meetings.

The cuts – supported by the EU, Canada, and Australia – would undermine the representation of those countries most at risk, research

led by the University of Edinburgh claims.

High income countries such as European nations are currently experiencing a nine per cent decline in smoking deaths each year. In low and [middle income countries](#), however, smoking deaths are expected to double from 3.4 million in 2002 to 6.8 million by 2030.

The study, published in the journal *Tobacco Control*, found that despite bearing the greatest burden of tobacco-related deaths, developing countries are already under-represented in global governance of tobacco control. In all but one of the FCTC meetings, Europe has provided the most delegates.

Professor Jeff Collin of the University of Edinburgh, who led the study and is attending the FCTC meeting in Seoul, said: "While the temptation to cut back on travel costs is understandable, in this context it seems profoundly misguided. The cost of supporting developing countries' participation in the FCTC is tiny compared with the catastrophic impacts of tobacco in these countries. The establishment of an appropriate travel policy is central to ensuring an FCTC that is fit for purpose, and must be prioritised within efforts to mobilise resources."

While annual deaths attributable to tobacco exceed those from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined, development assistance for those three diseases is 300 times greater than the total for tobacco control.

**More information:** [tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content ...  
rol-2012-050849.full](http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/.../rol-2012-050849.full)

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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