

# spectra

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## Health and culture

### 2 Niccel and Emil Steinberger

Emil Steinberger is a living legend. At 78 he is still performing shows filled with humour. His wife Niccel Steinberger, 45, who also has a pedigree in humour, is always at his side. She teaches laughter seminars and authors books on the topic. What influence do they think art and humour have on health? In an interview with spectra they talk about the pleasure of doing work that keeps them young, their personal recipes for soul food, the need to establish a culture of laughter in companies and their attitude to legal and illegal drugs.

### 3 Let's talk about ... alcohol

In May the Federal Office of Public Health launched a dialogue week focusing on alcohol as part of its ongoing partner campaign on this topic. Some 230 partners organised 600 events all over the country, creating opportunities to discuss alcohol, the problems it can cause and the way society handles them. The aim of this broad-based dialogue in and with society is to thematise alcohol not just as something to drink but also as a much-discussed issue for which meaningful solutions are being sought at all levels.

### 4 Important year for tobacco prevention

The Federal Law on protection against passive smoking came into effect on 1 May 2010, marking a major milestone in tobacco prevention. At the end of the year the new SmokeFree campaign got off the ground and was launched in January. Measures such as a further increase in tobacco tax and the use of frightening pictures on cigarette packs have also boosted the fight against the fumes. These are some of the facts reported in the 2010 Annual Report on the National Tobacco Programme 2008-2012. spectra summarises the main points.



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# «Interests and good hobbies are the best prevention»

**Interview with Emil and Niccel Steinberger.** Does humour keep you healthy? What role do art and laughter play in health? spectra asked two people who ought to know: Emil and Niccel Steinberger. Both earn a living making people laugh. The great comedian Emil does it with his unforgettable stage shows and books, and Niccel as an author and presenter of laughter seminars.

**spectra: Emil Steinberger, at almost 80 you still go on stage about 100 times a year. Does humour keep you young?**

*Emil:* I don't think that's necessarily true. You can't solve everything with humour, problems in your job, for example, but humour can be a useful starting point for defusing a situation.

**What do you do to keep healthy?**

*Emil:* I work! I've never been keen on sport. I can't stick to even the tiniest good resolution, such as taking a half-hour walk every day. It's more likely to be my various professional activities that keep me healthy, or at least free of problems, and allow me to work.

**What do you do for your emotional well-being?**

*Emil:* I go on stage! It really does do me good to hear people laugh. And sometimes it continues even after the show. I hope the laughter doesn't stop when the audience leaves the theatre. I hope they continue to enjoy it a bit after they've gone home. I derive enormous pleasure from all this, although it is very tiring.

**Talking to spectra were:**

**Niccel Steinberger**, born in Germany in 1965, studied intercultural German studies at Bayreuth University and today is an author and gelotologist (an expert in laughter). She has been a laughter coach since she left university and also gives seminars on the subject of laughter. With her husband Emil she set up the Edition E publishing house which publishes Emil's recordings and books and her books on laughter.

**Emil Steinberger**, born in 1933, is one of the most popular and successful Swiss cabaret artists ever. Following jobs in the post office and in graphic design, his «Emil» performances were highly acclaimed in the 1970s and 1980s in Switzerland, West Germany and East Germany. He also worked as a voice artist and actor. He performed his last Emil show in 1987. In late 1993 he moved to New York, where he spent six years. Today Emil Steinberger writes books and regularly tours Switzerland and Germany with his material.

Niccel and Emil Steinberger have been married since 1999 and live on Lake Geneva.

**So you create soul-food for other people. What's your personal soul-food?**

*Emil:* Time always plays a role in people's ability to receive culture, and active people always have the least time for the arts. But everyone should have an interest that is with them all the time and motivates them to do things and experience things. I naturally prefer to consume culture in the theatre, but recently we've visited a lot of museums and have enjoyed them greatly. They provide a very uncomplicated form of entertainment. You can just walk in without having to reserve a seat, and you see and experience things that simply do you good and provide you with the impetus to go out and get active yourself.

**Niccel, it was through humour that you got to know your husband. Can you briefly tell us how you and Emil got together?**

*Niccel:* After a visit to the Roncalli Circus at the age of 15 I was totally convinced that that was where my future lay. When I was 20 I wrote to Emil asking him to give me some tips on how to become a clown. This developed into a pen-friendship. Later I did theatre studies and then intercultural German studies at university. I wrote my final dissertation about clowns. In the process I discovered laughter as a concept. I noticed how many different aspects there are and how important and good laughter is. I wanted to pass this knowledge on to others. That's why I started holding laughter seminars after I left university. I found that laughter was a good approach for me personally. I used to listen to sad music when I was sad, but that just made me sadder still. At some point I realised that I needed to listen to happy music to make me feel better.

**What do you think about hospital clowns?**

*Niccel:* I think they're great. Laughter is always good for people. It makes them stronger, braver and more creative, and it reinforces group cohesion. I am totally convinced that people who work together should laugh together. We do this in our office too, and we also pass on the laughter bug to the waiters in our favourite restaurant, for example. It's wonderful to hear that our employees look forward to coming to work every morning. It's a big compliment and I'm sure it's because we laugh together so much.

**How do you establish a «culture of laughter» in a company?**

*Niccel:* Every company has to find its own way of doing it. Some do better with spoken humour, others with slapstick humour, or maybe there's someone in the office who's a brilliant story-teller. It varies a lot. Depending on the chemistry between the individuals, they can develop their own humorous language.

**What sort of people come to your laughter seminars?**

*Niccel:* All sorts! Some of them are



young people who want to write about the subject for their high school certificate. The oldest participant so far was an 80-year-old lady. There are people who treat themselves to the seminar as a retirement gift. Others are bereavement counsellors who want to use laughter in their work. I once had a police officer who wanted to use more humour in interacting with the people he was in charge of. And there are teachers who want to incorporate humour into their lessons. Then there are seriously ill people who come because they want a chance to really laugh again. Almost nobody laughs with them in their normal lives because they think it is inappropriate. But laughter is very liberating for people who are ill.

**Emil, you have already promoted non-smoking in a campaign run by the Federal Office of Public Health. Can you imagine promoting abstinence from drinking or drugs as well?**

*Emil:* The misery that drugs cause makes me very unhappy. When I see a drug addict I always wonder what has happened to that person to make them need drugs so badly that they are unable to satisfy their need with something else. They evidently have no pleasure in their everyday life that would prevent them from sliding into this situation in the first place. But there are also people who are simply unable to solve their problems and have to run away from them.

**So you would promote drug prevention?**

*Emil:* Yes, but only indirectly. I think it's important for young people to be interested and curious. Not curious about trying drugs, though, curious about experiences, new things, culture. The seeds are sown – or not – in the parental home. There are of course homes in which the words theatre and cinema are never mentioned. The children of such parents have to go out and find some culture themselves, or have to rely on their friends for it.

*Niccel:* There are a lot of very inquisitive, sensitive and probably very artistic people in the drug scene, too. They may have got into drugs for completely different reasons and not because they didn't have any interests.

**You live on Lake Geneva, surrounded by vineyards. What's your attitude to the drug alcohol?**

*Emil:* When we moved there it didn't take long for the invitations to start coming, for dinner and wine-tastings... *Niccel:* ... or press conferences and theatre performances. You get together at ten in the morning and drink a quick glass of white wine ...

*Emil:* ... yes, exactly. I just don't want to be part of it. I simply don't go to events like that. I'm lucky in that I've never been interested in alcohol. I think I was 34 the first time I drank beer, and then only because my colleagues made me. I just didn't want to. There was a reason, of course. I always used to have to fetch beer for my parents, and that made my fingers stink of hops. I hated the smell. I have a similar attitude to wine. It's not good for me either, I'm better off drinking water. I'm pretty resolute, but sometimes you really have to stand your ground.

*Niccel:* It's funny that the people drinking alcohol always want everyone else to drink and feel good. Recently even my brother thought I ought to have a glass of wine now and again. He reckoned I ought to give myself the pleasure. But what has pleasure got to do with it? I have absolutely no need to drink wine.

*Emil:* I was shocked at what I saw in Germany. Kids drinking beer while waiting for the bus to school. It's tragic, but what can you do? The only thing that helps is distraction, other interests. I'm convinced that good hobbies and interests are the best form of prevention...

*Niccel:* ... yes, but as you are always saying, until we can manage to have a half-hour walk every day, we can't tell other people what they should and shouldn't be doing with their lives.



# The dialogue on the subject of alcohol continues

**Swiss Alcohol Action Week.** The first Swiss Alcohol Action Week ended on 29 May 2011 after around 10 days packed with wide-ranging activities.

Some 230 partners from all over the country took part in the Week, organising more than 260 activities (and over 600 events in total). The «Eindrücke»

(Impressions) section of the website at [www.ich-spreche-ueber-alkohol.ch](http://www.ich-spreche-ueber-alkohol.ch) features lots of pictures and comments on these 10 days.

So what comes next? The dialogue week was the first step in the new partner campaign focusing on alcohol. The dialogue with and in society will be continued. The project managers are planning

further activities in selected dialogue categories in conjunction with the campaign's sponsors. New information will be available after the summer break on the website and in a newsletter (subscribe on the website).

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## «Health Guide to Switzerland»: new edition of success story

**Migration and health.** The «Health Guide to Switzerland» publication helps migrants understand how to use the Swiss healthcare system. The third revised edition of the popular booklet has just been published. The website of the migesplus centre of excellence for migration-related information has also been relaunched.

Where do I go if I fall ill or have an accident? Is medical treatment free in Switzerland or do I have to pay for it? What kinds of insurances do I need? How do I protect myself against illness? Many people in Switzerland, especially migrants, cannot always answer these questions without help. This makes it

more difficult for them to gain access to adequate healthcare provision. To remedy this, ten years ago the Federal Office of Public Health commissioned a «Health Guide to Switzerland», which was produced under the leadership of the Swiss Red Cross.

### Multilingual and multipurpose

The new edition of «Health Guide to Switzerland» provides information in 18 different languages on prevention, medical insurance and medical care. It also discusses the rights and obligations of patients and the basic legal framework. It contains important contact addresses and details of healthcare for particularly at-risk groups such as asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants («sans-papiers»). Switzerland's federal structure is taken into account: the new «Health Guide» includes a folder which the cantons, municipalities and specialist units can use to provide their own information material and addresses.

### Best-known booklet in the health sector

With orders in excess of 50,000, the «Health Guide» is the most frequently ordered booklet on the [www.migesplus.ch](http://www.migesplus.ch) website of the migrant health advice organisation, migesplus. The guide is one of the best-known information booklets in the health sector among both migrants and healthcare professionals. The Health Monitoring Survey of Switzerland's Migrant Population has shown that the «Health Guide» is known to a fifth of those interviewed. It is gen-

erally handed out to target group members at counselling sessions, courses or special events.

### Relaunch of migesplus website

[migesplus.ch](http://migesplus.ch), the centre of excellence for the development, production and distribution of migration-related information material, has revamped its website, making it optically more attractive, improving the ordering procedure and expanding the range of services. Now, for instance, users are able not only to order or download booklets but also to rate them and submit comments on them. As before, organisations operating in the health sector are invited to use the website as a platform for publicising and disseminating their multilingual information material on health-related topics.

### Ordering «Health Guide to Switzerland»

The third edition is available in 18 languages from [www.migesplus.ch](http://www.migesplus.ch), where it can also be downloaded as a PDF. In addition, users can download fact sheets on the individual chapters from the guide in 18 languages via [migesplus.ch](http://migesplus.ch) (> Gesundheitswegweiser).

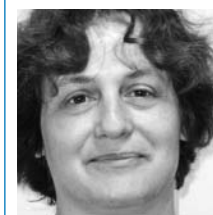
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## At first hand

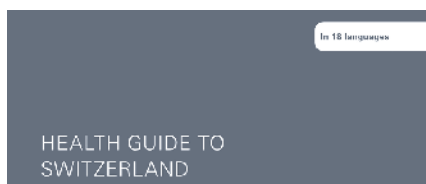
If you put the search terms «health and culture» into Google, it will start by offering you many ways to enhance your well-being and numerous city breaks – definitely in keeping with the time of year. You'll also find a lot of information about migration and health, focusing on the challenges that arise at the interface between carers, healthcare professionals and patients as a result of different values based on different cultural, religious and ideological convictions and languages. An openness to and a basic understanding of other cultures are standard skills for doctors and carers nowadays, alongside medical knowledge in the narrower sense of the term and awareness of medical ethics, economics and law.

Our culture sets great store by health. The value of health derives not only from our need for well-being; health is also an «enabler», something that makes other things possible. Health allows us to work and pursue hobbies, to maintain social contacts, be mobile, and so on. In this sense, health is rightly viewed as a very valuable, if not absolute, asset. Quality of life is determined not only by our (subjective and objective) health but also by our ability to cope with illness, disability and limitations. Characteristics such as a relaxed attitude, humour and cheerfulness are very useful in this respect.

Non-communicable diseases are closely related to lifestyle. We all know what the main risk factors are: smoking, too much alcohol, problematic eating habits and too little physical activity. Any systematic prevention policy would seem to be at odds with financial interests and the right to a self-determined life guided not solely by rational and health-oriented considerations. The balance between these in some respects divergent interests has to be negotiated through social and political processes. Yet it should not be forgotten that the foundation of a health-oriented lifestyle comprises things as simple as everyday physical activity, a healthy and balanced diet and a culture that nurtures relationships with family and friends.



Andrea Arz de Falco  
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The Swiss healthcare system in brief –  
a guide for immigrants to Switzerland



HEALTH GUIDE TO SWITZERLAND  
IN 18 LANGUAGES

Gesundheitswegweiser  
Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz  
Cross Red Swiss

# An eventful year for tobacco prevention

**2010 Annual Report on the National Tobacco Programme 2008–2012** (NPT 2008–2012). 2010 was an eventful year for tobacco prevention in Switzerland. The most significant milestone was the Federal Law on protection against passive smoking that came into force on 1 May. A large number of other measures were implemented at various levels. Below is a review of the most important developments.

The Federal Law on protection against passive smoking came into force on 1 May 2010. Since that day, spaces which are open to the public or provide a workplace for more than one person have been smoke-free. The new law is a major bonus in terms of health and a significant contribution towards achieving the third main goal of the National Tobacco Programme 2008–2012 (NPT 2008–2012), namely reducing exposure to passive smoke. An online survey was carried out in November 2010 to find out what initial experience with implementing the federal law had been and whether there were any problems. The results will be published during 2011. We already know, however, that exposure to passive smoking decreased in several cantons in 2009, even before the federal law came into effect. This was due not least to the fact that many cantons had already enacted cantonal regulations to this effect. The federal law is a minimum requirement that is valid throughout the country, and the cantons are free to implement more stringent regulations in the interests of protecting health. Fifteen cantons have made use of this option.

## Start of the SmokeFree campaign

The new campaign was developed last year by the FOPH's Campaigns Section in collaboration with the Tobacco Section and the agency Wirz Werbung AG. It went public on 10 January 2011. The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) reviewed the latest research findings, the evaluation of previous campaigns and the goals of the NPT 2008–2012 and decided to opt for a new approach. The new campaign highlights the benefits and the pleasure of not smoking. The campaign is being paid for from the To-

bacco Control Fund. It will be evaluated during 2011 and the results will be presented to the newly created NPT Communication flanking group (see next section). The hub of the multimedia campaign is the [www.smokefree.ch](http://www.smokefree.ch) website. This also provides an interface to the behavioural prevention-related programmes/projects being implemented by the FOPH's partners, including the national stop-smoking telephone hotline that is a prominent feature of communication activities.

## One goal – many voices

The NPT Communication (NPTC) flanking group was established in 2010 with the aim of liaising with the partners in prevention and facilitating an exchange of views on communication issues. In 2010 the group reviewed the year and perspectives and, above all, discussed protection against passive smoking and the Smoke-Free campaign. In keeping with the principle «One goal – many voices», the partners are an indispensable element of this national multi-year project, and information exchange and cohesion are important success factors. The standing members of the NPTC flanking group are: the FOPH, the Swiss Lung League, the Swiss Cancer League, the Federal Commission for Tobacco Control, the Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Public Health, the Swiss Association for Smoking Prevention, RADIX and Addiction Info Switzerland.

## More news

A lot of other things have been happening in tobacco prevention apart from the new Federal Law on protection against passive smoking, the new campaign and the NPTC flanking group:

- **Frightening pictures and the stop-smoking line:** Since 1 January 2010, all packs of cigarettes and other tobacco products have displayed pictures designed to discourage smoking next to the warning text. All packs also mention the national stop-smoking line.
- **Tax on tobacco raised 20 cents:** The Federal Council increased the tax levied on cigarettes by 20 cents per pack with effect from 1 January 2011. Tax hikes on tobacco are among the most effective preventive measures.
- **Information about nicotine-free e-cigarettes:** Nicotine-free e-cigarettes are a consumer item and are not covered by the Federal Law on protection against passive smoking. The updated information leaflet (No. 146) on this subject is available on the FOPH website.
- **Start of the Swiss addiction monitoring programme:** The Tobacco Monitoring Switzerland became part of the new Addiction Monitoring in Switzerland at the end of 2010. From 2011 the data on tobacco use will be generated by the Addiction Monitoring in Switzerland. The aim of the new programme is to collate data on



all types of addiction (including non-substance-related addictions such as internet use) in one project to facilitate comparison.

- **Focus on strategic leadership:** In 2010, the strategic leadership of the NPT 2008–2012 carried out an evaluation of the function, roles of and interactions between the individual stakeholders. The results are currently being analysed and potential optimisation scenarios are being developed.
- **Reorganisation at the FOPH:** In 2010 the former Alcohol and Tobacco Section was split into two separate sections for organisational reasons. The new Head of the Tobacco Section is Joëlle Pitteloud.

Lots of new things happened last year and there were a lot of developments. But the goals of the NPT 2008–2012 have not yet been achieved. For example, 15 percent of people between the ages of 14 and 65 are still exposed to passive smoking for at least seven hours per week. In recent years, however, the efforts of everyone involved have brought the objectives within reach.

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## Mini-series The National Prevention Programmes

What's happening in tobacco, alcohol, drug and HIV/STI prevention, what's new in nutrition and physical activity? In the next five issues, spectra will be highlighting the achievements in the major national prevention programmes organised by the Federal Office of Public Health:

**spectra 88 – September 2011**  
National Tobacco Programme, 2008–2012

**spectra 89 – November 2011**  
National Programme on Diet and Physical Activity, 2008–2012

**spectra 90 – January 2012**  
National Alcohol Programme, 2008–2012

**spectra 91 – March 2012**  
Third package of drug-related measures, 2007–2011

**spectra 92 – May 2012**  
National HIV and STI Programme, 2011–2017

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## Main goals of the National Tobacco Programme to the end of 2012

1. The proportion of smokers in the resident population of Switzerland must drop by 20%, i.e. from 29% (2007) to about 23%.
2. The proportion of smokers in the 14 to 19 age group must drop by 20%, i.e. from 24% (2007) to less than 20%.
3. The proportion of people who are exposed for seven hours or more per week to other people's smoke (passive smoking) must drop by 80%, i.e. from 27% (2006) to about 5%.