



The Smokefree Class Competition in the school year 2007/2008:

Happy classes from different countries

The Netherlands won the International prize: a class trip to Barcelona
 A class from the Netherlands won the international main prize. The class not only stayed smokefree for the duration of the competition, but also convinced the jury with a creative film on the positive effects of non-smoking.

The European winner is class 1G from school Compaen in Zaandam.



The class will take a trip to Barcelona. Congratulation!

The main prize in Germany

In Germany, 11,350 classes started the competition and 7,184 stayed in the competition until the end. But only one class could win the main German prize: a class trip worth 6,000 Euro.

The winner is class 6a from school Sachsenweg in Hamburg.

Pupils and teachers from the class were invited to a press conference in the capital Berlin on 29th May 2008. The pupils were very excited because not only the German drug commissioner Mrs. Sabine Bätzing came to congratulate, but also the president of the German Cancer Aid Mrs. Prof. Schipanski.

But the highlight for the pupils was the visit of the actors from the famous daily soap "Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten" (good times, bad times). This soap is one of the very first in Germany to actively promote non-smoking in German TV. None of the actors smoke in the series and they support the German Smokefree Class Competition.



Front row: pupils of the winning class, behind: Mrs Grabbe (teacher), Ulrike Frank (actress), Kristin Meyer (actress), Sabine Bätzing (German drug commissioner), Professor Dagmar Schipanski (German Cancer Aid)



The two smokefree actresses from the German series "Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten" are happy to promote the Smokefree Class Competition



The main prize in Latvia

Class 8b from the school BALVU PILSĒTAS ĢIMNĀZIJA



The class won a 2-day activity trip in Latvia.

Smokefree Class Competition in Switzerland: Results of an evaluation study

Switzerland has carried out the Smokefree Class Competition since the year 2000 under the national name “Experiment Nichtraucher”.

The competition is organised by the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Tabakprävention“ (Swiss Association for Smoking Prevention), as well as drug prevention organisations, cancer and lung leagues. The competition is financed by the Swiss Tobacco Prevention Fund.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the competition, a randomised controlled trial of the Smokefree Class Competition in Switzerland was conducted in 7 and 8 graders in Northwestern Switzerland.

Main study questions were:

What kind of difference can be observed between participating classes and non-participating classes in

- their smoking rate and with regard to
- the peer pressure, mainly in classes who had participated but had to stop because of smoking students.

A total of 179 school classes with 3,251 7 and 8 graders and 161 teachers participated in the study. Classes were randomly assigned to a control and an intervention group. The Smokefree Class Competition started in November 2006 and ended in May 2007. Data assessment took place before (October 2006) and at the end of the competition (June 2007). In addition, a 4-month follow-up was undertaken (September 2007).

Indicators of smoking, well-being, passive and active violence and classroom climate were collected from students and teachers at pre-, post-test and follow-up.



The study shows an effect of the Smokefree Class Competition on information on smoking. More information is given to students and perceived by students in the competition. Effects on smoking behaviour, attitude towards smoking, well-being and effects on negative peer pressure were not found.

The authors conclude that it is likely that the present study underestimates the potential effects of the competition on the prevention of smoking, because of the study design. The Smokefree Class Competition is a good means of universal prevention, addressing all students in Switzerland on a low threshold.

The authors also suggest that the possibility of enlarging the competition with selective prevention for the vulnerable group of students who take up the habit of smoking should be considered.

And the authors found that negative peer pressure does not seem to be a problem in these classes but smoking is.

The study supports other studies and reports of teachers from other countries.

The full report on the study is available under: http://www.bag.admin.ch/tabak_praevention.

Evaluation studies on the Smokefree Class Competition: Does repeated participation has an increased effect?

In Germany a study was conducted to analyse the effects of repeated participation in the competition »Be Smart – Don't Start« (the German version of the Smokefree Class Competition). A cross-sectional study was conducted with 1,816 students who (a) participated in the competition for the first in the school year 2004/2005; (b) repeated the programme in 2004/2005; or (c) had participated in the programme in the school year 2003/2004.

41.6% of the students with a single participation in 2003/2004 never smoked; the percentage was 49.1 % in students with first and 50.5 % in students with repeated participation in 2004/2005.

The competition seems to have an initial short-term effect, which can be stabilized by repeated participation.

The full study is published as follows:

Isensee B, Hanewinkel R. Effects of repeated participation in the non-smoking competition »Be Smart – Don't Start« (in German).

Sucht German Journal of Addiction Research and Practice 2007; 53(6): 328–334.

The study is available under:

<http://www.neuland.com/index.php?s=sen&s2=inh&s3=2007602>



The scientific corner: Studies and news

The Collective Dynamics of Smoking in a Large Social Network

Nicholas A. Christakis, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., and James H. Fowler, Ph.D.

What helps people quit smoking? Whether other people in the social network have successfully stopped smoking. This is the result of a recent study published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM 2008; 358(21): 2249-2258).

Nicholas Christakis and his team analysed a huge database from the famous Framingham Heart Study, in which a densely interconnected social network of 12,067 people was assessed repeatedly from 1971 to 2003.

The scientists came to the following results: If a smoker wants to quit smoking, he should first analyse his social network. If he has many smoking people, the chances to stop smoking are quite low. Friends of smokers smoke 61% more often. However, if people have a non-smoking partner his chances to quit smoking successfully increases by 67%. Or with a friend it increases by 36%.

The authors conclude that means to support groups to become and stay smokefree might be more effective than to support smokers with nicotine replacement.

The findings from the Framingham Heart are related to groups of smokers and their success in smoking cessation. In the Smokefree Class Competition the problem of smoking is tackled from the other side: SFC focuses on group influence and tries to support groups of non-smokers to stay smokefree.

The full paper is available under: <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/358/21/2249>

A lesson to be learned from Karl Marx: smoking triggers hidradenitis suppurativa.

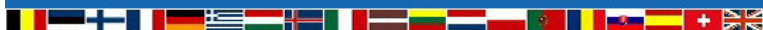
R. Happle and A. König

Karl Marx was a very heavy smoker. The British dermatologist Sam Shuster found evidence that Karl Marx suffered from a very painful skin disease, called Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS). This disease leads to abscesses in the armpit and the anal fistels.

The German dermatologists Rudolf Happle and Arne König made a study with two groups of patients – one with the diagnoses of HS and one without. They found that in the group with HS 89% were smokers. In the control group there were only 46% smokers.

They conclude that smoking might have triggered the disease in Karl Marx, even though they also point out that genetic disposition would be another important risk factor.

*The article is published in: British Journal of Dermatology 2008; 159(1): 255–256;
doi:10.1111/j.1365-2133.2008.08604.x.*



Future of the Smokefree Class Competition

In the school-year 2007/2008 the Smokefree Class Competition has been funded by the European Commission for the 11th time. After 11 years of funding, the European Commission has decided not to continue with the financial support in the school-year 2008/2009. At present the participating countries are examining other sources of funding to realise a continuation of the Smokefree Class Competition.

The Smokefree Class Competition has gained much of its success through the close co-operation among the international partner countries. Therefore we aim at maintaining the network of partners in order to exchange best practices and to improve the project and its implementation.

The Institute for Therapy and Health Research (IFT-Nord, located in Germany) has been responsible for the international co-ordination of the Smokefree Class Competition in the previous years. This year, IFT-Nord has applied at the European Commission within the Public Health Programme 2008-2013 for an "Operating Grant" for the Smokefree Class Competition Network (SFC-N). In fall the decision about the proposal will be communicated.

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