



# OBSERVATÓRIO SOBRE AS ESTRATÉGIAS DA INDÚSTRIA DO TABACO

All documents are available at <https://tabaco.ensp.fiocruz.br/en>

## *Editorial*

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Fiocruz's Observatory on Tobacco Industry Strategies collects public domain information on strategies adopted by the tobacco industry, identifying actors and groups that defend or are helpful to the tobacco industry in accordance with WHO FCTC and its implementation guidelines. It uses public, available, and reliable data sources that can be used in research, campaigns, and strategy definition to reduce the tobacco industry's interference in public policies and raise awareness of the additive and harmful nature of the products it markets.

In August 2022, the non-governmental organization DIRETA demanded that the content referring to it be removed from the observatory. However, the collected and published data<sup>1,2</sup> show that DIRETA supports the tobacco industry's interests regarding the use of electronic smoking devices (ESD), a product that has its manufacture, marketing, and advertising prohibited by RDC 46/2009.<sup>3</sup>

DIRETA declares that it operates without external investment from the tobacco industry or any other company that leads to a conflict of interest.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, documents published in the observatory show that the entity is supported by organizations sponsored directly and indirectly by the tobacco

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.direta.org>

<sup>2</sup> <http://olajournal.com.br/philip-morris-realiza-painel-sobre-reducao-de-danos-e-tabagismo/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://pesquisa.in.gov.br/imprensa/jsp/visualiza/index.jsp?data=31/08/2009&jornal=1&pagina=45&totalArquivos=120>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.direta.org/direta-debate-palestra-4-4-especialistas-discutem-os-danos-dos-cigarros-eletronicos>

industry. One of them is the World Vapers Alliance (WVA),<sup>5</sup> which has been created and is supported by the Consumers Choice Center (CCC). The latter is a lobbying organization based in the United States which promotes electronic smoking devices and receives resources from the tobacco industry.<sup>6</sup> WVA has also recently been identified as having received resources from the tobacco industry to carry out campaigns promoting electronic smoking devices.<sup>7</sup>

STOP, an organization that works in partnership with the Tobacco Control Research Group, published an investigation showing how the tobacco industry has tried to intimidate and harass tobacco control advocates in low- and middle-income countries – another predatory industry tactic. Twenty-three members of the international tobacco control community from middle- or low-income countries were interviewed, and stop researchers concluded that 3/4 of the interviewees had already been bullied.<sup>8</sup>

Based on the above, DIRECT, and other entities that defend or are helpful to the tobacco industry's interests will continue to be included in the observatory data bank.

*By Silvana Rubano Turci*

## ***Opinion***

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**Interview** with Dr. Neilane Bertoni dos Reis, from the Brazilian National Cancer Institute's Population Research Division, *who studied the prevalence of ESD use in Brazil and published the article: Prevalence of electronic nicotine delivery systems and waterpipe use in Brazil: where are we going?*

**According to the study published in the *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, about 80% of people who have used e-cigarettes are between 18 and 34 years old. How do you evaluate the tobacco industry's strategies to attract this young audience?**

*The strategies used by the tobacco industry to attract young people to use electronic cigarettes are diverse. The very design of the devices, by technological appeal, already attracts young audiences. The use of flavor additives to make the product more palatable is another decoy for teenagers and young people. These additives end up masking the feeling of consuming a product that generally has higher nicotine concentrations than a conventional cigarette. Another strategy is their advertising which, although prohibited in the country, is done through digital influencers*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.direta.org/parcerias>

<sup>6</sup> <https://tobaccotactics.org/wiki/consumer-choice-center/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thedailybeast.com/world-vapers-alliance-slams-cigarettes-big-british-american-tobacco-is-secretly-behind-it>

<sup>8</sup> [https://exposetobacco.org/news/tobaccoindustrylateststrategy/?utm\\_source=mc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=evergreen](https://exposetobacco.org/news/tobaccoindustrylateststrategy/?utm_source=mc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=evergreen)

*with thousands of followers on social media. They pass on the idea that it is fashionable and healthy and, being references for many young people, end up influencing the use of these devices.*

**The research also reveals that more than half of individuals who tried ESD had never smoked conventional cigarettes. Can we say that these devices function as a gateway to smoking?**

*This research showed that population subgroups less prone to using conventional cigarettes, such as women and people with higher education levels, end up using electronic cigarettes. Another study, a systematic review, pointed out that the risk of conventional cigarette experimentation was 2.5 times higher among those who had used electronic cigarettes when compared to people who had never used these devices.*

**Which regions concentrate the highest use of ESD?**

*Using information from the National Health Survey, we found that the prevalence of current electronic smoking device use was higher in the Midwest, South, and Southeast regions. In absolute numbers, the Southeast region is the one that concentrates about half of current ESD users.*

*(article published in the Brazilian Journal of Epidemiology in 2021 - <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-549720210007.supl.2> )*

**Brazil is internationally recognized for tobacco control measures, but the increase in the consumption of electronic cigarettes has imposed a series of challenges for health institutions and tobacco control organizations. In your assessment, what actions should be taken to fight against the new tobacco industry strategies, reach this younger audience and raise awareness about the risks of electronic devices?**

*The prevalence of electronic smoking device use in Brazil is much lower than observed in other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. It suggests that ANVISA's resolution (which prohibits ESD marketing and advertising since 2009) may be preventing the "explosion" among young people seen in other countries.*

*Scientific studies that present the risks associated with ESD consumption are emerging and showing that such devices are not harmless. The nicotine in the liquids used in these devices causes damage to health. Also, there is the presence of carcinogenic heavy metals. So, it is important to disseminate this information and to erase the image of modernity and health that the tobacco industry tries to give to e-cigarettes because this is not true.*

**State-of-the-art vapes replaced pure nicotine with nicotine acid salts to mask the rough and bitter feeling in the throat produced by the substance. What kind of risk does this**

## **replacement pose to users?**

*The nic salts are another tobacco industry's strategy, delivering more nicotine via electronic cigarettes than was possible with the conventional ones. Users do not have a "bad feeling" when smoking because of the associated flavors. So, users do not realize how much nicotine they are consuming. That is, the body absorbs more nicotine. Thus, in addition to nicotine dependence that can be introduced much faster, there are, for example, acute cardiovascular risks and respiratory diseases.*

## **How do you assess the importance of observatories in collecting information about the tobacco industry's strategies? How can this information support control measures and public policy development?**

*It is essential to monitor the tobacco industry's strategies to understand how they can hinder compliance with actions provided for in the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to which Brazil is a signatory, meaning tobacco control has become a permanent public policy.*

## **Featured News**

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### **Uruguayan government causes a backlash in anti-tobacco policy**

Luis Lacalle Pou, president of Uruguay, has compromised the tobacco control advances achieved in Tabaré Vazques's (2005-2010 and 2015-2020) and José Mujica's (2010-2015) governments. Adopting plain cigarette packaging has turned Uruguay into a reference for the WHO and several countries, including Brazil.

In late September, Lacalle Pou admitted that the modifications made to Decree No. 120/2019 were requested by the tobacco company Montepaz. The new wording allows, among several points, the end of plain packaging, which led Philip Morris to sue Uruguay in 2010. The International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) determined the country's victory over the tobacco company in 2016 with a fine of 7 million dollars.

Questioned by El País, Lacalle Pou claimed that smuggling and job creation led him to make this decision: "*when it is said that this decree threatens the health, against the anti-tobacco campaign - which is obviously not true - if we start using such pamphleteering arguments, so basic, I could say that I do not think so, that those who oppose this decree are defending smugglers and are attacking Uruguayan sources of employment. I could say that (but) I don't think about it, and I don't say that.*"

# **Brazilian Ministry of Justice suspends online sale of electronic devices**

In a wise decision, the Brazilian Ministry of Justice ordered the suspension of electronic cigarette sales in Brazil. The document is available in the Official Gazette/the Consumer and Protection Defense Department. The criterion adopted is the illegality of these products' sales and the risk factors to electronic smoking device consumers' health. Although the Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (ANVISA) has prohibited ESD manufacturing and marketing since 2009, online sales have been growing.

In all, 32 companies were fined, ranging from businesses specializing in tobacco products to companies that sell products under *the marketplace model*, such as OLX, Carrefour, Extra, Via S.A. group. The complete list of companies can be accessed in the respective order (Nº 962/2022). A fine of R\$ 5,000 per day will also be imposed for non-compliance.

Although the tobacco industry defends electronic cigarette consumption to reduce smoking, several studies and health professionals reinforce the problems they can cause. Dr. Patricia Coelho warns about the risk of respiratory diseases (emphysema, lung cancer) and the increased chances of the user starting smoking traditional cigarettes. In addition, aspirating vapor with nicotine and other substances not informed by the manufacturer is also a risk factor for health.

## ***New reports have been released***

Visit the website of Cetab/Fiocruz's Observatory on Tobacco Industry Strategies and access the latest releases on the tobacco industry's use of corporate social responsibility strategy:

- 2030 Agenda. Available at: <https://tabaco.ensp.fiocruz.br/pt-br/uso-pela-industria-do-tabaco-de-estrategias-de-responsabilidade-social-corporativa-para-se-associar>

- Child labor. Available at: <https://tabaco.ensp.fiocruz.br/pt-br/uso-pela-industria-do-tabaco-it-de-estrategias-de-responsabilidade-social-corporativa-rsc-na>

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