

# GET READY FOR PLAIN PACKAGING

No logos, colours,  
brand images  
or promotional  
information

Pack surfaces in  
a standard colour

Brand and product  
names in a standard  
colour and font



Graphic health  
warnings used in  
conjunction with  
plain packaging



World Health  
Organization

**31MAY:WORLDNOTOBACCO**DAY

[www.who.int/world-no-tobacco-day](http://www.who.int/world-no-tobacco-day)

**#NoTobacco**



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**Any queries regarding this document should be addressed to: [tfi@who.int](mailto:tfi@who.int)**

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## May 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 World No Tobacco Day

Tobacco packaging is a mobile billboard promoting consumption of tobacco products. Tobacco packaging makes products more attractive, advertises and promotes tobacco consumption, distracts from health warnings and deceives people into thinking that some products are less harmful than others.

If you strip back the decoration, gloss and misleading elements of tobacco packaging, you are left with little more than a box of deadly and addictive products that kills approximately 6 million people a year and harms the health of many more. Plain packaging helps reveal the grim reality of tobacco products.

## What is plain packaging?

Plain packaging (also called standardized packaging) refers to “measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style (plain packaging)”.<sup>1</sup>

Plain packaging has also been described as packaging that is “black and white or two other contrasting colours, as prescribed by national authorities; nothing other than a brand name, a product name and/or manufacturer’s name, contact details and the quantity of product in the packaging, without any logos or other features apart from health warnings, tax stamps and



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other government-mandated information or markings; prescribed font style and size; and standardized shape, size and materials. There should be no advertising or promotion inside or attached to the package or on individual cigarettes or other tobacco products.”<sup>2</sup>

Guidelines for Implementation of Article 11 (Packaging and labelling of tobacco products) and Article 13 (Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship) of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) recommend that Parties consider adoption of plain packaging.



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## Goals of plain packaging

The goals of plain packaging include:

1. reducing the attractiveness of tobacco products;
2. eliminating the effects of tobacco packaging as a form of advertising and promotion;
3. addressing package design techniques that may suggest that some products are less harmful than others; and
4. increasing the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings.

As the WHO FCTC recognizes, tobacco control relies upon implementation of comprehensive multisectoral measures that work together in a complementary way. In this respect, plain packaging is a demand-reduction measure that builds on other measures designed to reduce demand for tobacco products, such as mandatory health warnings and comprehensive prohibitions on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for Implementation of Article 11 (Packaging and labelling of tobacco products) of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, paragraph 46.

<sup>2</sup> Guidelines for implementation of Article 13 (Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship) of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, paragraph 16.

## Status of implementation

In December 2012, Australia became the first country to implement fully tobacco plain packaging. It is now possible to observe the globalization of plain packaging. France, Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have all passed laws requiring implementation of plain packaging from May 2016. Other countries are at an advanced stage of the policy process.

## Evidence justifying plain packaging

A large body of evidence justifies the introduction of plain packaging. Experimental studies, surveys and focus group studies conclude that plain packaging achieves its objectives. These conclusions are supported by three separate systematic reviews of the evidence conducted since adoption of the guidelines to Articles 11 and 13 of the WHO FCTC.

Early evidence of Australia's experience implementing plain packaging suggests that the measure has begun to achieve its public health objectives. The evidence shows that plain packaging in Australia is reducing the appeal of tobacco products, increasing the effectiveness of health warnings and reducing the ability of the pack to mislead. An expert analysis conducted as part of Australia's review found that introduction of plain packaging together with introduction of larger health warnings and new warnings had reduced smoking prevalence in Australia beyond the pre-existing downward trend. Specifically, the report estimated that between December 2012 and September



2015 “the 2012 packaging changes reduced average smoking prevalence among Australians aged 14 years and over by 0.55 percentage points”.<sup>3</sup> According to the model, average smoking prevalence in the post-implementation period would have been 17.77% rather than 17.21% with the changes to packaging. This effect on smoking prevalence is expected to grow over time.

## What should be done?

- Policy makers should consider adopting legislation or regulations to implement plain packaging of tobacco products as part of comprehensive, multisectoral approaches to tobacco control.
  - This process should include establishing a formal plan and timeline for implementation of plain packaging, in line with each Member State’s tobacco control programme and priorities.
    - In some cases, to prepare for plain packaging, policy makers may:
      - strengthen health warnings;
      - strengthen bans on misleading packaging and labelling;
      - ensure that bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship are comprehensive; and
      - ensure that each of these measures is well enforced.
    - Policy makers should resist interference in the policy process by the tobacco industry in line with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC and its guidelines for implementation.

<sup>3</sup> Post-Implementation Review Tobacco Plain Packaging, 2016, Australian Government, Department of Health, 26 February 2016, <https://ris.govspace.gov.au/files/2016/02/Tobacco-Plain-Packaging-PIR.pdf>, paragraph 107.

## Resisting interference from the tobacco industry

Countries can expect substantial tobacco industry opposition to plain packaging, including tobacco companies bringing claims against plain packaging before the courts. Australia, for example, successfully defended a claim before its domestic courts and a claim under a bilateral investment treaty, but is still defending claims under the law of the World Trade Organization.

Such industry opposition demands a careful policy design process, but countries should rest assured that the evidence base justifies introduction of plain packaging as part of a comprehensive approach to tobacco control.

## Further information

For more detailed information about designing and implementing plain packaging laws see [www.who.int/tobacco](http://www.who.int/tobacco).





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