

RAINBOW SMOKE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This analysis was conducted prior to a significant change in the spring of 2025. Bowing to the Trump administration's anti-DEI policy, cigarette manufacturers removed pages describing their commitment to LGBTIQ+ people from their websites. They also stopped communicating on this topic on social media. Their support for the LGBT movement therefore appears to have been an opportunistic communication tactic, which could be discarded as soon as it no longer served their commercial interests.

- **Pinkwashing:** the tobacco industry presents itself as an ally of the LGBTIQ+ community by funding associations and promoting inclusion. However, for decades, it has targeted this community through specific advertising campaigns, contributing to a higher-than-average prevalence of smoking and taking advantage of a population that is already subject to discrimination.
- **Duplicity:** despite its inclusive image, the tobacco industry maintains a major contradiction by funding the UDC, a very conservative party that systematically opposes the rights of LGBTIQ+ people.
- **Call for action:** To combat this hypocrisy, Switzerland should ban communication about cigarette companies' "Social Responsibility" activities prevent them from exploiting these actions for image purposes, as recommended by the WHO.

The tobacco industry claims to be an ally

Japan Tobacco International (JTI) and Philip Morris International (PMI) are strongly committed to a society that is tolerant and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people. On social networks, the tobacco companies highlight the existence of internal groups dedicated to diversity and show their support for associations in the LGBTIQ+ community. JTI and PMI have been awarded the Swiss LGBTI-Label and have financed Geneva Pride until 2022. JTI is also a key partner of the Swiss Diversity association. However, beyond these positive actions, their commitment seems to be mainly motivated by image gain and commercial advantage, rather than by a desire to support the LGBTIQ+ community in the long term.

The LGBTIQ+ community is a marketing target for the tobacco industry

The LGBTIQ+ community represents a lucrative market for the tobacco industry, which has been investing in targeted advertising campaigns for over three decades, while denying the practice. LGBTIQ+ people smoke more than the average and suffer more from the devastating effects of smoking. And Switzerland is no exception to this global trend

Financial support for a party opposed to extending rights to LGBTIQ+ people

But the hypocrisy doesn't stop there. The tobacco industry is a historic supporter of conservative parties opposed to the rights and recognition of LGBTIQ+ people. Like a subsidiary of Reynolds American (owned by British American Tobacco), which made the largest corporate donation to Donald Trump's 2024 campaign in the United States, PMI has regularly funded the UDC in Switzerland since the 1980s. In 2023, the party received CHF 35,000 from the tobacco giant. This support contrasts with the inclusive image displayed by PMI and JTI, since the UDC has systematically opposed any progress in favour of LGBTIQ+ people.

Ban the instrumentalisation of the LGBTIQ+ cause

Switzerland could put end to this double discourse by banning communication on corporate "Social Responsibility" activities, in particular the promotion of inclusion, as advocated by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Such a measure would limit the influence of the tobacco industry, whose strategies benefit its economic interests to the detriment of the health and rights of LGBTIQ+ people in Switzerland.