

Switzerland

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Summary of Findings

1. Industry participation in policy development

Switzerland has not ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and has no formal rules against the participation of the tobacco industry in public health policy, allowing key government officials to represent tobacco industry interests in policy discussions. Moreover, the Swiss government's open support for input from the tobacco industry on drafted policies and legislation, allows the industry to be well-represented in the policy process, enabling them to water down or stop tobacco control measures.

2. Industry CSR activities

The Swiss federal government has no policies in place which prevent federal departments, or individual civil servants to form partnerships with the tobacco industry, or from accepting sponsorship offers. While this became particularly obvious following the Dubai Expo 2020 scandal with the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs and Phillip Morris International (PMI), numerous other incidences have also occurred on the local level, where multinationals like PMI, British American Tobacco (BAT) and Japan Tobacco International (JTI) fund various corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities in the cantons of Geneva, Jura and Vaud.

3. Benefits to the industry

By failing to ratify the FCTC, Switzerland's minimal and non-encompassing federal tobacco control laws benefit the tobacco industry greatly, allowing it to use the country as a political playground and a marketing laboratory. For example, a major victory of the tobacco industry

is the freeze on taxation of tobacco products since 2013, at a level which is far below the level recommended by the WHO (60.3% in Switzerland vs. 75% recommended by WHO). Currently the tobacco industry has virtually no constraint in the way it markets its products in Switzerland, making them particularly attractive to young people. This regulatory vacuum is exploited by the tobacco and nicotine industry to flood Switzerland with new products, whether heated tobacco products, a large range of e-cigarettes, including the Juul, as well as nicotine pouches with extreme concentrations of nicotine, and snus.

4. Unnecessary interaction

High level government officials, including the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ignacio Cassis, participate in meetings or other social activities that are organised or at least partially sponsored by the tobacco industry. These events give tobacco industry representatives access to political decisionmakers, as well as providing them with opportunities to further their market expansion interests, as shown in the sponsorship deal with PMI for the opening ceremony of the Swiss embassy in Moscow.

5. Transparency

There is no law or reliable system in place that requires the government to publicly disclose meetings, or interactions with, as well as contributions from the tobacco industry, and vice versa. Minutes of related meetings are not published either. Yet between 2019-2021, a number of tobacco industry meetings with government officials took place that were not strictly necessary. As a result, donations and

sponsorship deals with the tobacco industry may be struck, and individuals are not required to disclose any affiliations they may have with the tobacco industry.

6. Conflict of interest

At the federal level, Switzerland has no national legislation for prohibiting any type of contributions from the tobacco industry to political candidates, parties, or campaigns, or to require full disclosure of such contributions. It is the only country in the Council of Europe that has not passed legislation to regulate political funding.

The connections between people active in the political field and the tobacco industry are often complex and difficult to follow, as they are generally not made public. However, several government officials now part of the tobacco industry could be found, including Christophe Berdat, former general secretary of the Swiss Liberal Party, and Thomas Borer, former Swiss ambassador.

7. Preventive measures

Switzerland fares very poorly in the domain of preventive measures. The Swiss government has not put in place any policies, nor is it in the process of developing any, that require the disclosure of records of interaction with the tobacco industry. Neither has it adopted or formulated a code of conduct, with standards, when dealing with tobacco industry representatives, or a policy requiring the tobacco industry to periodically submit information on various political, and marketing measures. There is also no programme to consistently raise awareness about Article 5.3 guidelines within government departments.

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Recommendations

It is impossible to produce, market and sell tobacco products in a way that is compatible with public health or the UN's 2030 Agenda, and is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The tobacco industry in Switzerland, as in the rest of the world, has been using subtle and covert strategies to counter scientific research, public health, and tobacco control policies. Their well-organised intelligence network and their vast financial resources enables them to ensure that their interests are not impeded. The tobacco industry is aware of its low credibility with the public; thus, it remains discreet and confidential, enlisting the help and support from other industries, particularly politicians, to maintain a low profile. In Switzerland, they have skilfully exploited the Swiss tradition of consensus democracy, using the process of political debate, and public consulting to water down or stop tobacco control measures, ensuring that the dominant and consistent role of the tobacco industry in tobacco control policies has been largely overlooked. The success of the tobacco industry in keeping debates about tobacco away from public health attests to the industry's success, as does the rising prevalence of smoking among youth and women.

The health and environmental relevance of tobacco must be maintained in the public arena, where it can be discussed by as many people as possible for an extended period. Particularly in the political realm, open discussion, and awareness of tobacco industry tactics, will limit the industry's influence. Public health advocates in Switzerland will need to adopt similarly strategic and long-term tactics, if possible, by enabling professional lobbyists, public relations, and public policy specialists. Many counterstrategies have been successfully employed in other countries and must

be adapted to Switzerland. The government and NGO's must keep presenting the harms the tobacco industry has on public health and the environment. A system to regularly raise awareness of the Article 5.3 guidelines must be implemented. Relevant policy activities should include:

- Establishing measures to limit political interactions with the tobacco industry,
- Requiring that interactions with, and information provided by the tobacco industry be transparent and accurate,
- Regulating activities described as "socially responsible" by the tobacco industry,
- Ensuring that the tobacco industry is not involved in setting public health policies.

Moreover, Switzerland must adopt a comprehensive national tobacco control strategy, outlining the full implementation of the WHO FCTC. The development of projects relevant to Article 5.3 of the FCTC, by the Tobacco Prevention Fund in Switzerland, is crucial to promoting a status-quo shift. Particularly the use of the guidelines for the implementation of Article 5.3 of the Convention will have an overarching impact on Switzerland.