

Respecting adult tobacco users - strengthening youth protection in a targeted manner

Tobacco industry associations call for restraint by politicians

Dortmund, 14 September 2023 - On the occasion of the opening of the leading trade fair InterTabac today in Dortmund, representatives of the tobacco products and novel nicotine products industry called for a policy that shows more trust and respect for responsible, adult consumers, strengthens the protection of minors in a targeted manner and more decisively takes into account the concerns of the companies and employees of a diverse industry.

Far-reaching advertising bans, tax increases, bans on flavourings - manufacturers, retailers and also consumers of tobacco products, e-cigarettes and other nicotine products have recently had to adjust to a multitude of new regulations and restrictions in Germany. The EU Commission in Brussels is preparing amendments to the EU Tobacco Tax Directive and the EU Tobacco Products Directive, which threaten to tighten the rules even further. In Berlin, politicians from the SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen are calling for additional advertising bans and a ban on flavours in e-cigarettes.

Against this background, Managing Director Michael von Foerster of the German Smoking Tobacco Association (Verband der deutschen Rauchtabakindustrie, VdR) called for a stronger return to the model of the responsible consumer: "An informed adult who rolls a cigarette, enjoys a cigar, smokes a pipe or consumes snuff has the right to do so without government paternalism through new harassment and restraints." Instead of continuing to turn the regulatory screw, greater trust in informed consumer decisions is urgently needed, not only in the tobacco sector.

Proponents of new tobacco advertising bans point to a supposed increase in smoking numbers, especially among minors, as a result of the Corona crisis. These results of the so-called DEBRA study are contradicted by the significant decline in cigarette sales by more than 8 per cent last year, explained Jan Mücke, Managing Director of the German Association of the Tobacco Industry and New Products (Bundesverband der Tabakwirtschaft und neuartiger Erzeugnisse, BVTE), who called for a solid, robust factual basis as a prerequisite for a renewed debate on regulation: "Far-reaching political decisions cannot be discussed on the basis of a survey which, given the small sample size, has no validity and does not stand up to scrutiny."

Mücke made it clear that tobacco products, e-cigarettes and other nicotine products do not belong in the hands of children and young people. We support a targeted strengthening of the protection of minors, for example through more intensive control of the ban on the sale of these products to minors. Arbitrary bans, on the other hand, would not add any value to the protection of minors and would ultimately be counterproductive, said BVTE Managing Director Mücke: "Banning flavours in e-cigarettes does not keep young people away from nicotine, but only prevents adult smokers from switching to these low-emission alternative products".

Bodo Mehrlein, Managing Director of the Federal Association of the Cigarette Industry (Bundesverband der Zigarrenindustrie e. V., BdZ), demanded - also in view of the difficult economic situation in which Germany continues to find itself - that the companies in the sector, which directly, indirectly and inductively secure the employment of around 350,000 peopleⁱ in industry and trade, should not be further strangled by additional measures. For example, the cigar industry, characterised by medium-sized businesses, is already facing the challenge of installing a costly traceability system to monitor the supply chain by 2024, Mehrlein explained: "The medium-sized companies have to shell out a lot of money for a measure that in no way meets the goal of combating tobacco smuggling, since no significant smuggling is known for cigars and cigarillos." He also stressed that according to official statistics, these products are mostly smoked only occasionally by upper-age consumers and are also not a gateway product.

The tobacco retail trade continues to be under massive pressure from exploding costs and low profits, so that the economic viability of many locations is at risk. Torsten Löffler, President of the Federal Association of Tobacco Retailers (Bundesverband des Tabakwaren-Einzelhandels, BTWE) urgently warned against further burdens on small businesses: "Those who demand a ban on tobacco advertising in shops want a ban on communication for legal products, prevent competition as well as diversity and thus endanger the existence of businesses and the jobs of employees." The specialised trade ensures a consistent enforcement of the protection of minors and must therefore be strengthened and made fit for the future.

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ⁱ S&P Global: The economic footprint of traditional tobacco and new nicotine products. Contributions to the EU-27 in 2021, Economic impact analysis, April 2023, [Internet](#)