

Report takes aim at lax Swiss tobacco rules

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Switzerland is doing far too little to rein in tobacco and nicotine use, and is especially lax on vaping rules, according to a commission report, which blamed hefty industry lobbying.

Several of the world's biggest tobacco companies, including Philip

Morris International and British American Tobacco, have their global or regional headquarters in Switzerland.

"For decades, the [tobacco industry](#) has downplayed the harmful effects of its activity and has blocked Swiss public health policies," the Federal Commission for the Prevention of Tobacco Use said in a report published Thursday.

The commission warned that industry pressure had left the country with watered-down regulations, especially for new electronic cigarettes, heated tobacco sticks and other and vaping products.

"We need a far more restrictive approach," commission president Lucrezia Meier-Schatz told AFP Friday.

There is no age limit for purchasing such products, although several cantons are considering banning their sale to minors.

Their use is also permitted in closed public spaces, and they are not subjected to the same taxes and advertising restrictions as conventional cigarettes.

"These products need to be regulated exactly the same way as regular cigarettes," Meier-Schatz said, insisting that industry claims that the new products are far safer than cigarettes were far from proven.

Switzerland, which also happens to be home to the World Health Organization, is meanwhile one of few countries that have yet to ratify the UN agency's global Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Meier-Schatz insisted industry lobbying was to blame.

"The [tobacco](#) industry pressure on the political sphere is enormous, and has until now managed to prevent the ratification of this convention," she said.

The industry contributes about 6.3 billion Swiss francs (\$6.4 billion, 5.8 billion euros) to the Swiss economy, or one percent of its [gross domestic product](#), according to the Le Temps daily.

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