



EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR SMOKING PREVENTION
RESEAU EUROPEEN POUR LA PREVENTION DU TABAGISME aisbl

FOR PRESS INFORMATION:

SMOKING IN FILMS LINKED TO TOBACCO EPIDEMIC

New studies involving nearly 15,000 young people appearing on 8 May 2007 highlight how closely Hollywood movies are linked with the tobacco epidemic among youth around the world:

- A report in the journal *Pediatrics* shows that US film productions diffuse billions of images and impressions of tobacco to US adolescents, precisely the age group that is most likely to begin experimenting with tobacco products.
- A German study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* concluded, after controlling for other factors, that teens in North Germany most exposed to the smoking in U.S. films were more than twice as likely to have tried smoking than those least exposed.
- A Mexican study (unpublished) has also found that exposure to on-screen smoking, particularly in U.S. films, has a strong link to teen smoking initiation in that population.

In late February, the Harvard School of Public Health, invited by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) to make recommendations on tobacco in films, strongly advised major US studios to "eliminate the depiction of tobacco smoking from films accessible to children and youths".

Impelled by the mounting scientific evidence, the European Network for Smoking Prevention (ENSP)—with 700 member organizations in 30 European countries, the largest network in the field of tobacco control—has resolved to raise public awareness of the impact of smoking in motion pictures on youth smoking; to advocate measures to reduce substantially the exposure of children and adolescents to smoking in films by pushing the topic up national and European political agendas; and to discourage the film industry from depicting smoking in its youth-accessible products, due to its promotional effect. We will also investigate and expose tobacco industry product placement and influence. We expect the combined effect of these actions will be to reduce the number of adolescents recruited to smoke by tobacco imagery in films.

To realize this aim, we recommend adopting the policy positions developed by the US-based Smokefree Movies initiative and endorsed by the World Health Organization: (1) producers of films with smoking should certify that no one attached to the production received any consideration from the tobacco industry or its agents; (2) anti-smoking advertisements should be shown before films with smoking, in any distribution channel; (3) tobacco branding should no longer be evident in films; and (4) future films portraying smoking should receive an age-classification certificate at least as restrictive as the U.S. 'R' rating (no admission to persons under the age of 17 without a parent or guardian), thereby creating a market incentive to keep the films most seen by teens smokefree.

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