Restaurant displays new no-smoking signs. The Union’s ITCS helps identify which key policies, structures and resources a country has in place for sustainable tobacco control.

THE UNION EUROPE REGION IN 2017

THE UNION LAUNCHES AN INNOVATIVE NEW TOOL TO ASSESS THE SUSTAINABILITY OF NATIONAL TOBACCO CONTROL PROGRAMMES

The Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability (ITCS) has been developed by The Union to assist countries to assess national tobacco control programmes, and guide them to become sustainable. It is the first tool of its kind. In 2017 it has been used by countries around the world, including The Philippines and Turkey.

The Index comprises 31 indicators that identify which structures, policies and resources a country has in place for sustainable tobacco control. The indicators encompass key infrastructures: national laws, financial mechanisms, human resource and capacity-building, and measures to insulate public health policy against tobacco industry interference. The Index was developed by the authors of a paper published in BMJ’s Tobacco Control journal: *Index of Tobacco Control Sustainability (ITCS): A Tool to Measure the Sustainability of National Tobacco Control Programmes* (Jackson-Morris & Latif, 2016).

An Index assessment gives countries a clear insight into how well their tobacco control programmes are structured for future impact and resilience. It identifies areas of strength and highlights infrastructural gaps. Completing an assessment gives those leading national tobacco control programmes a clear baseline from which they can prioritise future work. It is a benchmarking tool to track progress towards sustainability. The ITCS was developed to complement the established processes and supports of the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).
In February, The Union issued a statement that it is unacceptable that tuberculosis (TB) was excluded from the World Health Organization’s (WHO) list of antibiotic-resistant ‘priority pathogens’. The Union welcomed a revised report in September recognising TB alongside other pathogens as a global priority for research and development.

The STREAM trial, evaluating the effectiveness of shorter treatment regimens for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, held a community engagement workshop in Georgia, where Stage 2 of the study is taking place. STREAM is a multi-centre international randomised controlled trial implemented by The Union, Vital Strategies and other global partners.

Authors from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and The Union’s Senior Advisor, Research, Prof Anthony Harries, published an article in Conflict and Health calling for protection and safe passage for migrants and refugees who travel along the Western Balkan corridor to Northern Europe. In co-authoring this paper, The Union supports MSF’s efforts to ensure health and security for those most in need.

The first Stephen Lawn Memorial Lectures, ‘An epidemic uncurbed: TB control measures in Cape Town, 1910 to 2010’, was given in London before World TB Day. At the lecture, Prof Anthony Harries from The Union introduced the Stephen Lawn TB-HIV Research Leadership Prize.

At a meeting of partners in the Bloomberg Initiative (BI) to Reduce Tobacco Use, The Union’s Department of Tobacco Control presented on its work as a lead partner in the BI grants programme – outlining achievements of the last 10 years and future plans for providing technical support to governments and civil society.

In Berlin, Germany, The Global TB Caucus convened a summit of the Group of 20 countries (G20), to agree on proposed actions for leaders to implement in relation to TB and antimicrobial resistance.

On World No Tobacco Day, José Luis Castro took part in a high-level event, where 53 leading finance firms, representing US$ 3.8 trillion in assets under management, signed the world’s first global Investor Statement on Tobacco.

As part of the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use Grants Programme, The Union’s Department of Tobacco Control supported Georgia to significantly strengthen its national tobacco control law – the upgraded legislation comes into force in 2018. Plain tobacco packaging and higher tobacco taxes were key elements of the amendment. Georgia’s Ministries of Health, Finance and Agriculture collaborated to reform tobacco tax, aiming to reach European Union required levels within 10 years.

At the 70th World Health Assembly in May in Geneva, The Union called for faster and more innovative approaches to ending all forms of TB, as well as redoubled efforts to tackle non-communicable diseases, collaboration in tobacco control and for a right to health for everybody.