

spectra



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Internet & risk

2 Prevention Act founders

The aim of the Prevention Act was to enshrine prevention activities in Switzerland in a sound legal framework and coordinate them more effectively. But after years of groundwork, the envisaged federal Prevention Act foundered once and for all in the Council of States at the end of September. A total of 24 votes were needed to loosen the reins on spending, but only 22 state councillors voted in favour – even though the actual bill had been approved by a majority of both chambers of the Swiss Parliament. We talked to preventive medicine specialist and state councillor Felix Gutzwiller about the background to this significant decision.

3 Addiction potential of the Internet

Adolescents and young adults in Switzerland surf the Internet for an average of two hours a day. Only a small minority engages in excessive and therefore problematic use. These are findings of the expert report commissioned by the Swiss government in response to two parliamentary requests by Erika Forster-Vannini and Barbara Schmid-Federer. In 2009 the two parliamentarians had asked for the potential threat posed by the Internet and online games to be investigated. spectra has summarised the most important findings.

4 "LOVE LIFE" campaign 2012/13

Sexually transmitted diseases can be deceptive: they are often symptom-free and therefore may go undiagnosed, but can still have serious consequences for health. It is therefore essential for anyone who knows they have an STI to inform their sex partners of the diagnosis so that these in turn can be tested and, if necessary, treated. How they say it is immaterial – the important thing is to say it. This is the principal message of the new "LOVE LIFE" campaign 2012/13, which, for the first time, focuses on informing partners of an STI diagnosis. This issue of spectra presents the campaign.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA
Federal Office of Public Health FOPH

Covert tobacco advertising on the Internet

Online marketing. Tobacco advertising is forbidden or restricted in many countries. However, the tobacco industry is increasingly finding new ways of getting round these obstacles on the virtually uncontrolled and uncontrollable Web 2.0.

To date, 168 countries, including Switzerland, have signed up to the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and undertaken to prohibit any form of tobacco advertising on their territory. The crux of this framework convention is that the ban applies for the most part to traditional advertising media such as print, radio and television. In many respects, however, the Internet is still in something of a legal limbo with regard to tobacco advertising.

Thanks to the growing scope for interactivity and social media platforms offered by Web 2.0, the tobacco industry is finding more and new loopholes through which to market and advertise its wares.

Strong tobacco presence on YouTube

An important online platform for more or less covert tobacco advertising is YouTube. Conducted in the context of an American study in 2009, a search using the word "Marlboro" generated 3,590 hits on YouTube. Of the 20 most viewed of these videos, twelve contained explicit advertising for Marlboro. A study carried out in New Zealand yielded similar results. Its authors searched YouTube for the five leading Western cigarette brands. They analysed the contents of

the most viewed films generated by each search (total: 163) and ascertained that most of them contained material promoting smoking. Over 70 per cent of the films had a brand name in their title. One film in favour of smoking had been viewed over two million times.

Marketing in legal limbo

The tobacco industry makes clever use of the Internet to blur the distinction between marketing and market research. RJ Reynolds, the producer of Camel cigarettes, is a case in point. The company used its website to invite thousands of consumers to help launch a new cigarette and design the packing. As a deliberate secondary effect, the campaign generated a great deal of word-of-mouth propaganda for the company and its tobacco products.

Using the same weapons

These are only two examples of how the tobacco industry exploits Web 2.0 and the growing opportunities for interactivity. If such advertising is to be stopped, there is above all a need for effective and up-to-date legislation that focuses on the Internet and its platforms. With its emphasis on interactivity, Web 2.0 is an easily accessible, fun and fast channel for advertising. Tobacco prevention players are also exploiting these advantages to promote their activities and disseminate information campaigns.

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"In the end, the Act foundered because of the government spending 'brake' mechanism, even though the bill itself enjoyed majority support."

Five questions for Felix Gutzwiller.

The planned Prevention Act was definitively rejected by a small majority of votes at the end of September when the Council of States refused to loosen the spending "brake" mechanism (to allow redistribution of federal funds). The opponents of the Prevention Act feared new regulations, growing state interventionism and loss of cantonal power. We asked Felix Gutzwiller – professor of medicine, expert on prevention and FDP (Free Democratic Party) representative for Zurich on the Council of States – for his views on the background to this development.

State Councillor Gutzwiller, what does the outcome of this vote mean for you?

It is extremely unfortunate that the bill came so close to becoming law yet foundered in the end. After a first unsuccessful attempt in the 1970s/1980s, this is now the second time that efforts to create a more effective legal framework for health promotion and prevention have failed.

What enabled a majority opposed to the Act to win through in the end?

There were two main reservations about this Act in the eight years it took to develop it. One of them had to do with federalist anxieties ("the smaller cantons have always been against it despite a positive vote by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Health Ministers"), while the other related to vague fears that this Act would lead to "growing state regulation and prohibition", even to standardisation of individual lifestyles, creating a kind of "menu fédéral". In addition, people – and the media too – did not look closely enough at the opposition's alliance "for

a moderate prevention". This alliance cleverly concealed the fact that the main opposition came from the cigarette trade, the catering sector and the SME association (the SGV), all of which represent clear special interests. And, unusual for the Council of States, no further fact-based arguments were presented in the final phase. In the end, the Act foundered because of the government spending "brake" mechanism, even though the bill itself enjoyed majority support. Paradoxically, the opponents thus ensured that the Federal Office of Public Health would retain approximately seven million francs that had actually been earmarked for transfer to the Health Promotion Switzerland foundation. So if the opponents had been serious when they argued that certain campaigns should be taken away from the federal government, then there would have been all the more reason for transferring responsibility for them to Health Promotion Switzerland, as envisaged.

Why did the promotion of health equity meet with so little sympathy in the conservative camp?

Even in the conciliation committee convened to iron out differences, a member argued that the Act was basically about "social redistribution". This is a grotesque misunderstanding. Given that clear differences in life expectancy between the better and the less well educated sections of the population have been demonstrated in Switzerland too, one of the key tasks of the public sector – also from an ethical viewpoint – is to help promote health equity.

What effects will the outcome of the vote have on future prevention work in Switzerland?

We prevention specialists will certainly



Felix Gutzwiller

have to ask ourselves whether we created grounds for criticism and opposition and, if so, in what respect. Basically, however, we will continue to pursue a number of important goals of the rejected Act. I'm sure, for instance, that we can make further progress in coordinating various prevention activities involving the federal government, cantons, municipalities and private-sector health organisations. In addition, drawing up joint health goals for the country continues to be an important task.

What can prevention professionals and health politicians do better in future?

In the final analysis, the underlying reason for the defeat of the Prevention Act is probably the fact that, in Switzerland, health continues to be regarded as something best left almost exclusively to the individual citizen, and therefore the public sector is denied any legitimate right to play an active role in this area.

So there will have to be a particular focus on making people understand the interaction between behavioural and structural prevention. This will perhaps help them see that contributing to the promotion of health equity is a legitimate and important function of the state.

Online addiction: vigilance is called for



Excessive Internet use. The report "Gefährdungspotenzial von Internet und Online-Games" [Risk Potential of the Internet and Online Games] produced by the Federal Office of Public Health does not yet sound the alarm on online addiction, but warns that increased vigilance is required.

In response to two parliamentary requests by Erika Forster-Vannini and Barbara Schmid-Federer, the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), together with a panel of specialists, has drawn up an expert report on the potential threat posed by the Internet and online games. According to the report, which was approved by the Federal Council in August 2012, between one and six per cent of Internet users engage in uncontrolled, excessive and thus problematic use of the Internet. Young people tend to use the Internet more than adults, and men more than women. Excessive Internet use is not yet very widespread, but experts assume that increasingly more and increasingly younger adolescents and children will make problematic, i.e. excessive, use of the Internet in the future.

Physical and psychological consequences

According to the report, a number of studies have demonstrated a connection between excessive Internet use and physical health status. Anyone who engages in excessive surfing or game-playing on the Internet loses all sense of self and time. The consequences of such behaviour include poor eating habits, lack of exercise and insufficient or irregular sleep. In addition, sitting in front of a computer for hours on end can cause postural damage and muscular atrophy and have harmful effects on eyesight. But besides somatic damage, it can also

have detrimental psychological effects: excessive Internet users are more likely to suffer from anxiety disorders, depressive moods or ADHS than normal users.

Promoting media skills and early identification and intervention

The report recommends promotion of media skills and early identification and intervention as the most important preventive measures. The task of transmitting media skills is covered at the federal level by the Federal Social Insurance Office's national programme on protecting young people from media-related harm and on media skills. The strategy of early identification and early intervention in cases involving children and young people at risk is already part of the Third Programme of Measures to

Reduce Drug Problems (MaPaDro III).

Keeping an eye on the problem

According to the report, there is not yet any need for dedicated counselling and treatment units for "Internet addicts". However, the staff of existing addiction treatment facilities should be empowered to deal with the phenomenon. In addition, the problem of excessive Internet use will be carefully monitored as it evolves, so that any further developments will trigger a prompt response. For this purpose, the FOPH's National Addiction Monitoring survey will include questions on Internet use.

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Expert report on the risk potential of the Internet and online games

The publication "Gefährdungspotenzial von Internet und Online-Games" reports on the extent of excessive Internet use and of the health problems associated with such behaviour. It also contains an overview of preventive measures, interventions (e.g. treatment) and recommendations on action. The report can be downloaded from www.bag.admin.ch/Jugendprogramme > Wissen und Forschung > Exzessive Internetnutzung

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At first hand

The Internet is addictive. The intense fascination exerted by some Internet activities can result in excessive use that amounts to addiction, particularly in adolescents and young adults. And because the Internet access on mobile devices is improving all the time, the problem is likely to grow over the next few years. The distinction between the virtual and the real world will become increasingly blurred. Consequently, the up-and-coming generation will experience an entirely new form of socialisation, with consequences for society that can scarcely be predicted at present.

In the light of this situation, it seems obvious that, in the social discourse, certain forms of Internet use are increasingly being treated as a problem. However, this perception of such activities as a problem stems from a generation that has for the most part grown up without the Internet. It is quite conceivable that younger parents will be more successful in integrating the Internet into the everyday routine of their children's upbringing. In addition, scientific studies show that the Internet does not dominate the everyday lives of the majority of children, adolescents and adults; rather, it has become an indispensable part of the world they live in.

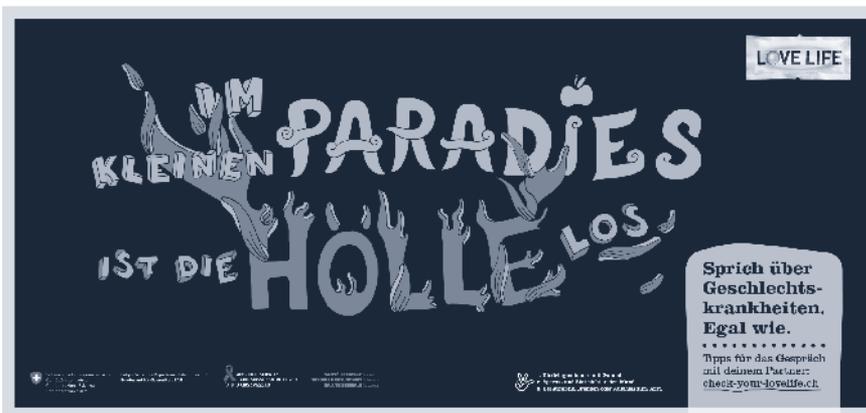
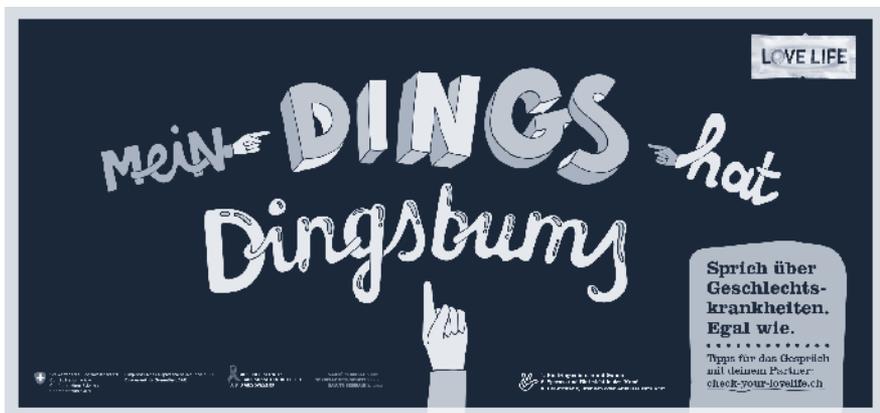
New media were already a source of anxiety a hundred years ago. As the sociologist Ernst Schultze wrote in 1909: "In almost no time at all, the child becomes addicted to devoting its entire free time to reading; it wants to do nothing else, (...) – everything is expunged by the miracles that are suddenly revealed to the child in the world of books. (...) And it will devour everything it can get hold of."

Any further discussion of the dangers and risks of Internet use should therefore take the positive aspects of the Internet into account as well. In relation to prevention, this means encouraging adolescents to take a constructive approach to the Internet at an early stage. In addition, their media skills should be developed. In this way, children and adolescents will learn not only how to use the Internet in moderation, but also how to handle other risks and dangers associated with it.



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Say it any way you like, but just say it



"LOVE LIFE" campaign 2012/13. On 12 October 2012, the Federal Office of Public Health and its partner organisations launched the 2012/13 "LOVE LIFE" campaign. Its aim is to create a climate that makes it easier for people to inform a sex partner that they have a sexually transmitted disease.

The new campaign has been launched by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), the Swiss AIDS Federation and the SGS (Sexual Health Switzerland) Foundation.

For the first time, the main focus of the "LOVE LIFE" campaign is on people informing a sex partner that they have a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Using slogans such as "You can't hide it for ever ..." and "Say it any way you like, but just say it ...", the campaign calls on people with an STI to talk to their sex partners about the diagnosis.

Whether by Morse code or thought transference – the main thing is to inform partners

The campaign demonstrates that there are countless opportunities for and ways of informing one's sex partners of an STI. The TV commercials "Schatten-

theater" (Shadow theatre), "Telepathie" (Telepathy) and "Morsen" (Messaging by Morse code) present imaginative variants of how to inform partners. The public transport and small-format posters show how the topic can be addressed humorously and inventively by using ambiguous circumlocutions or double entendres. The main message of the campaign is: "Say it any way you like, but just say it ...". Further tips on broaching the subject with a sex partner can be found on the campaign website, www.check-your-lovelife.ch, which also suggests alternative ways of conveying the information if a one-on-one conversation is not possible. Further campaign measures include online banners, interactive banners, a competition, and cards for free.

Deceptively symptom-free

Thanks to 25 years of information campaigns, HIV and AIDS are now topics that can be freely discussed. Last year, other sexually transmitted diseases featured in the public campaign for the first time. This included adding a third rule to the two existing rules of safer sex: "If you experience itchiness, stinging or discharge, go and see the doctor." This rule extended the campaign's reach to people who had symptoms of sexually

transmitted disease and obviously needed to see a doctor. Not infrequently, however, such diseases can be symptom-free and therefore go undiagnosed. An infected individual can therefore transmit the disease to their partner without him or her becoming aware of it for a long time. This can have serious consequences for health: even a symptom-free infection can cause damage and be passed on to others. With its appeal to inform sex partners of any STI, the 2012 campaign is targeting precisely this problem: if people are informed that their sex partner has an STI, they know they have to be examined and, if necessary, treated, which in turn means informing any new sex partners they may have.

Older adults as target group

The study of "Health Behavior in School-Age Children" (HBSC) shows that adolescents and young adults achieve a rather good level of protection against sexually transmitted diseases by using condoms. But older people often underestimate the risk of infection and fail to protect themselves adequately. They are therefore a key target group of this year's campaign. Also a target group are professionals who provide advice on the topic and make the diagnoses.

Link: www.check-your-lovelife.ch

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25 years of HIV and AIDS prevention

The FOPH created the "STOP AIDS" campaign 25 years ago. Every year since then, it has drawn public attention to the topic by focusing on new aspects of the problem. The campaign messages have always been adapted to prevailing social attitudes and the latest scientific findings. The campaign has thus evolved from STOP AIDS (1987–2004) and LOVE LIFE STOP AIDS (2005–10) to today's LOVE LIFE (since 2011). Originally focusing exclusively on HIV/AIDS, it now addresses all sexually transmitted diseases.

Switzerland is the only country that, every single year since 1987, has run public information campaigns dealing with HIV/AIDS and evoking the rules of safer sex: 1. Always use condoms when having penetrative sex, 2. Do not let blood or semen get into your mouth, 3. If you experience itchiness, stinging or discharge, go and see the doctor.

Eye-catching "Food Pyramid" attracted lots of visitors

FOPH stand at Comptoir Suisse. The 93rd Comptoir Suisse in Lausanne drew to a successful close on 23 September 2012, with no fewer than 185,000 people flocking to French-speaking Switzerland's annual autumn trade fair. Many of them made their way to the "Nutrition" hall and, more specifically, to the Federal Office of Public Health's stand.

Boasting an enormous food pyramid at its centre, the attractively designed stand with its interactive options in Hall 35 drew a correspondingly large number of visitors. Interest was also shown in the food game devised specially for the Comptoir, the wheel of fortune and an attractive presentation of the FOPH's Salt Strategy, which was explained with the help of three loaves of bread and test

tubes filled with salt. Many interested visitors also grasped the opportunity to seek advice from the representatives present.

The stand at the Comptoir was a joint project of the Federal Office of Public Health, the Swiss Society for Nutrition SGE, the Swiss Association of Professional Nutrition Consultants SVDE and the study course "Nutrition and Dietetics" of Geneva's Haute Ecole de Santé (HEdS). The question of whether the FOPH will be attending other fairs to highlight nutritional issues is currently under examination.

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