

Abstract from ECToH 2023

The background to the study is that cigarette consumption has clearly decreased in youth over the past decades in Sweden. This trend has rendered the tobacco industry to find new means to promote their nicotine products such as the oral snuff as well as the, so called tobacco-free, white snuff. They have particularly succeeded in reaching females with oral snuff, where there was an almost threefold increase in Swedish female teenage group between 2018 and 2022. Trying to keep up the pace of the tobacco industry is a challenging task and one vital arena is the political. This study focused to find out the opinions and perspectives of the representatives of the Swedish political arena, particularly representatives for the political youth unions, as this group is likely to become future members of parliament.

Method

Leading representatives from youth associations of parties represented in parliament were interviewed. The 30 minutes semistructural interviews were run through videocalls in early spring 2022. Audio recordings were made and transcribed.

Questions included the view of Swedish tobacco policy today, attitudes to tobacco, own nicotine use, as well as contacts with the tobacco industry. They were also asked to take position on tobacco prevention measures, such as advertising-free tobacco packaging, display ban at points of sale, ban on tobacco flavoring and tobacco-free schools.

Results

A general difference between the members of parliament with a more serious view on smoking cigarettes, whereas youth politicians were more focused on white snuff. In addition several of the youth politicians themselves used white snuff. Seven out of eight possible respondents of the political youth associations were interviewed. All had been contacted by the tobacco industry. It was noticed that the chairman of the Center Party's Youth Association who did not respond participated in a paid trip to the Philip Morris research and development center in Switzerland. When it comes to being positive to proceed with new tobacco prevention measures as well as to harsher regulations on snuff and electronic cigarettes, it showed that the red-green youth associations were in majority. At the same time, they also problematized the tobacco industry's marketing towards young people. The right-wings and Sweden Democratic youth associations opposed all proposals for new tobacco prevention measures. Several disliked the expanded smoke-free environments introduced in 2019 and

wanted in different ways promote the consumption of snuff. Main conclusions Tomorrows possible members of parliament does not give high priority to the tobacco issue, admitting at the same time that they do not have much knowledge. A combination that makes the representatives for the political youth unions an easier prey for tobacco lobbyists. Tomorrows tobacco policies risks being marginalized. The hope rests with the politicians of the future who stand up for public health issues on a broad basis. Conflict of interest There were no conflicts of interest of the author and co-authors of this project

Publications

This study has been published as a report by Tobaksfakta "Slaget om framtidens tobakspolitik" (The battle of the future tobacco policy) in aug 2022 (Slaget-om-framtidens- tobakspolitik_TF2022.pdf (tobaksfakta.se), Swedish text)

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