

**Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)**  
Chaussée de Louvain 479, 1030 Brussels

To: Molly Fluet, Executive Director of Adsales  
Darianna Gessner, Chief Revenue Officer  
POLITICO

8 August 2019

**Subject: PRO subscriber/Health community complaint about sponsoring of the PRO Morning Health Care by the tobacco industry.**

Dear Ms Fluet and Ms Gessner,

On behalf of the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL), a non-profit European umbrella organisation of national and regional cancer societies, a long-term user of Politico PRO service, and the undersigned organisations, **we would like to raise a concern of the recent sponsoring of Politico's newsletters, particularly Politico PRO Health Care, by the tobacco industry (namely British American Tobacco, BAT), which occurred in the week of 24 June 2019.**

**With this letter, the undersigned organisations ask Politico to reject any form of advertising of tobacco companies as unacceptable, in regard to credible health reporting.**

Tobacco is the single most important risk factor for cancer (and other diseases), responsible for over 30% of cancer burden in Europe. Since 1990s, ECL has been a strong advocate in favour of a tobacco advertising ban, because it could not accept the promotion of a product which kills at least half of its customers.

Belgium has a very strict ban on tobacco advertising (the law of 10 December 1997). This law also applies to advertising for e-cigarettes, classified as similar products. The legislation is very strict as the tobacco industry had been circumventing rules on advertising for more than two decades. In fact, the definition of advertising in Article 3 of the Belgian law is broad enough to exclude any actual or future loophole introduced by big tobacco. <sup>1</sup>

In our opinion, there is no doubt that the sponsorship by British American Tobacco (BAT) of the Politico PRO Health Care is an infringement of the Belgian legislation and we would call on you not to accept any sponsorship by tobacco companies in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary report on the debate and vote in the Health Committee on the proposal of law to ban tobacco advertising, Chambre des Représentants de Belgique, 18 June 1996, 346/4-95/96, page 47.



Moreover, we see this as an infringement of the Article 13 of the FCTC Protocol, stating that *'Promotion of tobacco companies themselves (sometimes referred to as corporate promotion) is a form of promotion of tobacco products or tobacco use, even without the presentation of brand names or trademarks.'*<sup>2</sup> The EU ratified the protocol on 24 June 2019.

Therefore, we, the European health community, ask Politico to reject any form of advertising of tobacco companies, as this is unethical and unacceptable from our perspective as well as in order to retain Politico's credibility in health reporting.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr. Sakari Karjalainen  
President, ECL



Dr. Wendy Yared  
Director, ECL

**Supported by:**



Pieter Vanholder, Executive Director  
European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)



Mike Morrissey, CEO  
European Cancer Organisation (ECCO)



Antonella Cardone, Director  
European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC)



Susanna Palkonen, Director  
European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations



Prof. Federico Lega, President  
European Health Management Association (EHMA)

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<sup>2</sup> WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Guidelines for implementation of Article 13 – Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. See: [https://www.who.int/fctc/treaty\\_instruments/adopted/Guidelines\\_Article\\_13\\_English.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/fctc/treaty_instruments/adopted/Guidelines_Article_13_English.pdf?ua=1)





Lena Sharp, President  
European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS)



Fiona Godfrey, Secretary General  
European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)



Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, President  
European Public Health Association (EUPHA)



Prof. Jørgen Vestbo, Chair of the Advocacy Council  
European Respiratory Society (ERS)



Samira Essiaf, CEO  
European Society for Paediatric Oncology (SIOP Europe)



Prof. Umberto Ricardi  
European Society for Radiotherapy & Oncology (ESTRO)



Anca Toma Friedlaender, Director  
Smoke Free Partnership



Prof. Dr Frank Ulrich Montgomery, President  
Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)



Dr. Bronwyn King, CEO  
Tobacco Free Portfolios



Prof. Dr. Markus Peck-Radosavljevic, M.D., Chair of Public Affairs Committee  
United European Gastroenterology (UEG)

