



Conference Report

The Conference

The first **Global Forum on Nicotine** was held on 27th and 28th June 2014, at the Marriott Hotel, Warsaw, Poland. Over the two days *200+ participants* took part in a programme that comprised lectures, debates and discussions, workshops, poster presentations, and even a live programme broadcast on the web, produced by Vapourtrails TV (<http://www.vapourtrails.tv/>). A number of sessions were conducted in Polish. The event provided ample opportunities for networking and informal discussion for those attending. The conference also attracted a lot of media interest, with reportage and comment in Polish national and international media and also on social media.

We have established an archive site, where you can find most of the formal presentations, pdfs of posters, videos of some of the sessions – including a number in Polish – photographs and other information about the event. To view these please visit <http://gfn.net.co/2014>.

The Context of the Conference

The science and understanding of nicotine is rapidly changing. The arrival of new nicotine delivery systems, along with other lower risk alternatives to smoking, is forcing rapid changes in nicotine science, public understanding and the regulatory landscape.

This impacts upon on a wide range of stakeholders including: *consumers* – who now have a wider range of sources of nicotine; *academics and researchers* – a new research agenda and new methods for studying the use of nicotine containing products; *public health and tobacco control advisors* – the role of these products within the landscape of smoking reduction; *parliamentarians and other policy makers* - faced with developing regulatory frameworks; *manufacturers and distributors* – developing new products or whose business model is challenged by disruptive products; and *national and international tobacco control organisations*. The pace of changes and developments in technology and products available has produced a number of different and often contradictory responses from various sectors.

Uniquely the Global Forum provided a platform to all those with an interest to join in the debates and discussions together. The one ground rule was that everyone would be heard in a respectful manner, challenged on what they said, rather than who they were, or represented.

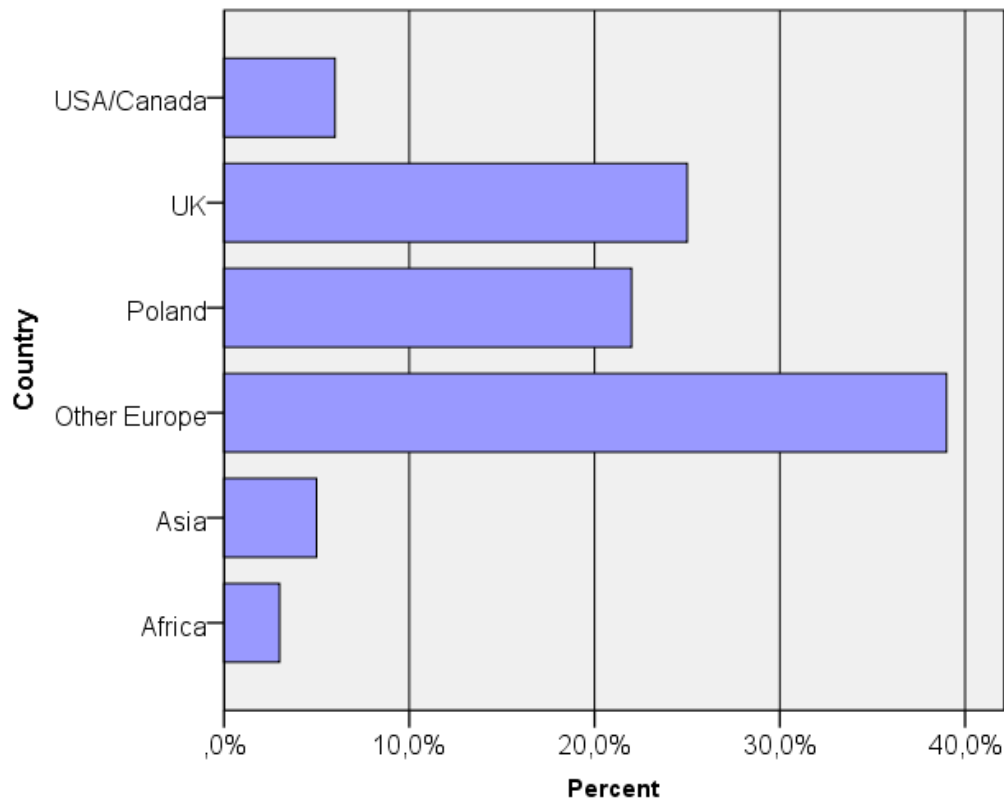
The conference accepted no sponsorship, or other financial support from the industry, relying on participant registration fees to cover costs.

Who came along?

Over 200 people took part in the conference over the two days. *Sixty-five per cent* were *male* and *thirty-five per cent female*.

Where did they come from?

Participants came from *26 countries* and the table below shows the percentages coming from different places.



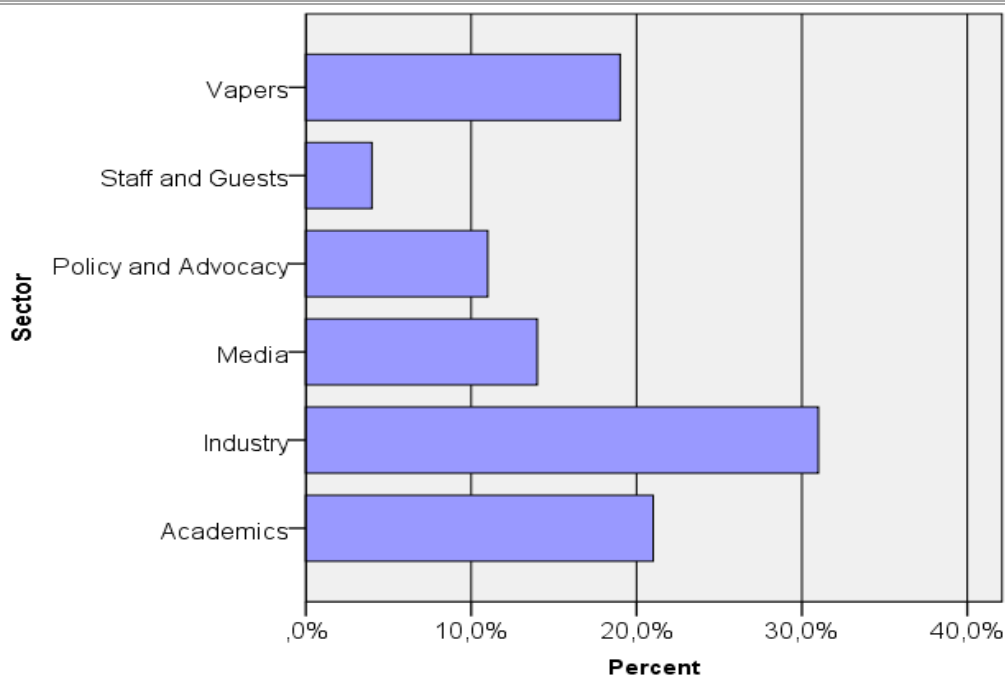
Given that this was the first conference of its kind, and also the relatively short lead-in time of six-months, from inception to delivery, it was inevitable that those within close proximity would make up the largest number attending. It is however encouraging to have had some representation from Africa, Asia, the USA and Canada, where the debates on regulation are also underway.

In terms of future events, more targeted approaches will need to be made to those from outside of Europe, including adding more speakers and poster presenters on issues directly relevant to the situations in different locations across the globe.

Who did they represent?

There were many different organisations, professions and disciplines amongst the participants.

In order to give a meaningful picture it was necessary to create more general categories and the table below shows the percentages falling into each of these categories.



Staff, guests and media are self-explanatory. With regard to other categories:

- **Vapers** includes consumers of non-combustible nicotine products (including snus)
- **Policy and Advocacy** includes parliamentarians, political and scientific advisors, lobbyists, and local, national and international organisations that campaign on issues
- **Industry** includes those concerned with the manufacture, distribution and sale of non-combustible nicotine products
- **Academics** are those from educational and other research facilities concerned with evaluation of the use and impact of nicotine

It was encouraging to have a high proportion of *academics* attending (21%) as well as some *nineteen per cent* of the total being *vapers*.

As with the different countries represented, the data on categories will assist in targeting future events to increase representation from both these groups, as well as from policy makers.

What did they tell us about the experience of attending?

Much informal feedback was received both during and after the conference. In addition we asked participants to complete an on-line feedback form and were very encouraged by the results.

Thirty-two people *completed the feedback form*, which represents about 17% of those who took part (excluding staff and guests). They came from 13 *countries*, with the highest returns from *academics* (31%) *vapers* (19%) and *industry* (22%). Given the overall make-up of the participants it means the feedback can be seen as largely representative.

In terms of evaluation we asked for an assessment of the programme, as well as the venue and organisation of the conference.

Programme

Asked to rate the various sessions on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) participants were largely well satisfied with their experience.

The programme received high ratings. The average rating for the programme as a whole for those *scoring sessions* as 5 (*excellent*) was *57%*. The *range* was between *23% and 87%*. If we include scoring 4 (*very good*) for each of the sessions, the *average rises to 89%*, with a *range* between *77% and 100%*.

The *most popular session was the opening plenary*, including the inaugural Michael Russell Oration, delivered by Professor Peter Hajek. This is important, as the opening of a conference most often sets the tone for the remainder of the event. In this instance, given the overwhelmingly positive feedback, this seems to have been the case.

The *poster displays* overall rated *89% very good/excellent*, which is a point noted for future editions of the conference.

Venue and Organisation

The quality of the venue and organisation are an important factor in the overall experience for participants. Feedback is helpful to the organisers to review performance and assist in improving delivery for future years. As with the programme we asked participants to rate aspects of the venue and delivery of the event from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent).

The *venue* scored *72% excellent*, with the remaining *28% very good*. The standard of *catering* received an *overall rating of 97%* - excellent (*65%*) or very good (*32%*).

In terms of the choice of location, *Warsaw* rated *59% excellent*, with a further *31% very good*.

It was good to see that *75% thought the networking reception was excellent*, as creating networking opportunities throughout the conference was a priority for the organisers.

The *overall organisation* of the conference rated *94% (excellent 69% and very good 25%) and* In terms of *value for money 77%* thought this *excellent*, with a further *20% very good*.

What next?

As well as asking for participants to evaluate the content of the conference, we also asked for opinions and suggestions on topics and locations for future events.

Regarding *future topics for the programme*, the following were prominent:

- A debate on what divides the public health community so much on nicotine.
- Having more people from tobacco control present – and speaking – adding more balance and enhancing the impact of the proceedings.
- Linked to the last point, more efforts should be made to engage regulators and international tobacco control – particularly WHO, EU and FDA – to expand the debate.
- There should be more discussion on other nicotine products – including snus – as well as discussion of nicotine as a ‘lifestyle’ product.
- The economics and health of nicotine, emerging markets and product quality and safety.
- A suggestion for a ‘nicotine for beginners’ session, to help debunk some of the myths surrounding it.

Most people were content with the *location of the conference* in Warsaw and believed the venue provided good service and value for money. Those suggesting other locations largely focussed on the potential impact the conference might have – for example in Spain, given the current issues there – or on the attraction of a destination for delegates wishing to extend a stay.

Second Global Forum on Nicotine 2015

The response to the conference, including the formal and informal feedback and coverage in the media, has convinced the organisers that this is an event that people want to happen and want to attend. The dates for the second Global Forum on Nicotine are **Friday 5th and Saturday 6th June 2015**. The venue will again be the **Marriott Hotel, Warsaw**.

In choosing the venue the organisers took into account the good value for money the venue provides. It also avoids having to source a new venue and negotiate terms and conditions, enabling more resources to be devoted to developing the programme for the event and to promotion.

Venues for events beyond 2015 will be considered, including those suggested in the feedback from 2014, with decisions being made and announced at next year’s conference.

Global Forum on Nicotine 2014 Archive

<http://gfn.net.co/2014>