



PPACTE: Catching the killer



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Professor Luke Clancy
Director General of the Irish Research Institute
for a Tobacco Free Society (RIFTFS)

Background

Tobacco is the single largest cause of avoidable death in the European Union, accounting for over half a million deaths annually. Here in Ireland, more than 6,000 people die from smoking-related disease every year: 95 per cent of lung cancers are caused by smoking. Moreover, regular smokers face an increased risk of heart attack and stroke, and, on average, lose 10 to 15 years from their life expectancy, while pregnant women who smoke can cut off oxygen supplies to their unborn baby.

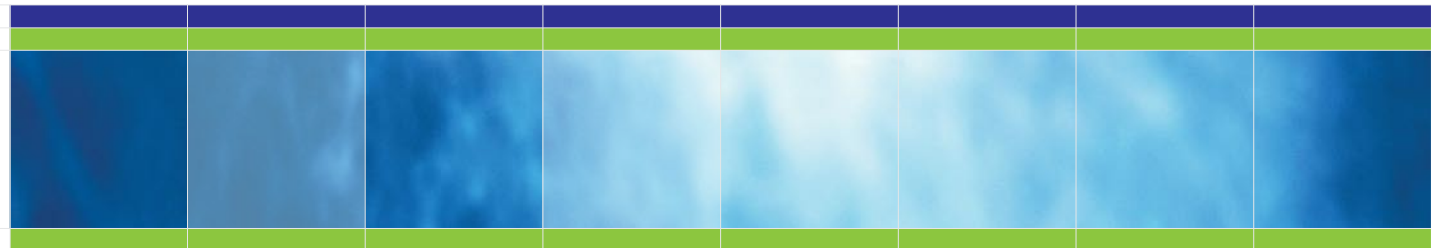
So what is the best way to control this killer? According to the World Bank, money talks: higher tobacco taxes are the single most effective way to reduce use - and consequently reduce cancer - especially for young people and others with low incomes. A price rise of 10 per cent decreases consumption by about 8 per cent in low- and middle-income countries.

But do the same rules apply in the richer countries of western Europe, where disposable incomes are higher? Also, what is the effect of price on smuggling? And what strategies will the tobacco industry devise to counteract increasing prices?

These are some of the questions PPACTE aims to answer. The project, which has secured the largest award for a tobacco control project the EU has ever given, is being led by Professor Luke Clancy, Director General of the Irish Research Institute for a Tobacco Free Society (RIFTFS) - a new institute set up by the government to look at all aspects of research on tobacco control.

Benefits of participating in FP7

Professor Clancy believes that the opportunity to make a difference on a European scale is the most important benefit of leading such a project through FP7. “The aim is to look at the impact of price and taxes on the effect of fiscal policy on tobacco control in Europe and to offer recommendations to Member States and to the European Commission. It concerns the most important intervention there is in tobacco control, and since Ireland has a leadership role in this area, it is a fantastic opportunity to influence EU policy for the future.”



The Framework structure has also allowed RIFTFS to bring together a multidisciplinary team with some of the best health economists in the world under its leadership, including the Lyon-headquartered International Cancer Research Organisation (IARC) in France, a policy expert from the International Union Against Cancer, an economist from the US, an industry expert from the UK and a world leading econometric analyst from Finland.

“Price elasticity - the response of the market to a price rise - varies with the subject and the item,” he explains. “When you are talking about tobacco, which is an addictive product, just putting up the price doesn’t automatically mean that people stop using it. It’s a hugely complex issue to analyse, demanding a lot of skills - many of them not available in Ireland. The consortium we have put together leverages the best people from around the world in one team.”

An additional benefit for Ireland, Professor Clancy adds, is that the project will generate the fulltime equivalent of five high-level jobs here in this country, building research capacity in the area of tobacco control.

Advice to first time FP participants

This is RIFTFS’s first time to lead or participate in a Framework project, and Professor Clancy has two key pieces of advice for other new participants in FP7.

The first is to avail of proposal development support from Enterprise Ireland. “You can read everything available on Cordis, but at the end of the day, its just reams of information,” he explains. “You need to talk to real people who have been through the process before and who are prepared to help nurture the idea and support it financially and in any other way, because great research ideas are nothing in themselves. It’s about putting the package together and making sure that it fits.”

Secondly, once the project is up and running, he recommends buying-in professional project management skills to oversee day-to-day operations, thus freeing up the co-ordinator to focus on the leadership and strategic aspects of the research.

More details

Acronym:	PPACTE
Full title:	Pricing Policies and Control of Tobacco in Europe
Contract type:	Collaborative project for small or medium-scale focused research projects
Number of participants:	8
Coordinator:	Research Institute for a Tobacco Free Society (RIFTFS), Dublin
Project Cost:	€3 million
European Funding:	€3 million
Funding to Irish participant:	€1 million
Website:	www.tri.ie

This series of case studies is designed to provide an insight on participating in the Seventh EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) 2007-2013 from the perspective of both individual researchers and companies that were successfully funded in FP7.

If you are interested in finding out more about participating in FP7 or reading more case studies about the experiences of academic researchers, small & medium enterprises and multinational companies in FP7 visit www.fp7ireland.com The FP7 case study series was produced by the National Support Network for FP7 in Ireland, info@fp7ireland.com

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