

Global tobacco control – implementation and effectiveness

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The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing more than 7 million people a year. As WHO estimates, around 80% of the 1.1 billion smokers worldwide live in low- and middle-income countries, where the burden of tobacco-related illness and death is heaviest.

Unless urgent action is taken, the number of smokers worldwide will continue to increase. Tools such as the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) can play a pivotal role in curbing the global tobacco epidemic. Currently, 181 countries are parties of the FCTC. The FCTC is included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where it is recognised as one of the “means of implementation” to reach the overall health goal (SDG 3) and a target on non-communicable diseases. However, while progress in implementation of the FCTC has been made in recent years, there is still scope for improvement regarding implementation, enforcement, and surveillance.

The International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (the ITC Project) is the first-ever international cohort study of tobacco use (<http://www.itcproject.org/>). Its overall objective is to measure the psychosocial and behavioural impact of key national level policies of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The ITC Project is a collaborative effort with international health organizations and policymakers in 29 countries so far from all around the globe, including Germany. Data from the ITC project can be used to comparatively study implementation and effectiveness of tobacco control measures in participating countries.

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