

THE TOBACCO AND NICOTINE INDUSTRY (STILL) TARGETS YOUNG PEOPLE

BACKGROUND

Despite claiming to market only to adults, the tobacco and nicotine industry continues to target young people, as they represent its primary source of new consumers. The majority of smoking adults start before the age of 18, a time when the brain is particularly vulnerable to nicotine addiction. By targeting young people, the tobacco industry secures a customer base for many years to come.

TARGETED MARKETING

To appeal to teenagers, the industry exploits the psychological mechanisms specific to this age group. It presents tobacco as a symbol of emancipation and associates its use with values such as freedom, rebellion, experimentation, and a sense of belonging to a group. Colorful packaging, manga-inspired characters, fruity flavors, and attractive prices: everything is designed to attract young people. Promotional strategies have evolved alongside young people's habits. Social media now plays a central role, alongside influencers, product placements in movies, TV shows, and music videos, sponsorship of festive events, and the distribution of free samples.

INTENSIVE LOBBYING

Beyond advertising, the industry also seeks to curb public health policies designed to protect young people. It regularly opposes prevention measures recognized as effective, citing economic freedom and consumer responsibility. Switzerland remains one of the least advanced European countries in the fight against tobacco use. It is still the only European country that has not ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Despite some progress, the protection of young people remains insufficient, particularly due to the economic and political clout of the tobacco industry, whose international headquarters (Philip Morris and Japan Tobacco) are located in Switzerland.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUTH

Protecting young people from smoking requires measures recognized as effective: raising taxes, banning all advertising and attractive flavors, strictly regulating new nicotine products, establishing smoke-free spaces, and facilitating access to smoking cessation support. Targeted prevention campaigns, tailored to young people and exposing the industry's strategies, are also essential.