

# Tobacco Control

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## Germany: Helping the tobacco industry to expand in South-East Asia

When it comes to producing and promoting tobacco products, Germany has the dubious distinction of playing a leading role in the world. The country is home to the Körber Group (owner of the Hauni AG), the world's leading supplier of machines for the production of cigarettes. It is also the largest producer of cigarettes in the European Union, and leading exporter of cigarettes worldwide.



Germany also hosts the worldwide leading specialist trade fair for tobacco products and smokers' requirements. The 'Inter-tabac' is completely organised by a city-owned company, the Westfalenhallen Dortmund GmbH, in close cooperation with members of the tobacco industry. Although Germany has ratified the FCTC, and thus committed itself to prohibit any form of promotion of tobacco products, the city of Dortmund fails to prevent one of its own companies from doing so. Unsurprisingly, the strict law for the protection of non-smokers in Dortmund is interpreted in a rather permissive way during the fair.

Not only is this tobacco trade fair promoting tobacco in its home country, it has been exported to South East Asia as 'Inter-tabac Asia'. It was held in the Philippines in 2012 and 2013, the 'door into the growing Asian market opened', as the organiser proclaimed on its website. In February 2014, the fair is scheduled to be held in Indonesia. The German organiser is full of praise for a country which has notoriously lax restrictions, particularly when it comes to selling cigarettes to children. The fact that Indonesia has the highest tobacco consumption per capita in the whole of Asia is lauded, as is the fact that rising incomes enable more people to consume international tobacco products and services.

Tobacco control groups in Germany are more than indignant about this. Initiated by Forum Rauchfrei, a Berlin-based, nationwide operating group of tobacco control activists, which organised a protest rally against the trade fair in Dortmund in September 2013, a growing protest movement against the Inter-tabac and its offspring in Asia has been forming. However, this protest may fall on deaf ears as the tobacco industry holds a strong position in Germany. In a formal letter to Forum Rauchfrei, Dortmund's mayor has already stated, that "the city of Dortmund understands, that all standards resulting from the

law on the WHO FCTC are being respected ... when holding the trade fair.” The chairman of the Westfalahallen Dortmund GmbH's supervisory board was even blunter when confronted with criticism: “This is not a children's birthday-party. We are obliged not to produce financial losses for the city of Dortmund.”

It would appear that the city of Dortmund will not alter its practice and will go on to develop the market for tobacco products in South-East Asia for the tobacco industry, unless the international tobacco control community puts an end to this shameful conduct by expressing its massive protest and putting pressure on the city of Dortmund.

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