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Press Release

Cigarette ad poster taken down on behalf of local authorities in Berlin

Local authorities have cigarette ads taken down in Berlin's borough Steglitz-Zehlendorf because these ads could induce juveniles to smoke. On March 31st Forum Rauchfrei had made an official complaint to the council member responsible for economics, health and transport about the placards using young models for promoting Benson & Hedges Slide.

Last Friday the head of the food supervisory office informed Forum Rauchfrei that the posters will have to be removed. Furthermore he announced to initiate fine proceedings.

Johannes Spatz, spokesman of Forum Rauchfrei, is pleased with this success for the protection of youth. Young models who are being used in tobacco ads prompt juveniles to smoke. For this reason the ads violate the German tobacco laws. As the placards are posted all over the city of Berlin, he is hoping that the other boroughs' offices take immediate action as well and have the posters removed. "The time of permissiveness with regard to unlawful tobacco advertising must come to an end" Johannes Spatz demands. For in the past the compliance to the ban on tobacco advertising as laid down in law had not been sufficiently monitored by the food supervisory offices. And with respect to complaints, too, authorities remained mostly passive against the tobacco industry. The borough office's intervention is a nationwide premiere. But Spatz still wants more by demanding a general ban of tobacco advertising in the streets. In this field Germany comes in last together with Greece Germany is the only country in the EC, in which tobacco advertising in the streets ("outdoor advertising") is not forbidden yet.

As can be read in the April 16th issue of "Die Tabakzeitung" (a weekly paper for tobaccoists) the Japan Tobacco International Group has "started the nationwide launch" of its brand Benson & Hedges Slide, so that the unlawful advertisements can be seen all over Germany.

Under the terms of § 22 of Germany's pro tempore tobacco law the display of images "that are in their way especially appropriate to prompt juveniles or adolescents to smoke" are forbidden. For this to be the case according to the tobacco industry's self-commitment it is sufficient, when persons are depicted, which are "estimated 30 years or younger" by juveniles.

The ads which are currently placed at busstops and on billboards in Berlin show two motifs. In one the Benson & Hedges cigarettes from Japan Tobacco International are promoted by a youthful-looking male combined with a big city silhouette in youthful design. The other motif shows a youthful-looking female and the same big city setting.