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PRESS RELEASE

Tobacco industry and Swiss universities: new research reveals extensive links and lack of transparency for the first time

A new report by the Swiss *Transparency and Truth* initiative led by the organization OxySuisse documents for the first time the extent of the links between the tobacco industry and Swiss academic institutions: 29 collaborations have been identified in 16 higher education institutions. During its research, OxySuisse encountered serious shortcomings in transparency within higher education institutions. Against the backdrop of current international scientific scandals, OxySuisse warns of a serious risk to the scientific integrity of the Swiss academic community and is setting up a secure channel for whistleblowers.

For decades, the tobacco industry has been using research and scientific collaboration to influence science and health policy. The situation in Switzerland is particularly critical: it ranks **99th out of 100 in the Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2025¹** and thus has one of the most serious deficits in terms of transparency and protection against industry influence.

29 collaborations at 16 universities – documented systematically for the first time

Transparency and Truth is today publishing the [first systematic study](#) on the links between the tobacco industry and Swiss science. Of the 31 universities, universities of applied science, federal institutes of technology and university hospitals surveyed, the study shows that 16 institutions have had **29 collaborations** since 2019, 23 of which were with **Philip Morris**. All regions of the country are affected. Forms of collaboration include joint research and publications, teaching activities, industry-funded workshops, research contracts and joint doctoral theses. There are indications that the actual number is higher, as several collaborations were not reported by the universities and could only be uncovered through additional research. Furthermore, confidentiality clauses could be hindering the disclosure of contracts.

Lack of transparency in public institutions

The lack of transparency is particularly worrying. As public institutions, universities are required to disclose this information in accordance with the transparency laws in force. Four institutions refused to disclose information or publish their contracts. In several cases, OxySuisse had to take legal action to obtain access to documents, with some proceedings still ongoing. To date, all court decisions and assessments by cantonal transparency officers have ruled in favour of

¹ Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2025: <https://globaltobaccoindex.org/fr/country/CH>

OxySuisse. A [ranking](#) of institutions based on their compliance with the principle of transparency and their links to the tobacco industry has been established.

International dimension and systematic approach

For decades, the tobacco industry has been infiltrating universities to give itself scientific legitimacy, minimise the risks of its products and influence regulations in its favour, often covertly, by manipulating data and violating the principles of scientific integrity. In Switzerland, the Rylander affair (University of Geneva)² and Philip Morris's mandate on plain packaging (University of Zurich)³ illustrate this strategy. Internationally, recent investigations, including those by the University of Bath⁴ (2024) and *Le Monde*⁵ (2025), confirm that this phenomenon persists. The *Transparency and Truth* report shows that these collaborations are not exceptions, but rather the expression of a systematic and planned strategy.

A threat to Switzerland's scientific integrity

The report reveals structural weaknesses in the Swiss university system. Most academic institutions do not have clear rules on collaboration with the tobacco industry.

OxySuisse is therefore calling for **transparency** in collaborations with the tobacco industry, the establishment of **binding national ethical rules**, and **awareness-raising** among the respective ethics committees. In parallel with the publication of the report, OxySuisse is setting up a [secure channel for whistleblowers](#), through which researchers and members of higher education institutions can confidentially report violations of scientific integrity in collaborations with the tobacco industry.

Contact

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² The Rylander case: a professor at the University of Geneva in the pay of Philip Morris – OxySuisse: <https://oxysuisse.ch/en/the-rylander-case-a-professor-at-the-university-of-geneva-in-the-pay-of-philip-morris/>

³ The University of Zurich and Philip Morris case – Transparency and Truth: <https://transparencyandtruth.ch/en/ressource/the-university-of-zurich-philip-morris-case/>

⁴ Influencing Science: PMI's covert science in Japan – Tobacco Tactics: <https://www.tobaccotactics.org/article/influencing-science-pmis-covert-science-in-japan/>

⁵ The nicotine lobby's secret expert – Le Monde: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/investigations/article/2025/11/11/the-nicotine-lobby-s-secret-expert_6747334_231.html?search-type=classic&ise_click_rank=1

→ **Report**

‘Swiss Universities: Low Hanging Fruits for the Tobacco Industry?’ (40 pages + appendices): [English](#)

→ **Website**

With documentation (**analysis** (15 pages), **summary** (1 page), **infographics, ranking**): [English](#) | [French](#) | [Italian](#) | [German](#)

→ **Whistleblower channel**

<https://transparencyandtruth.ch/en/ressource/secure-contact-channels/>

OxySuisse & Transparency and Truth

OxySuisse is an independent Swiss organisation based in Lausanne that has been working since 2004 to promote transparency, scientific integrity and the protection of public health. It systematically studies the influence of tobacco industry players on research, policy and public institutions.

<https://oxysuisse.ch/en/>

OxySuisse implements the **Transparency and Truth** initiative, which exposes the tobacco industry's influence strategies, raises public awareness and contributes to the denormalisation of this industry, which causes some 9,500 deaths in Switzerland every year. The initiative is funded by the [Tobacco Prevention Fund](#), is part of the Fund's 2025-2028 national strategy and follows the recommendations of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) aimed at protecting public policy from the influence of the tobacco industry.

A multidisciplinary team works closely with civil society partner organisations and bases its research on internal tobacco industry documents from the [Industry Documents Library](#) at the University of California in the United States (UCSF) and the [Tobacco Tactics](#) scientific databases at the University of Bath in the United Kingdom, which document international developments in the tobacco industry.

<https://transparencyandtruth.ch/en/>