

# LETHAL BUT LEGAL

*Professor Freudenberg in  
Brussels, Monday 23 April 2018*

*Event Report  
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## Professor Freudenberg in Brussels, Monday 23 April 2018

At the invitation of Wemos, the European Public Health Alliance and Corporate Europe Observatory, Professor Freudenberg gave two lectures about his book 'legal but lethal' in Brussels on Monday 23 April. One in the European Parliament and one in Mundo B.

In his book 'Lethal but Legal', Freudenberg (Distinguished Professor Public Health at the City University of New York) describes how corporations – through profiles of different industries (tobacco, food, gun, alcohol, automotive, pharmaceutical) – use certain methods to gain economic benefits at the expense of our public health. By producing and marketing lethal but legal products they promote the consumption of unhealthy products and are able to maintain a political and economic system that undermines public health. Meanwhile, the role of governments is eroding, as they make decisions that benefit these companies. The European Union is an important policy field to discuss these problems, because often trade and jobs have more priority than health for policy makers.

### CORPORATE CONSUMPTION COMPLEX

For the past three decades, a network of organizations, producers, retailers, lobbying groups, trade associations, PR agencies, law firms, researchers and journalists has formed into what Freudenberg calls the corporate Consumption Complex. This network has the power to maintain a system which enables corporations to promote unhealthy lifestyles and unsustainable practices.

On an annual basis around 19 million die of diseases that can be related to the consumption and use of goods from one of the before mentioned industries. To complete the picture of the damage that these industries are causing, we should also add the impact on morbidity as a consequence of (over) consumption of these goods.

One of the goals that Freudenberg sets is to



***“Corporate practices are the cause of the unhealthy lifestyles now so common across much of the world. Corporations shape our environment and our behaviour, our ideas and our consciousness.”***  
**- @CUNY’s Prof Freudenberg at our #LethalButLegal event on #publichealth.call-views**



CEO

@corporateeurope

counter the manipulation by the industry in order to protect politics and science from corporate influence. Some might think that in Europe corporate lobby is less than in the US, but in fact there are as many staff members working for the European commission as there are lobbyists in Brussel. Freudenberg stated that this is leading to the problem where lobbyists become the primary source of information for decision makers, instead of independent knowledge institutes.

Another important goal that Freudenberg sets is the revitalization of the public sector. He stated that it does not only provide another actor to compete with the private sector, but moreover, it creates an alternative that has the public interests as its highest goal.

As his final goal to counter corporate influence, Freudenberg stated that we have to challenge the view that there is no other world view



***The ‘corporate consumption complex’ which believes increased consumption is the answer is endangering public health says Prof Freudenberg***



**EPHA  
@EPHA\_EU**



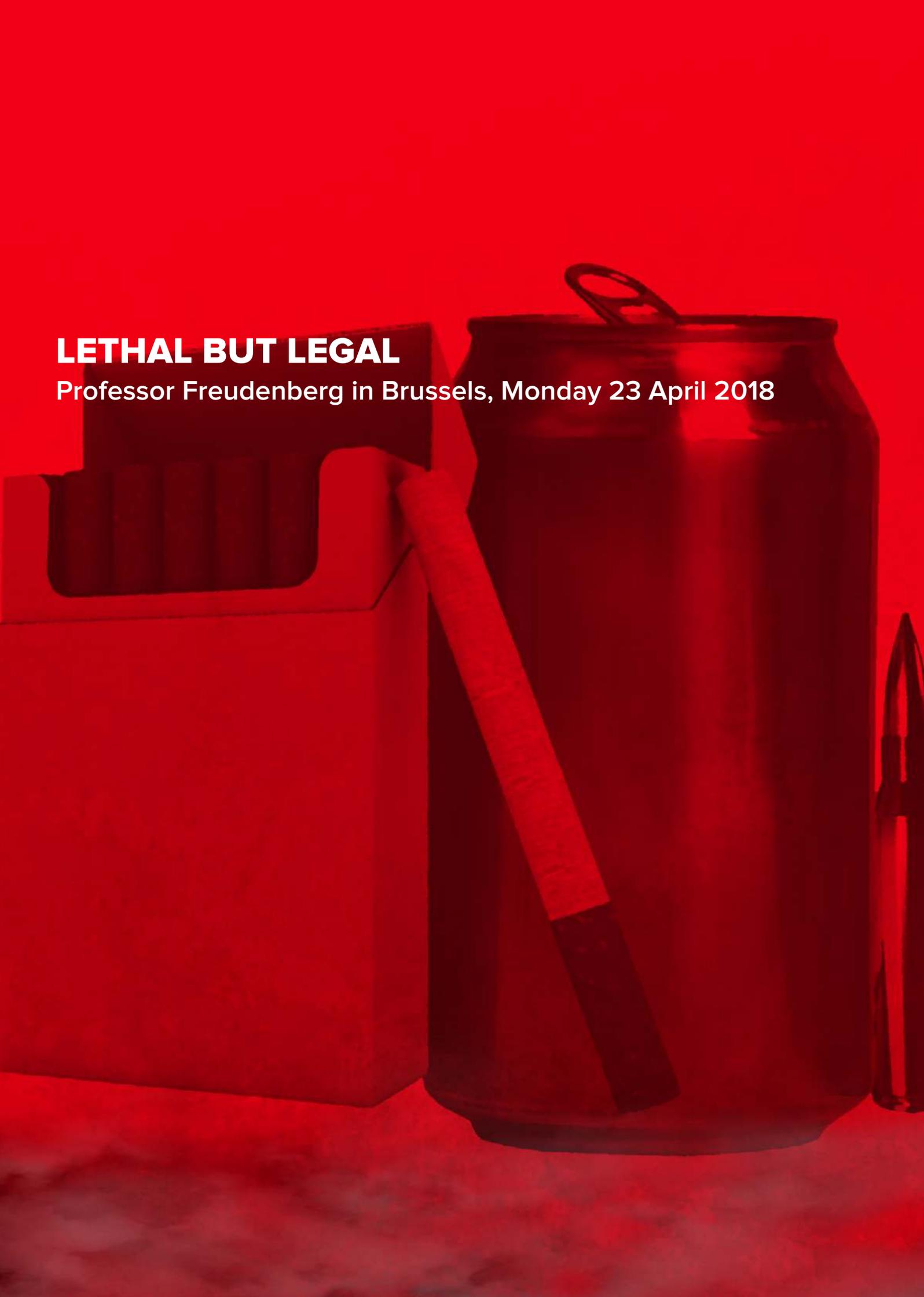
***We should seek alliances working on #publichealth and #globalhealth beyond the #EU and beyond the health sector. Beware of #rollback @ninawren says. It’s about #SocialJustice prof. Freudenberg stresses. #LethalButLegal @Wemos @corporateeurope @EPHA\_EU***



**Linda Mans  
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possible than the one of corporate industries dominating our decision-making processes. In order to achieve this goal we have to celebrate successes.

Professor Freudenberg showed us that it is in everyone’s interest to prioritize public health over economic interests. Consequently, It is important that governments should be in full control of decisions that affect our health. Decisions should be made based on independent scientific information with our health as a priority, and not based on corporate interests that damage our health.



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