

GERMANY: PHYSICIANS PROTEST TOBACCO 'FLAGSHIP TRADE FAIR'

In September 2015 in the German city of Dortmund, the world's leading trade fair for tobacco products, InterTabac was held. As in previous years, it was organized by a municipal company on behalf of the city of Dortmund; and as in previous years, the city's mayor sent a warm welcome address to tobacco companies from all over the world.

InterTabac constitutes a blatant violation of the FCTC. While Germany has committed to curbing tobacco consumption, one of its cities actively furthers it. While Germany is obliged to protect its citizens from secondhand smoke, one of its cities circumvents the law for the protection of non-smokers. While Germany needs to protect itself from tobacco industry influence, one of its cities advocates tobacco industry interests, and while Germany should have implemented a comprehensive ban on the promotion of tobacco products five years ago, one of its cities proudly organises the world's biggest tobacco trade fair.

InterTabac faces growing opposition in Germany as well as worldwide. This year, for the first time major German health organisations such as the German Heart Foundation, the German Diabetes Association, the Federal Association of Respiratory Physicians, the Professional Association of Children and Adolescent Physicians and the Medical Association of Westphalia-Lippe, together representing 43,000 physicians (many of them from Dortmund) supported the Forum Rauchfrei protest against the trade fair. The protest met with a wide and positive response in the media.

Still, officials are unwilling to take action. Pointing out that tobacco is a legal product and tobacco trade fairs may be organised by the tobacco industry, they ignore the fact that InterTabac in Dortmund is organised by a municipal company which acts by order of the city. Attempts to urge the mayor and the city council to put an end to the fair have so far been fruitless. In 2015 Forum Rauchfrei sent an appeal, co-signed by many internationally renowned organisations and individuals working in the field of tobacco control, to the health minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, the federal state in which Dortmund is located. She was, however, not willing to criticise the trade fair.

We feel confident that we will succeed in stopping this trade fair in the near future, as we get more and more international encouragement. Many of the appeal's co-signers were members of Indonesian tobacco control organisations who still remember InterTabac ASIA, which was to be held in Bali in February 2014, but was cancelled due to a massive wave of protest initiated by Forum Rauchfrei. InterTabac ASIA was also planned by the company in Dortmund, which at that time wanted to open the Southeast Asian market for German tobacco companies.

Consistently mounting international pressure on the city of Dortmund is likely to be the only way to make it stop organising the world's biggest tobacco trade fair. We call on the global tobacco control community to continue to support us in this fight.

Johannes Spatz & Dieter Eichinger

Forum Rauchfrei, Germany

aktionszentrum@forum-rauchfrei.de