



Conference Report

The conference

The third **Global Forum on Nicotine** took place in Warsaw, Poland, on Friday 17th and Saturday 18th June 2016. The formal programme was preceded on Thursday 16th June by the European premiere showing of '**A Billion Lives**', a major American produced documentary, which highlights the opportunities presented by e-cigarettes and other new nicotine products and technology to reduce the devastating loss of human life, as a result of continued smoking this century. Some 250 guests, including conference participants and media, attended the premiere and the social event held afterwards, which provided a valuable opportunity for networking prior to the opening of the conference itself.

Overall the conference saw **320 people attend** – an increase of 28% on the previous year.

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

The programme

The scientific understanding of new nicotine delivery systems and other lower risk alternatives to smoking has been accompanied by rapid changes in nicotine science, public understanding and the policy and regulatory landscape. This is not always for the good. Bad science is often poorly interpreted and presented uncritically in the media. There is public misunderstanding of the relative safety of lower risk products. Regulations, policies and positions are taken, seemingly often despite evidence. Positions on nicotine and its uses are polarised.

With this in mind, the conference theme for this year was '**Evidence, Accountability, Transparency**' and programme focussed on accountability of those involved in science, policy and regulatory development, and transparency of institutional and personal position.

The two days comprised the opening and closing sessions, three plenary sessions, two parallel sessions, one panel with Q&A and three satellite sessions. Fifty-three speakers and chairs were drawn from 16 countries, with the event as a whole being **chaired by Professor David Swenor**, from the University of Ottawa, in Canada.

Professor Marewa Glover, from Massey University, in New Zealand delivered the **Michael Russell Memorial Oration** and **Dr Ryan Courtney**, from the Cancer Institute New South Wales, in Australia, and **Anastasia Moysidou**, from the Technological Educational Institute of Athens, in Greece, were **jointly awarded the GFN Young Investigator of the Year Award**.

In addition there were 35 poster presentations, including some video installations, covering developments in the science and technology of nicotine and delivery systems, as well as policy and practice.

The full programme and other archive materials, including videos, presentations, photos can be found at <https://www.gfn.net.co/2016>

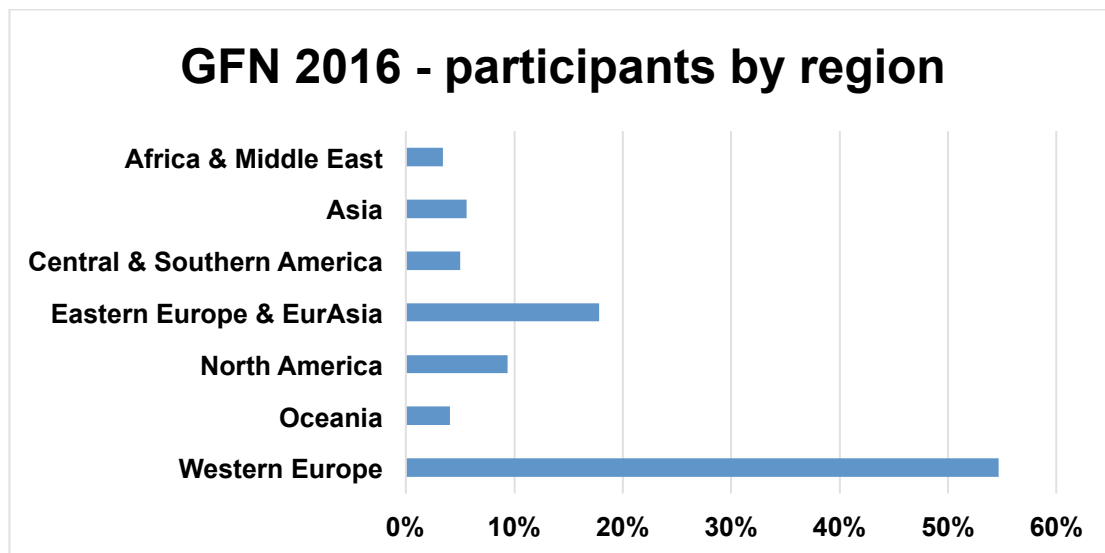
The Global Forum continues to be ***‘the only place where science and policy meet’*** and has a major role to play in fostering debate involving all stakeholders, including scientists, academics, public health professionals, politicians, manufacturers, distributors and consumers, who all have an interest in nicotine and its uses. The guiding principle is adherence to what the science and evidence tells us, often challenging cultural and political norms and what might be described as ‘perceived wisdom’ on the issues.

Who came along?

Of the 320 people participating, ***sixty-seven per cent were male*** and ***thirty-three per cent female***.

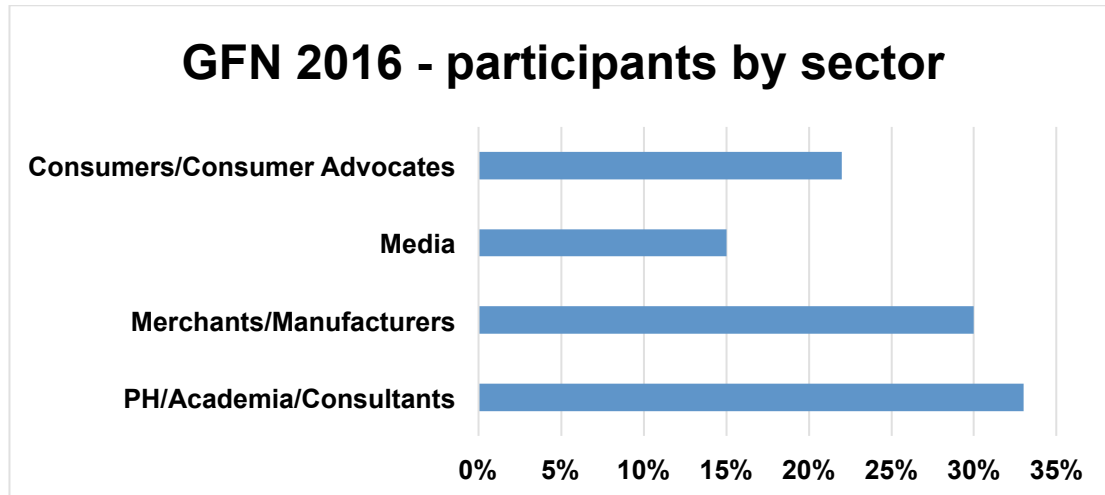
Were did they come from?

Participants this year came from ***51 different countries***, an ***increase of 21%*** on the previous year. The table below shows which regions participants came from. The largest group continues to be from Western Europe, but we also saw increased numbers from Eastern Europe and Eurasia, along with some interest from Central and South America.



Who did they represent?

The table below shows the sectors represented by the participants. The conference has an open registration policy and participants are asked to identify a group that coincides with their occupation or interest.



The numbers in the different categories are broadly similar to last year, although there was a slight increase in the numbers from the media present, which we believe reflects the continued growth in interest in the subject matter of the conference. It was also pleasing to see large numbers of **consumers and consumer advocates (from 13 countries)** once again in attendance.

What did they tell us about their experience of attending?

In addition to the verbal feedback received both during and after the conference, we asked participants to complete an on-line feedback form, in order to receive a formal assessment of the quality of the programme, the logistics – location, venue, services and overall organisation - and value for money of the event.

We asked them to rate the various aspects from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) as well as providing any additional comments and/or suggestions for future topics, etc they might have. We received **forms from 52 people (16.25% of participants)** which largely reflected the make-up of the participant groups and below is a summary of what they told us.

Programme

The opening, closing and **plenary sessions** scored consistently well, with all in the range of **81-97% very good/excellent**.

The **parallel sessions** (for those who attended and recorded a score) rated **76-100% very good/excellent** and the **panel session** rated **86% very good/excellent**.

The **satellite sessions** rated between **73-100% very good/excellent**, with the science and policy update scoring highest.

Posters rated between **65-78% very good/excellent**, although the number who posted a rating was lower than for other aspects of the programme.

With regard to **individual presentations** during the conference, those made by **Professor Marewa Glover, Dr Chris Ford and Clive Bates, were most often cited as favourites** by those expressing a preference.

Everyone who recorded a score after attending the premiere of **'A Billion Lives'** considered it **very good/excellent**.

Logistics and venue

The **venue and location** for the conference once again scored very highly, with **90%** rating it **very good/excellent**. The provision and quality of the **food and beverages** also rated highly, at **96% very good/excellent**.

The **networking events** (Thursday and Friday evenings) rated between **94-97% very good/excellent** with **networking opportunities overall** provided by the conference rating **98% very good/excellent**.

Conference staff, overall organisation and value for money rated between **93-96% very good/excellent**.

Some general comments

Comments were made by a number of participants and these largely concerned the programme and suggestions for future years, issues for consumers attending the conference, getting the messages from GFN to a wider audience and organisational/logistical issues.

With regard to the programme a number of respondents noted the 'absence of contrary voices' speaking. In particular comments were made that some significant actors, such as FDA, EU and FCTC/FCA and those charged with regulation of products at national levels were not in evidence.

Similarly some noted the absence of some elements of tobacco control that have been vocal and largely hostile to the growth in new nicotine products.

As organisers of GFN we have sought to engage and invite people from across the spectrum, so as to have robust debates and will continue to do so. It can only be hoped that our overtures are more positively received for future editions of the conference.

Some useful suggestions for future programme topics, among them:

- ❖ Other delivery routes for nicotine and new reduced risk products and perhaps some comparison of reduced risk products
- ❖ Scientific evidence about the use of e-cigarettes and new products – eg risk profiles of common e-Liquid ingredients (ie in relation to lung health)
- ❖ Implementation of the EU TPD2 and the actual impacts on markets, learning, national regulation, etc
- ❖ The impact of consumers – ‘How the pioneering ‘modders’ used technology to kick-start a social movement’
- ❖ More learning from practice – eg how Stop Smoking Services use experienced consumers to assist others in switching and how peer to peer work can be evaluated and acknowledged
- ❖ How are position statements and guidance determined - eg those from PHE and other public health organisations - and how hospitals and other locations came to change their campus vaping policy - the arguments for and against
- ❖ Accountability and the role of the industry in THR
- ❖ What can e-cigarettes tell us about excessive appetites theory of addiction?
- ❖ ‘Citizens v Public Health’ – activism to influence regulation
- ❖ More and more focus on accountability of all the actors concerned in production, distribution and regulation of products.
- ❖ An explanation of CEN/ISO standards and their implications and impact

Organisers will include the above ideas for consideration in 2017 and beyond.

Regarding the programme as a whole, a number of responses were received about clashes in scheduling. Whilst these will always occur, many consumers commented on the particular clash of advocacy and science sessions and how we might try to avoid this in the future.

Organisers are looking into how this can be avoided, including adding an extra half-day to the event to accommodate specific meetings for consumer advocates and other activities.

Some useful comments and suggestions were made about better use of social media to increase the profile of the conference and also having those attending increase awareness of the conference and the issues at a local and national level. The organisers will consider how we might best expand this important area of communication.

Some minor problems were experienced with the venue and services and these have been noted for future conferences.

Media coverage

Published Media

The sample below shows the conference is 'on the radar' in a growing number of locations and that the content of the coverage is largely positive.

In **Italy** ANSA the leading newswire in Italy generated features that were published on ANSA health channel and reproduced by other media, like the Agivapenews, the most important online magazine in Italy dealing with e-cigarettes.

"Electronic cigarettes are becoming more popular as an alternative. Global Forum on Nicotine identifies advantages for health, but repressive laws"
http://www.ansa.it/salutebenessere/no2zie/rubriche/speciali/2016/06/17/crescono-svapatori-mondosempre-piu-alterna2ve-a-bionde_e0812ea6-9efc-4d02-8589-8efea6ff68bb.html

"Smoking: e-cigs don't increase the risk that young people get hooked. According to a study in UK on 120 youths, electronic cigarettes are seen as alternative"
http://www.ansa.it/salutebenessere/no2zie/rubriche/speciali/2016/06/17/fumo-e-cig-non-aumentano-rischio-che-giovani-prendano-vizio_5c0a4072-dae4-4c04-b7a6-ba4f863fd48d.html

"Smoking: tests on alternative cigarettes approved, they might improve health Experts, from lower blood pressure to improved breathing, the evidence is mounting"
http://www.ansa.it/salutebenessere/no2zie/rubriche/speciali/2016/06/17/fumo-ok-test-su-alterna2ve-a-bionde-migliorano-salute_8c3677a7-7405-45a5-b403-81ddc661cf13.html

"Smoking: experts, WHO should consider harm reduction ensured by alternatives to cigarettes Now the attitude is 'quit or die'"
http://www.ansa.it/salutebenessere/no2zie/rubriche/speciali/2016/06/18/fumo-esper2-oms-consideri-riduzione-danno-da-alterna2ve_3cdf2459-4590-4236-b8b6-a5a891b30a22.html

In **South America** EFE, the leading regional Spanish speaking newswire published a first feature referring to the search of a less harmful option to replace cigarettes and the difficulties surrounding its regulation:
<http://www.efe.com/efe/espana/sociedad/foro-global-sobre-nico2na-busca-opcion-menos-nociva-%20que-el-cigarrillo/10004-2959073>

This story was widely reproduced, including in Spain by the influential online outlet El Confidential, El Diario and the health portal Sanidad, among other online publications.

All Africa the leading **pan-Africa** newswire reported:

“Africa: Global Forum on Nicotine - Reducing Harm and Saving a Billion Lives in this Century”

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201606231272.html>

In **Hong Kong** the Harbour Times, the leading daily reported:

“Harsh words for HK regulators on e-cigs”

<http://harbour2mes.com/2016/06/23/hong-kong-may-be-left-behind-in-e-cigarette-debate/>

Several pieces appeared in the **Indian** media:

“E-cigarettes act as roadblock to smoking.”

http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/e-cigarettes-act-as-roadblock-to-smoking-116061900417_1.html

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/lifestyle/health/E-cigarettes-a-roadblock-to-youth-smoking/2016/06/18/article3488509.ece>

“E-cigarettes acting as roadblock to tobacco: a few though, remain sceptical about the harmless nature of e-cigarettes.”

<http://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/e-cigarettes-act-as-roadblock-to-tobacco-study-2862891/>

“Here's how e-cigarettes can lower smoking in youths - A new study has shown that e-cigarettes may play an important role in reducing the likelihood of people smoking.”

<http://www.dnaindia.com/health/report-e-cigarettes-a-roadblock-to-youth-smoking-2225090>

In **Kazakhstan** Tengrinews, the second most popular online media outlet, with about 6 million unique visitors in a month published:

“Health should be the most important point in e-cigs regulation issue.”

https://tengrinews.kz/strange_news/regulirovanii-ryinka-elektronnyih-sigaret-glavu-ugla-stavit-296977/

The Unian news agency, in **Ukraine**, reported that reputable researchers, physicians and anti-tobacco advocates are opening a new front in the war against tobacco smoking through electronic cigarettes, and other devices, allowing smokers to give up combustible cigarettes comfortably.

<http://www.unian.net/society/1383575-nikotynovyie-voynyi.html>

Published in Switzerland, Vaping Post published a number of items:

<http://www.vapingpost.com/2016/06/21/the-global-forum-on-nicotine-in-warsaw-is-to-vaping-what-the-cannes-festival-is-to-cinema/>



<http://www.vapingpost.com/2016/06/24/eciv-interview-with-co-founders-richard-hyslop-and-remi-parola/>

<http://www.vapingpost.com/2016/06/20/the-vaping-equation/>

Social Media

The importance of social media to the evolution of nicotine science cannot be under-estimated and some simple statistics from monitoring of hashtags associated with the conference show that the messages are reaching a significant audience.

Total Tweets 4.476	Total Audience 786.122	Contributors 538	Measured time 215 h
Total Impressions 8.164.737	Impressions / Audience 10,39	Tweets / Contributor 8,32	Frequency 20,82 <small>Tw/h</small>

In short, there were around 4,500 tweets from over 500 contributors. This represents some significant activity and is on par with other events such as COP6. Tweets for #GFN16 were delivered to an audience of over 780k with an impression reach of over 8m.

This year also saw a number of groups posting video content filmed at the conference. One in particular proved to be very popular, with almost 25,000 hits, produced by colleagues from M.O.V.E. based in Spain. It can be found at <http://www.efe.com/efe/espana/sociedad/foro-global-sobre-nico2na-busca-opcion-menos-nociva-%20que-el-cigarrillo/10004-2959073>

GFN 2016 - an independent perspective

*For this year we invited **Harry Shapiro**, the Director of **DrugWise** (<http://www.drugwise.org.uk/>) who has worked in the drugs field for over 35 years, most recently as Director of Communications for DrugScope, and who has written extensively on all aspects of drugs and drug-related issues, to act as the rapporteur for GFN 2016 and provide his view on the proceedings. Here are his thoughts.*

Having spent over 35 years working in the field of illegal drugs, this was my first foray into the world of tobacco or more specifically the current worldwide controversy over e-cigarettes. What I learnt from my two days at the conference was both fascinating and appalling.

Until 2014, those advocating for tobacco harm reduction had no international forum for the exchange of information and ideas. Enter Professor Gerry Stimson, a UK social science drugs researcher who conducted the pioneering UK research into the benefit of harm reduction interventions to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS among injecting drug users and established the

International Harm Reduction Association. Seeing similar issues arising from the world of tobacco, he, along with Paddy Costall who organised the IHRA conferences, set up the GFN to allow for all interests to meet, so much so that this year's conference was literally standing room only. With delegates from 55 countries, they reflected the breadth of engagement in this smoking (or should I say vaping) hot topic: clinical and academic researchers, doctors, policy analysts, vaping manufacturers and consumer advocates. And there in the room too was Big Tobacco, probably unheard of in the world of tobacco control (unless of course you are the Chinese delegation at the WHO FCTC COP meetings). Having spent years going to drug conferences, it was almost like exchanging views over coffee with somebody from a South American drug cartel.

The conference was prefaced by the European premiere showing of *A Billion Lives* directed by Aaron Biebert. The title takes its cue from the calculation by the World Health Organisation of the estimated death toll this century from smoking cigarettes. The first section rehearses the dark history of Big Tobacco including an illuminating interview with David Goerlitz who was literally the face of Winston cigarettes in the 1980s, before laying out exactly what the vaping community and those clinicians and in public health are up against in making the case for e-cigarettes. The film makes clear that major national and international medical organisations and regulatory bodies have taken against alternative nicotine delivery systems, probably through a continued deep suspicion of Big Tobacco who have been slowly investing in the new technologies over the past decade and what feels like a moral rather than clinical antipathy towards the continued use of nicotine.

The film encapsulated for me those fascinating and appalling aspects of this issue. The fascination comes from the fact that after decades of clear divisions between tobacco companies and the health community, disruptive technology has not only introduced an entirely new delivery system for nicotine, but also caused a seismic crack in the fault lines between commerce and health. And appalling because of the lengths that national and international regulators, medical bodies and NGOs are going in order to seriously undermine what is a clear public health benefit on a global scale. And what's more, it is no secret, as the film shows, that much of what passes for research and misleading public health messages are being funded by Big Pharma – who are also lobbying regulators - to protect their own NRT profits.

In fact from the perspective of the delegates, only the UK has so far emerged with any credit among nations involved in the global debate. Public Health England published a report which declared that the product was “95% safer than cigarettes” while the Royal College of Physicians concluded that “On the basis of available evidence, the RCP believes that e-cigarettes could lead to significant falls in the prevalence of smoking in the UK, prevent many deaths and episodes of serious illness, and help to reduce the social inequalities in health that tobacco smoking currently exacerbates”. Judith Wolters from Australia's New Nicotine Alliance declared that the vaping community looked to the UK as a beacon of sanity and reason in what has become a hard line approach from the wide range of tobacco control interests.

If there was one over-riding emotion in the room it was passion: the vaping community feels under siege from the hostile forces around them and as ex-smokers, they are understandably outraged at attempts to prevent them from actually leading more healthy lives.

That passion is no less apparent among clinicians who are similarly outraged that peer-reviewed academic journals are publishing what Clive Bates from Counterfactual calls “junk science”. In a one-to-one interview with Greek cardiologist Dr Konstantinos Farsalinos, he explained to me one of the more notorious examples which appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine in January 2015. Propylene glycol and glycerol are used in nicotine liquids to bulk out the flavours and create the vapour. One chemical created by the heating of propylene glycerol is formaldehyde, which at sufficient levels is possibly carcinogenic. In order to show that e-cigarettes emit high levels of formaldehyde, the researchers ignited an e-cigarette to a temperature that no vaper could possibly tolerate. For Dr Farsalinos “it is like roasting a piece of meat until it was absolutely black and inedible and then complaining about the nature of meat. But low levels of formaldehyde are in the air we breathe, the amount you inhale from an e-cigarette is no more than you would sitting at home watching the TV”. Apparently though, neither the authors nor the journal would admit any mistakes and refused to retract the paper. Dr Farsalinos said he spends too much time trying to replicate studies that should have never been published in the first place.

The other area of bad science causing anger among presenters was that trying to establish that vaping is a gateway to smoking among young people or will renormalise smoking among ex-smokers. Professor Linda Bauld, from Stirling University highlighted two particularly flawed studies, which received much media publicity. One from Scotland purporting to show that young people are more likely to try e-cigarettes simply by seeing point of sale displays while the other study, the much-criticised study by Kalkhoran and Glantz claimed that e-cigarettes don't help smokers quit. But as Professor Neil McKeganey pointed out, it isn't just this there is flawed research out there, but such results are a “catastrophic proposition, the consequences of which are very tight legislation” which will not threaten to offset all the benefits of e-cigarettes, but in the words of vaping activist David Dorn “will kill people” as they take the easy option and carry on smoking instead of being encouraged to switch.

And regarding control, the most concerning to the conference delegates are the European Tobacco Products Directive (TPD) and the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) Deeming Regulations both of which have been enacted this year. The story of snus highlights the issues.

According to the WHO data, the use of snus has resulted in fewer tobacco-related deaths among Swedish men than anywhere else in Europe. But snus has been banned in all European countries except Sweden as long ago as 1992. Yet despite the growing evidence in favour of smokeless tobacco products and some legal challenges by the manufacturer Swedish Match, the

ban remains under the new European TPD. Snus was not banned in the USA, but according to the Swedish Match representative at the GFN Conference, when the company wanted to introduce a modified risk product, they had to submit an evidence report to the FDA, which eventually ran to 140,000 pages. The irony of such restrictive legislation and unreasonable level of evidential support mean that only Big Tobacco has the resources to comply, driving out smaller, independent companies which limits competition and innovation.

Aside from despair over draconian legislation and disgust at the refusal to accept the evidence for e-cigarettes while peddling bad science, other important themes emerged.

Perhaps the real nub of the whole vaping controversy is the pleasure principle, something that seems to elude the whole anti-e-cigarette community, probably because many of them have never been smokers. As David Dorn said, "It's why e-cigarettes work as well they do...something which smokers can enjoy which at the end of the day won't kill them". Research undertaken by Dr Chris Russell at Glasgow University underlines the point; he talks of the taste, the nicotine hit and the social community that surrounds vaping, "by all accounts, other ways of quitting are just miserable. Now these people have come across something that not only makes quitting possible, but enjoyable. Who would have thought there would be products like that ten years ago"?

Across many parts of the developed world, smoking rates have been falling. But when you look deeper into the figures, you find that rates are still high among those most socially disadvantaged and among sub-populations with complex needs including those in poor mental health and/or with substance misuse problems. Professor Marewa Glover from New Zealand gave an impassioned Michael Russell Memorial Lecture on the plight of Maori women in this respect while on a more positive note, Louise Ross who runs Leicester City smoking cessation services spoke of a pioneering project where she has convinced local health officials to allow vaping on mental health wards, especially for the elderly and frail, "why should they be made to go outside?" she asks.

Looking at this issue upstream, there could be some important global political consequences should tobacco control officials continue to block the growth of alternative nicotine delivery systems particularly in the developing world where smoking rates are still very high. After all, United Nation Universal Declaration of Human Rights is supposed to trump all other international treaties. Could the WHO be brought to book by denying the right to good health for millions of the world's citizens?

Which leads finally to the crossover from drugs harm reduction where the right to health - particularly for injecting drug users - is an on-going global struggle. Dr Chris Ford is the Clinical Director of the International Doctors for Healthy Drug Policies and urged the vaping community to make their voices heard in much the same way as drug user activists across the world have done as their campaigning agendas precisely map onto each other. She might also

have added that smoking rates among drug service users in the UK are at least three times the national average and that those in the older user age groups are dying in increasing numbers as drug use, smoking and drinking co-morbidities begin to impact on the ageing body.

There were significant legislative developments between the Second and Third GFN conferences. What can we expect when the conference reconvenes next year in Warsaw? What for example, will be the impact on the TPD of the UK decision to leave the EU? Will there be successful legal challenges to the FDA Deeming Regulations? What can be done to win the hearts and minds of the public in the face of continued publicity given to the 'bad news' about vaping? Come back next year and find out

What next?

Dates for the fourth **Global Forum on Nicotine** have been set. The extended conference will take place on Thursday 15th to Saturday 17th June 2017, again at the Marriott Hotel, in Warsaw.

The website for the conference, together with the registration system, will be live in September 2016.

The conference will maintain a differential pricing policy for participants and ensure that consumers, advocates, academics, public health professionals and those who represent NGOs will continue to benefit from reduced fees.

Global Forum on Nicotine 2016 Archive

<https://www.gfn.net.co/2016>