



# Tobacco related initiatives of the Youth Organisation No Excuse Slovenia

## Introduction

Tobacco is one of the biggest threats to health in Slovenia. According to the National Institute for Public Health, it is accountable for 10 premature deaths daily, which in a country of only 2 million inhabitants is a large number. The cost of tobacco use (consisting of health care costs, reduced productivity and premature mortality) is estimated to 5% of the GDP, or 1.8 billion €. Prevalence of smokers in the country is around 25% the age groups between 15 and 64 years.

We approach the tobacco problematic on several different levels, all of which are explained in this document:

1. By training our activists in a safe environment, we equip them with competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) to become active citizens, that strive to change society for the better. This approach also reduces the possibility of them developing addictive behaviour and thus, tobacco use.
2. By raising awareness in primary and secondary schools, we try to increase the knowledge on harmful effects of tobacco use, the tactics employed by the tobacco industry and denormalising tobacco use. With this information we strive to alter the attitudes of youth towards tobacco and deter them from tobacco use (or at least delay the onset).
3. We engage in research activities, where we try to uncover the compliance of tobacco distributors with the law. In the research we mainly focus on sales of tobacco products to minors and advertising of tobacco products.
4. We advocate for a stronger tobacco control legislation.

All of our programmes and activities aim to be evidence-based and in accordance to the WHO FCTC (WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control) and the MPOWER measures. For the sake of clarity, all the programmes and initiatives will now be presented separately, even if there is substantial overlap between them.

## Activist programme

### Background

The theoretical background of our school-based programs and youth activist work is based on the guidelines of the European drug prevention quality standards (EMCDDA) and Slovenian guidelines: Quality Standards for Drug Prevention Programs. Guidelines state that evidence-based prevention programs should focus on the development of social skills, the development of drug prevention skills, the development of decision-making skills and the correction of wrong normative assumptions among young people.

The activities are also in accordance to the European health strategy 2020 and National resolution on healthcare plan 2015-2025, especially as we tackle the priority areas 1 (by empowering and engaging youth) and 2 (by addressing the largest preventable cause of non-communicable disease).

### Goals and objectives

Overall goal is to move towards a society without tobacco. With that end goal in mind, we have set several SMART objectives that apply to this area of our work:

- To educate and empower our volunteers (that pass through a 1000-hour educational programme) to become active and critical-thinking citizens.
- To prevent smoking or at least delay the onset of smoking in our volunteers
- To advocate for comprehensive tobacco regulation in accordance to the FCTC

### Indicators

- Number of activists that passed through the programme: 613 young people completed a 1000-hours program up to this date
- Number of sessions held per year: over 1000 thousand in average
- Percentage of smokers of our volunteers: less than 5%

### Methodology

Program for Activists starts when a new member joins No Excuse. It lasts for 3,5 years, which means 7 seasons (4 seasons, which take place from February to August and 3 seasons, taking place from September to January) The student usually joins the program in the 1st year of high school (with 14 or 15 years) and thus becomes a novice in the program for Activists. During the program they are offered different roles, which helps them to personally grow: novice, activist, tutor, helper to the leader. After the program is completed for certain activist, they have an opportunity to enter a Program for Leaders of No Excuse, which is focused on getting mostly leadership skills and experiences.

The aim of the Program for Activists of No Excuse Slovenia is for young people to achieve certain goals, develop skill and obtain knowledge that will help them in the future on their personal and professional path. Activists obtain new competences in 4 different ways:

- non-formal training and education
- guided thinking activities
- active participation in No Excuse activities (active participation in local units – preparations and implementations of local initiatives, participation in content areas of public health and sustainable development (like tobacco projects), participation in No Excuse events and international exchanges)
- commitment and functioning in the organization

Following is a brief summary of the Competency Model for the activists containing all the competences that an Activist is supposed to gain during the Program. Some of them are also key for the implementation of the Program O2 Belongs to You (described under the next point).

Competences/ activities for gaining certain competences	Year of the Program in which the competence is gained
Learning of the basics of the fields of action covered by No Excuse	Year 1
Personal professional goals 1a	
Learning about internet, email, doodle and other applications commonly used in organizational work - digital literacy	
Learning about icebreakers and energizers – games commonly used in youth organizations internationally	
Active listening	
Giving and accepting constructive criticism	
History and Terminology in No Excuse Slovenia	
<b>Training on the field of Tobacco</b>	
<b>Basics of the rhetoric</b>	
Use of online social networks	
Silent coaching	
Stress and coping with stress	
Understanding the feelings of others	
Personal professional goals 1b	
Criticise – suggest – act #1 (as active citizens we are learning to also act and change, not just criticize)	
Advocacy among peers	
Time management	
Finding challenges and solutions in the local environment	
Learning more about content of Public health and Sustainable development issues	
Training on the field of Alcohol	
Motivation	
Using Google docs and Dropbox in daily life	
Criticize - suggest - act #2	
Theoretical background of advocacy	
Training on the field of Cannabis	
Advanced rhetoric	Year 3
Creative thinking	
Group work and the dynamics of the group	
Evaluation – why it is important in youth work and how we do it properly	
Accepting responsibility and making decisions	
Youth sector in Slovenia	
Conflict management and problem solving	
Submitting opinions and concluding compromises	
Mindfulness	Year 4
Media advocacy	
Youth sector in the broader field	Year 4
Project management	
Methods for building a group spirit	
Criticize - suggest - act #3	
Personal professional goals #2	Year 4
Integrity	

### Target population

The target population for recruitment are as stated before 14 and 15 year olds. We promote our activities online through our website, Facebook page, Instagram and through presentations at high

schools. Most activists join due to the promotion in high schools, however we are open to any young person in that age group.

### Adapting during implementation

This type of work requires a lot of improvisation and adaptation. Firstly, we needed to adapt throughout the years and evolve the programme. We have included sessions that the members deem important (for example: digital competencies) and excluded some others. We try to keep in touch with the times and try to keep the programme relevant to the members and the demands of society.

Secondly, there is improvisation needed during the implementation of the programme. Working with youth always has certain amount of unpredictability, higher than working in a more professionalised sector, like cancellations and abstentions. We have several mechanisms in place, with which we make sure that our members learn through their experiences and have a second chance.

### Stakeholder involvement

There are several stakeholders involved in this process: activists (members), employees, participants of school based programmes and national/local government.

- Activists are included in the process from start to finish. They follow a program, consisting of 1000 hours that include training in soft skills, project management, youth work (including non-formal education techniques) workshops on tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and sustainable development. Not only are they the recipients of this knowledge, they also play an active role in learning by choosing and overcoming personal challenges, providing a service to the community by conducting school-based programmes, research and engage in advocacy activities. They frequently evaluate their own involvement in the programme and suggest improvements. When they finish with the course, they have the possibility to engage in the Leadership programme, where they can lead this process for the younger generations. Even though this process is predetermined we try to give as much responsibility and ownership of the process to the activists.
- Employees serve as guides of the experienced activists and keepers of the quality of the process. Most often they supervise the activists and organise training sessions for them.
- Participants of school-based programmes are described below.
- National and local governments finance our programme through grants.

### Estimation of human resources, materials and budget requirements

For this programme to work, it is essential that we have a secretary general, who takes care of administrative tasks and the supportive role of employed youth workers and public health associates, who take care of the quality and the content of training and knowledge transfer. Right now, there is one person employed as the secretary general, three people as youth workers and two public health associates. In addition to that, there is a team of 15 experienced young leaders who take on leadership roles and organise events for around 50 younger activists.

Other materials include maintenance of the office, where the employees work and all the costs connected to the activities (renting venues and accommodation for events, food, training materials, publications etc.).

Other budget requirements include transportation, rent, accommodation, training and other services costs, which altogether with other above-mentioned costs reach about 180-200 thousand euros a year.

### Results of the practice

So far, there have been over 600 individuals that have passed through the 1000 training programme that nowadays exhibit less prone to addictions and have a skillset, making them more employable, active citizens.

## School-based programmes

### Background

The theoretical background of our school-based programs and youth activist work is based on the guidelines of the European drug prevention quality standards (EMCDDA) and Slovenian guidelines: Quality Standards for Drug Prevention Programs. Guidelines state that evidence-based prevention programs should focus on the development of social skills, the development of drug prevention skills, the development of decision-making skills and the correction of wrong normative assumptions among young people.

The activities are also in accordance to the European health strategy 2020 and National resolution on healthcare plan 2015-2025, especially as we tackle the priority areas 1 (by empowering and engaging youth) and 2 (by addressing the largest preventable cause of non-communicable disease).

The school-based programmes are divided into two different activities:

- O2 belongs to everyone: A session on harmful effects of tobacco and tobacco industry tactics that lasts 45 minutes
- Martin Krpan (a name of a Slovene fairy-tale hero): A more comprehensive programme that consists of 5 sessions per year for 3 years (one of which is O2 belongs to everyone) and others focus on life-skills such as decision making, stress management, time management, communication etc.

### Goals and objectives

Overall goal is to move towards a society without tobacco. With that end goal in mind, we have set several SMART objectives that apply to this area of our work:

- To increase knowledge of harmful effects of tobacco of 12 and 15-year olds
- To change attitudes of 12- and 15-year olds regarding tobacco use
- To prevent smoking or at least delay the onset of smoking of the participants
- To reduce the overall tobacco use in the country

### Indicators

Process indicators:

- Number of O2 workshops (in total) - over 6500
- Number of students reached with the O2 workshops - over 135 thousand
- Number of Martin Krpan programmes - over 150 repetitions
- Number of students reached with Martin Krpan programmes - over 2500

Outcome indicators:

- Raise in knowledge on harmful effect of tobacco
- Changed attitude towards tobacco products
- Drop in youth tobacco use (according to ESPAD report 2015), which cannot only be credited to our activities

## Methodology

The O2 for everyone is a peer-to-peer programme in duration of 45 minute (one school hour). They are performed by our activists in 7<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school (12 years olds) and in 1<sup>st</sup> grade of secondary/ high schools (15 years olds). In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade they focus mostly on the reasons why young people smoke and whether these reasons are valid and how to achieve a similar effect in a healthier way (for example it is much better to do yoga, talk with friends, play with your pets to calm down than to smoke), while in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of high schools we focus more on new tobacco and nicotine products and why they are not better than conventional cigarettes (more and more young people in Slovenia smoke roll-your-own, water pipe, e-cigarettes). In both “versions of the workshop” we use most of the time for introducing the tobacco industry and their immoral tactics.

### The Session agenda:

1. Brief introduction
2. Recognition of toxic substances (what kind of chemicals can we find in cigarette smoke, what is their purpose, how many of them are carcinogenic)
3. attractive effects of smoking (why do young people smoke? Why might smoking be good?)
4. Debunking myths about positive effects of smoking
5. Negative effects of smoking and what is second-hand smoking
7. Brief history of tobacco (how did it come in Europe and how did it become so largely used)
8. Tobacco industry with film (their manipulation, lies, marketing, why they want young people to smoke and how they convince them)
9. Conclusion

In the Martin Krpan programme, the layout and the methodology of the sessions is similar, however the session content is different. The session titles include:

#### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade:

1. Getting to know each other and ground rules  
Aim: The facilitator connects with the participants and establishes trust, that is a basis for further work.
2. Teambuilding  
Aim: The participants experience team-work and connect with each other better.
3. Effective communication  
Aim: The participants understand the importance of effective communication and the main barriers of effective communication
4. Emotional literacy 1: experiencing, expressing and identifying emotions  
Aim: The participants reflect on how they experience and express emotions (positive and negative ones), they understand the meaning of emotions and train identifying emotions.
5. Emotional literacy 2: managing emotions and empathy  
Aim: The participants develop empathic thinking and learn to manage negative emotions.

#### 8th Grade:

1. Self-esteem  
Aim: The participants understand the importance of healthy, stable self-esteem and develop it by focusing on positive traits.
2. Peer belonging and peer pressure  
Aim: The participants realise the influence of their peers on their behaviour and the negative consequences they might hold. Additionally, they train how to avoid negative peer pressure.
3. The influence of media  
Aim: The participants develop a critical attitude towards media, advertisement and posts that influence our perception and behaviour. They understand the negative consequences that the media can have.
4. O2 belongs to you (as explained earlier)
5. Conflict resolution  
Aim: The participants understand the meaning and importance of conflicts and learn how to address them in a constructive way.

#### 9th grade:

1. Bullying and peer-violence  
Aim: The participants learn about the phenomenon of bullying, its consequences and develop techniques to avoid and prevent it.
2. Youth and alcohol  
Aim: The participants critically think about harmful effects of alcohol use, its consequences on individuals and society.
3. Stress 1: Identification  
Aim: The participants assess their stressors and how they react in a stressful situation. They understand that stress can be normal and how to deal with it when it is overwhelming.
4. Stress 2: Management  
Aim: The participants understand that stress can be normal and how to deal with it when it is overwhelming.
5. Creative thinking:  
Aim: The participants develop their abilities to think creatively and understand the importance of creativity in everyday life.

#### Target population

The target population for these interventions are, as mentioned before, 12- and 15-year olds in primary and secondary schools. We get in touch with them through contacting the schools.

We collaborate with 204 elementary and high schools (almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  of all Slovenian school) to deliver the sessions. We strive to cover as many geographical areas throughout the country and we rotate between schools to keep up with the demand for our sessions.

#### Adapting during implementation

Similarly to the activist programme, there has been some development of the content throughout the years (a good example of that is adding e-cigarettes to the agenda, as it is a relatively new product on the market). Additionally, the O2 belongs to everyone has evolved into the Martin Krpan programme as we were advised to create more comprehensive addiction prevention programme.

Overall, there is less improvisation needed in this line of work than in the activist programme, as the environment is more structured and we collaborate with more “official” institutions (schools). Therefore also our activists, who conduct the sessions (mostly the O2 belongs to everyone), display more responsibility and reliability.

### Stakeholder involvement

- Activists are the ones who conduct most of the school-based programmes. They also frequently provide suggestions on how to improve the programmes and implement them.
- Employees are the ones who design completely new content. They also conduct the more complex school-based programmes (Martin Krpan), that consist of more than one session. They sometimes help train and prepare the activist for delivering the sessions in schools.
- Participants of school-based programmes are the main benefactors of this activity. They are engaged through interactive sessions and are given the space to discover and discuss important topics ranging from harms of tobacco use to important life skills (such as decision making, time management). They also provide feedback and help improve the programmes for future years.
- Schools are an important stakeholder serving as a channel to get to the youth. They offer us access to the participants and an environment for our programmes.
- National and local governments finance our programme through grants and conduct reviews of our programmes, serving as a quality control mechanism.
- Public health experts provide the latest data, trends and guidelines. They are also frequently consulted on the quality and relevance of the programme.

### Estimation of human resources, materials and budget requirements

Similarly to the activist programme, there is one person who is taking care of the administrative tasks (such as contacting schools, creating schedules etc.) and then a couple of youth workers (with background in psychology) that develop and conduct the more comprehensive programmes and support the activists by giving advice and offering tutoring and extra training. In addition to that, there is a team of 15 experienced activists who take on leadership roles and organise events for younger activists.

Other materials include maintenance of the office, where the employees work and all the costs connected to the activities (renting venues and accommodation for events, food, training materials, publications etc.).

Here is where optimization of resources comes into play, as the administrative employees and youth workers are the same ones as in the activist programme. Conducting the school-based prevention interventions is also a part of the activist programme, enabling a double stream of learning to develop (one of the participants of the school, who learn about tobacco and the other for our activists who learn about teaching, organising, contributing to society etc.)

### Results of the practice

With this practice we have reached over 135.000 participants over the last 12 years. These participants now have a smaller chance to start smoking and can make healthier decisions in life. Additionally, a result of the development of this practice has been a new product that we offer: a comprehensive addiction-prevention programme, called Martin Krpan.

## Mystery Shopping

### Background



Mystery Shopping is a research method that we use to get data for advocacy purposes. It is an important mechanism to ensure the adherence to the law and is as such also defined in the Restriction on the Use of Tobacco and Related Products Act.

It is a supporting activity for one of the “best buys” of tobacco harm prevention: limiting access to tobacco products.

### Goals and objectives

Overall goal is to move towards a society without tobacco. With that end goal in mind, we have set several SMART objectives:

- To uncover the adherence to the law regarding selling tobacco products to minors
- To raise the adherence to the law regarding selling tobacco products to minors

### Indicators

Process indicators:

- Number of Mystery Shopping events/attempts: over 120 attempts

Outcome indicators:

- Passing of a progressive tobacco law in 2017 (Restriction on the Use of Tobacco and Related Products Act) that includes licencing for the sales of tobacco products.

### Methodology

This is a method is a variation of the Mystery Shopping method that is frequently used in retail business: a person poses as an ordinary customer, attempting to buy a certain product. Then they evaluate how the client was treated by the personnel and feedback is given to the company. In our edition, an under-aged activist poses as an ordinary customer, trying to buy a pack of cigarettes and checks if the salesperson will ask for the ID and/or will sell the cigarettes to the minor.

There are two variations of this method that we have used throughout the years, depending on whether an inspector from the Market Inspectorate has been present:

1. With an inspector:

When the attempt to purchase is made and is “unsuccessful” (the sales person checks the ID and does not sell the tobacco products to the minor), the activist thanks the salesperson for respecting the law and there is no further action.

When the attempt is “successful” (either the salesperson does not ask for the ID and sells the cigarettes or asks for the ID and sells the cigarettes despite seeing that a minor is trying to buy them), the inspector enters the scene and asks to see the ID. Upon finding that the product has been sold to the minor, the inspector proceeds to penalise the salesperson (and the company they represent), while the activist can leave the scene.

This type of Mystery Shopping is for encouraging adherence to the law and research purposes.

2. Without an inspector:

The underage activist works in tandem with an older activist. The procedure is similar, the only difference is that if the attempt is “successful” no further action is taken. The older activist is there to record the result. This type of Mystery Shopping is for research purposes only.

It is important to note that all underaged activists have a signed consent form from their parents or legal guardian that allows them to participate in this activity.

In both cases, the result of the attempt is recorded and the tobacco products (with the receipts) are kept as proof. We later use this information for our advocacy and media campaigns.

#### Target population

The main target population are decision makers and policy makers, and to a lower degree the salespeople of the tobacco products.

The main aim so far was to gather the information on the “success rate” of our purchases and use it to convince the policy makers to draft stricter regulations (to add licencing for the sale of tobacco products to the new law) and the decision makers (members of parliament) to pass the stricter regulations.

#### Adapting during implementation

This activity has been one of the most challenging ones for our members. Often it happens that the salespeople react emotionally and aggressively when they are caught and penalised for breaking the law. These emotions often target the activists, as they get blamed for “conning” the salesperson. This is the reason we have developed a comprehensive protocol for the Mystery Shopping that firstly aims to protect the activists. In the protocol it is defined that the inspector and the activist enter the scene separately and appear to not know each other even after the sale. Furthermore, as soon as the transaction is complete and the activist shows the ID to the inspector, they are advised to leave the scene immediately. Additionally, there is always an older, more experienced activist or even an employee prepared on to talk over the phone or in person if the activist feels distressed. If the activist does not want to continue with the purchases, their will is respected.

#### Stakeholder involvement

- The under-age activists conduct the research in tandem with an employee or a member of the Market Inspectorate. They are the key participant in this activity, because they enable us to measure compliance of tobacco distributors with the law. Their feedback is also invaluable to improve the process.
- Employees provide training and support (logistical and emotional) for the activists. They are also the ones who design the research in collaboration with other partners.
- The Market Inspectorate of Slovenia is sometimes involved in the Mystery Shopping activities as the responsible surveillance institution for the sale of tobacco products. They ensure that any defiance of the law is registered and penalised.
- The Faculty for Social Sciences provides technical support and expert advice for a large-scale mystery shopping research that is currently in motion.

#### Estimation of human resources, materials and budget requirements

There are less professional personnel needed from our side to conduct this activity. There is usually one coordinator (who is an employee- one of the public health associates) and several activists (up to 10 per “action day”- the day when this activity is performed, usually 6 times a year). It is also the coordinators job prepare the activists, coordinate with the Inspectorate and later to review the results and make a report.

The additional budge requirements are transportation costs for activists and funds for the tobacco products. This sometimes poses a difficulty, as we cannot justify buying tobacco products to the grant-providers.

## Results of the practice

The results of the researches have thus far always shown an extremely low adherence to the law. Over 90% of the attempts to buy the tobacco products were successful. With this data, we have advocated for the addition of licencing for tobacco sales that was eventually added to the new tobacco legislation, adopted in 2017 and is set to take action in 2019.

## Advertisement to children research

### Background

Article 13 of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) calls for a comprehensive ban on all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship (TAPS), including the retail display of tobacco products.<sup>4</sup> Evidence shows that the tobacco industry responds to partial TAPS bans that regulate only certain types of TAPS strategies (such as television or radio) by re-directing their resources to market their brands on unregulated channels such as the point-of-sale (POS).<sup>5</sup> Numerous longitudinal studies have demonstrated that exposure to tobacco product advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that youth will start to smoke.<sup>6</sup> The display of tobacco products at the POS has the same effect and influence on behavior as traditional media advertising.<sup>7</sup> Marketing in retail environments specifically has been shown to increase the likelihood of smoking initiation among youth.<sup>8</sup> One study found that stores where adolescents frequently shop may contain nearly three times as many marketing materials and shelf space for popular tobacco brands.

The purpose of this research was to support our advocacy efforts for one of the "best buys" of tobacco harm prevention: Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

### Goals and objectives

The main goals are explained under the "Advocacy" chapter.

### Indicators

- Number of POS investigations (over 300)

### Methodology

The methodology for this activity is extracted from the document: Technical Report on Tobacco Marketing at the Point-of-Sale in Five Slovenian Regions, published here: <http://www.takeapart.org/tiny-targets/#download-section>

The following report describes a study about tobacco marketing at the point-of-sale in the Slovenian regions of Osrednjeslovenska, Podravska, Obalno-kraška, Jugovzhodna, and Gorenjska. The work was led by the Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH). IGTC partnered with No Excuse, a youth and public interest organization based in Slovenia, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), an international tobacco control advocacy organization. No Excuse provided guidance and context about the sampling framework and recruited local data collectors to record observations. IGTC designed the survey instrument and data collection protocol, and CTFK trained the data collectors to gather data and submit daily reports for review in real-time. The CTFK study team was in Ljubljana for training and data collection period to troubleshoot any logistical or technical issues. Data cleaning, validation, and analysis were carried out by IGTC.

This study surveyed tobacco retailers in the regions of Osrednjeslovenska, Podravska, Obalnokraška, Jugovzhodna, and Gorenjska, Slovenia. No Excuse identified and selected primary and secondary schools within each city which were then plotted on a map. Schools and neighborhoods were selected based on local knowledge surrounding, retail density, school density; safety, and ease of accessibility for data collectors traversing the city via public transportation.

One hundred and twelve schools were selected and assigned unique identification codes (73 in Osrednjeslovenska, 20 in Podravska, 10 in Obalno-kraška, 4 in Jugovzhodna, and 5 in Gorenjska). An online mapping and distance software was used to define the sampling area radius of 250-meters surrounding each school, ensuring that none of the sampling areas overlapped. The study surveyed a convenience sample of supermarkets, convenience stores, small grocers, kiosks/newsstands/trafikas, cafes/bars, and gas stations.

### ***Survey Instrument***

The survey instrument was designed to address key components of Slovenia's tobacco control law that allows or regulates different types of tobacco product placement, promotion, health warnings, and sales restrictions, as well as known trends in POS marketing that may target youth. The survey also asked whether stores were located within eyesight of the school and provided fields for data collectors to enter the sampling area code, retailer address, name brand of tobacco products displayed or advertised, and other notes or comments about the retailer.

### ***Data Collection Protocol***

Observations and photos were collected from 315 retailers during normal business hours from 13 December through 16 December, 2016. Each data collector received a packet of sampling area maps including the unique school identification code and space to record the addresses of retailers in the area. Street names and radii boundaries were clearly visible on all sampling area maps. Data collectors identified retailers within the sampling area by using the maps to follow a systematic walking pattern, observing all streets within the 250-meters and were instructed to use the nearest intersections and nearby landmarks to better identify the limit of the sampling radius. Retailers that sold tobacco products prompted a request for detailed observations on tobacco product marketing, while only the address, school identification code, visibility from the school, date of observation, and geolocation were recorded for locations that did not sell tobacco products. Data collectors wrote the address of each tobacco retailer they observed on the corresponding sampling area map. Observational data and photos of tobacco product displays or ads were recorded and uploaded to a cloud-based database in real-time within Magpi, a mobile data collection application installed on smartphones. The mobile app automatically captured the date, geographic coordinates, and data collector name for each record uploaded to the dataset. The order of questions and format of response options were designed to facilitate rapid and discrete observation by data collectors. Data collectors also carried paper copies of the survey to use as an alternative to the mobile app in the event of any technical issue. At the end of each day, data collectors reported the address and sampling area code of each retailer they observed by entering information into a spreadsheet hosted on Google Drive. The CTFK study team reviewed these reports daily in order to check the uploaded dataset and ensure that the mobile software application was functioning properly.

### ***Training***

Eight data collectors attended a one-day training on the study protocol on 12 December, 2016 – immediately before the data collection period. The CTFK study team explained in detail the purpose of the study, the current tobacco control law, the survey content, key terms and definitions, the Magpi software application, and data collection procedures. Data collectors were instructed to behave as customers in order to discretely observe the retail environment and capture photos. In order to estimate the placement of products at the eye level of children, each data collector used a

measuring tape to identify a 1-meter reference point on their body. The data collection team was trained to recognize product displays, advertising, promotions, and required health warnings or signs communicating age restrictions. During the training, data collectors participated in a field test of the study protocol to practice using the survey, mobile app, and data collection procedures in nearby retailers.

### Target population

From the perspective of No Excuse, this research was used to extract data that was later used for advocacy purposes, therefore the main target population were policy and decision makers (members of parliament and the ministry of health).

The target population was reached directly (with presenting the data in meetings) and indirectly (by publishing data in the media).

### Adapting during implementation

The protocol for the study was prepared in advance and it had to be slightly adjusted to suit the environment. For example, we added a “trafika” as a possible point of sale and eligible for recording. “Trafikas” are stores that, by size, fit between convenience stores and kiosks/newsstands and are very common in the country.

### Stakeholder involvement

The important involvement here was mostly the collaboration with the IGTC from the JHSPH and the members from CTFK. Their roles are explained in the methodology.

Important stakeholders were also the decision makers and policy makers, who were also the target population of our advocacy activities (more on that is explained later in the document under “advocacy”).

### Estimation of human resources, materials and budget requirements

Most of the technical resources were provided by the IGTC team. No Excuse provided 8 data collectors. Cost included a compensation for the work, reimbursement of transportation costs and meals for the data collectors.

### Results of the practice

This study demonstrates that harmful tobacco products and advertisements are placed in areas that are visible and accessible to minors and near schools. Tobacco products were observed on display in 90.0% of retailers and were advertised in 42.0% of retailers. Brand stretching was also observed in 43.0% of tobacco retailers, and tobacco marketing was visible from outside the POS in half of all retailers that were observed. A wide variety of tobacco brands were available for sale.

With the results of this research we demanded a more comprehensive law that completely ban any kind of advertising, promotion, sponsorship and donations from the tobacco industry. We published the results of the study in January 2017 and the new law was passed a few months later. The law now includes the ban we demanded.

## Advocacy

### Background

Advocacy efforts focus mostly on introducing stronger regulation of tobacco products, the “Best-buys” of tobacco prevention that include:

- Protecting people from second-hand smoke: addressed by our effort to ban smoke-rooms, smoking in cars with children present, keeping smoke-free closed public spaces.
- Warning about the dangers of tobacco use: addressed by our efforts to introduce warning labels and pictorial warnings on tobacco products.
- Enforcing bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship: addressed by our efforts to completely ban tobacco advertising, sponsorship and donations from the tobacco industry and introduce plain packaging.

The activities are also in accordance to the European health strategy 2020 and National resolution on healthcare plan 2015-2025, especially as we tackle the priority areas 1 (by empowering and engaging youth) and 2 (by addressing the largest preventable cause of non-communicable disease).

### Goals and objectives

Overall goal is to move towards a society without tobacco. With that end goal in mind, we have set several SMART objectives that relate to our advocacy efforts:

- To advocate for comprehensive tobacco regulation in accordance to the FCTC that includes:
  - A complete ban on tobacco advertising
  - An introduction of licencing for selling tobacco products
  - An introduction of pictorial warnings in addition to warning labels
  - An introduction of plain packaging
  - A progressive tax increase on tobacco products
  - A ban of smoke-rooms
  - A prohibition of smoking in cars when children are present

### Indicators

Process indicators:

- Number of media posts: over 1000
- Number of press conferences: 17
- Number of meetings with decision makers: at least 45
- Number of inspectorate denouncements: over 100

Outcome indicators:

- Passing of a progressive tobacco law in 2017 (Restriction on the Use of Tobacco and Related Products Act) that includes:
  - A complete ban on tobacco advertising
  - An introduction of licencing for selling tobacco products
  - An introduction of pictorial warnings in addition to warning labels
  - An introduction of plain packaging
  - A progressive tax increase on tobacco products
  - A ban of smoke-rooms
  - A prohibition of smoking in cars when children are present

### Methodology

The advocacy process does not follow one specific model; however, it draws inspiration from many, including (but not limited to) the lessons from the Tobacco Control Leadership Training (conducted by CTFK, JHBSPH and WHO), CANmeds practice, Oxford Handbook of Public Health Practice. We use

well established tools, such as vision setting, problem and root cause analysis, stakeholder mapping, key-message formation, directly advocating to decision makers, indirect advocating through pressure groups and media etc.

An important mechanism for advocacy was a document called the Youth Tobacco Manifesto, which we first published in 2006 and then updated and re-published 4 times since, demanding (among other things) a complete ban of tobacco advertising (including donations and sponsoring from the tobacco industry), introduction of plain packaging and licensing for tobacco product sales and a tax raise on tobacco products.

While it is difficult to systematise our advocacy work, it is best described as: “We were always there.” By that, we mean that anytime there was a debate, discussion, world no-tobacco day, conferences on tobacco use, or any other event, connected to tobacco, we have done our best to attend and support stronger legislation. There have also been times when we exposed certain “experts” that have collaborated with the tobacco industry and made the connection obvious to the public. We have been proactive about putting the tobacco regulation on the agenda of decision makers and policy makers by meeting them in person or hosting press events that tackled this topic. Additionally, we used the data we collected with the research (as described above) to push for stricter tobacco control.

We also formed a strong coalition of partner NGOs in a network that now has over 70 member organisations. This coalition has given us even more reach and credibility in our pursuit of lowering the harm of tobacco.

#### Target population

The main target population of these activities are decision makers, such as members of parliament and other members of the executive branch of government to support stricter tobacco regulation and implement it. This includes changing laws and enforcing it.

Another important target population is the policy makers. These have usually consisted of government officials from the Ministry of Health and experts from the National Institute of Public Health and they have been in charge of drafting the new legislation (and other policies). We have tried to influence the process of drafting policies by providing data from our research and supporting inclusion of best-practice policies from other countries (for example plain packaging).

#### Adapting during implementation

A fundamental principle of advocacy for us has been adapting. As the political landscape of the country changes every few years, there is a need to adapt to new public figures, new interests and new proposals. It goes very similarly with partners. Additionally, tobacco control is a field that keeps developing to keep up with the technological advancements, such as new types of marketing (digital marketing) and even new products (for example e-cigarettes) and new “best practices” are developed on a weekly basis.

This is why we do not stick to a strict protocol or method when it comes to advocacy, but rather keep growing: developing skills, educating our members and nurturing partnerships. Above all, we persevere and live in accordance to our mentality of “always being there” when tobacco is on the agenda.

#### Stakeholder involvement

- Ministry of Health, National Institute of Public Health and the WHO country office of Slovenia were involved in the forming of the new legislation.

- We have collaborated with other NGOs to inform a broader public about the harm of tobacco products and put pressure on members of parliament to pass the more comprehensive legislation.
- Decision makers were involved either directly through meetings where we presented the need for comprehensive tobacco legislation or statements addressing them in parliament sessions. Additionally, we have confronted them in media, applying pressure for passing the law.
- Other experts have helped us by providing data and best practices from abroad. Most notable experts are dr. Hana Ross and Robert Eckford.

Even though the institutions were mentioned before, we would like to point out several individuals who we collaborated with in the last years, mostly in advocacy effort, however they also had a great contribution in other fields of our work:

- Dr. Tomaž Čakš, Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia
- Dr. Helena Koprivnikar, National Institute of Public Health
- Tadeja Hočevar, National Institute of Public Health
- Mitja Vrdelja, National Institute of Public Health
- Dr. Marijan Ivanuša, WHO Slovenia
- Dr. Darina Sedlakova, WHO Slovenia
- Nataša Blažko, Ministry of Health
- Vesna Kerstin Petrič, Ministry of Health

#### Estimation of human resources, materials and budget requirements

This practice requires experience, skill and a distinct set of attitudes. There are up to three people in the organisation that engage in these activities regularly, however they do not only spend their time on advocacy.

#### Results of the practice

In 2017 we have adopted a new, comprehensive law, that included most of our demands including (but not limited to): a complete ban of tobacco advertising (including donations and sponsoring from the tobacco industry), introduction of plain packaging and licensing for tobacco product sales and a ban on smoking in cars with a child present. To this day we keep fighting for an even stronger legislation and higher tobacco taxation. In 2018 we were formally recognized by the Slovenian Health Minister, Ms. Milojka Kolar Celarc, as an important stakeholder in working towards public health in Slovenia.

#### Communication plan (refers to all the initiatives)

We are communicating the brand No Excuse Slovenia for the last 12 years and we can say that the phrase “No Excuse” (slov. *Brez izgovora*) have become quite a regular phrase among Slovenian youngsters, although in the past it was not used that frequently. Reaching about 50 percent of the Slovenian population in the previous years with our programs (mainly tobacco) definitely left an important impact on Slovenian Youth, so they can recall the name also in their everyday life.

For many years we were not working with any professional communication company as they were all mainly working with tobacco industry and none of them were keen to support our critical social marketing campaigns attacking tobacco companies, but times are changing – we are in the process of co-establishing one social marketing agency with a well-renowned Slovenian marketing company.



Our PR strategy was always straight to the point and critical with no compromises, which made us attractive to the media and public, but also facing a lot of negative criticism in social media posts and direct attacks from some media outlets that have suffered from our honesty. The media coverage of our activities has been tremendous over the years, with over 1000 features in traditional and digital media. Without this transparency and direct approach, we would never get the new tobacco control law in such extent as many of malware practices from important stakeholders would never be exposed.

Basically, while with young people we wanted to keep the profile low, exposing primarily the brand "O2 belongs to you" and secondarily "No Excuse", in public (media, conferences, formal meetings etc.) we only used the brand No Excuse Slovenia in order not to confuse the public. Therefore, if you ask the general public, they haven't heard about O2 belongs to you, while if you ask schools employees, pupils, students and other concerned individuals and groups (experts, former activists etc.), they would recall the brand easily.

Last but not least, in the last 5 years we have started with a hashtag lifestyle movement #noexcuse4life (for now only among internal public), which builds up on the awareness that once trained on the No Excuse values, skills and knowledges, there is no way back – both explicitly and implicitly young people no longer see the world as black and white, but understand a number of manipulations that happen in the current system, out of which the tobacco examples is one very important and most easy to understand one. We don't believe in revolution, but in reform and the tobacco control law proved that changes are possible when exploitation happens. Many former No Excuse activities return in our future activities, apply for job posts or are active in other fora in public health, sustainable development or youth work fields, but with a specific view on the world "out there", that has been facilitated with the help of our organization.

#### Final remarks

This document is a summary of 12 years of work, which has included numerous initiatives. It was difficult to summarise everything in a 20-page document, that is why we would like to extend and invitation to ask for any reference, publication or other proof-of a claim made in this document. We will gladly comply with your request.