

Regulators Should Have Dialogue with Business, says New EU Research

Just after the Eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP8) to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) closed in Geneva on October 6, 2018, a new study in Europe reveals that the public want regulators to be open to dialogue with business, and that more fairness and credible evidence is needed in policy-making.

Commissioned by Geneva-headquartered tobacco maker JTI International and conducted by Populus with Ipsos, the research found that of the 8,473 respondents surveyed across eight European countries, an average of:

- 72% believed that it is either very important or somewhat important that the policy-making process is open to dialogue between governmental authorities and all parties who are potentially impacted by it, including businesses;
- 79% believed that it is either very important or somewhat important that a policy should be introduced based on credible evidence of its effectiveness, instead of a biased assumption it will work;
- 76% would protect the principle of free speech; either actively fighting for the right of someone they disagree with to speak, or passively agreeing with someone they disagree with's right to express their opinion.

8,473 interviews were conducted online among adults living in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and UK between September 28 and October 4, 2018.

Releasing the research findings on October 8, 2018, JTI said that the proceedings at the FCTC COP's echo chamber differ hugely from other UN decision-making bodies such as at the UNFCCC on Climate Change, where businesses are an integral part of discussions, and plenary sessions are public.

"Today's new research shows that the public want politicians and officials to consider all the facts and viewpoints - including from businesses. Ousting one group of companies from giving their views and sharing their expertise contradicts basic democratic principles and is counterproductive," JTI noted in its statement.

"The public are right that all views must be heard," states Jonathan Duce, Head of External Communications at JTI's global headquarters in Geneva.

"The FCTC COP would have been wise to follow their advice last week, because governments can only make good decisions once they have taken everyone's views into account. The findings of this research are clear: more must be done by governments around the world to restore public confidence in the regulators who make the rules we all abide by. This research has shone a light on what citizens expect from decision-making and shows that people only want policies if they are supported by credible evidence and proven to be effective."