

Media Literacy

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Media Literacy and egta: Introductory comments

Egta, the association of television and radio sales houses, is the European voice of over 80 television and radio advertising sales houses. The business of sales houses consists in selling available advertising space on television or radio channels for which they work and thus contribute to their financing.

Egta welcomes the Commission's EU-wide survey of Media Literacy best practices. Egta will make some preliminary comments on its views on Media literacy before specifically concentrating its response to answering questions 11 and 9, which relates to advertising and other forms of commercial communication.

Advertising plays an important role in society promoting ideas, goods and services and thus helping people to make informed choices. This freedom to advertise brings with it special responsibilities. The audiovisual sector as a whole contains 'complex' messages including advertising, which is noted by the Commission in this questionnaire. For this reason, media literacy is a core value of egta members who understand that it is important that people acquire the necessary skills to interpret the media's different messages and make informed choices. This response will outline the ways in which egta members help people, especially children, to understand and interpret these messages in the context of their daily lives.

11. Could you please list and briefly describe any important and effective initiatives in your region whose objective would be to help children and young people to acquire the necessary skills to decipher and evaluate advertising and other forms of commercial communication?

Egta's response to this question is limited to commenting on television and radio advertising and other forms of commercial communication. As a member of the Responsible Advertising and Children Programme (RAC) and therefore supportive of the Media Smart literacy programme¹, egta members understand that particular attention must be given to children when it comes to media literacy. These are highly valuable initiatives and they complement a particularly detailed regulatory framework on television advertising, particularly when it comes to children. Sales houses further help young people decipher and evaluate advertising by forming and abiding to the many self-regulatory codes that set high levels of protection for minors. In this way, egta members are committed to play their role in ensuring that commercial communications are responsible, the belief in which is a cornerstone of egta membership.

If one considers the case of television, it is the most highly regulated media in terms of commercial communications. Many provisions already exist that protect all viewers regardless of age, such as the ban on misleading advertising² and on surreptitious advertising. The obligation that advertising be "readily recognisable as such"³ required by the European directive on "Television Without Frontiers", helps viewers clearly decipher advertising and other forms of commercial communication. All of these provisions successfully make sure that viewers lacking in media literacy, vulnerable people or children and young people in particular, are aware of the commercial purpose of advertising. Moreover, egta supports these principles and the idea that all commercial communications must be distinguishable from editorial content in the framework of discussions on the proposed directive on "Audiovisual Media Services".

In addition to the regulatory restrictions outlined above, sales houses take the initiative to apply restrictions that are of the self-discipline origin, either self-regulatory codes or in-house codes of conducts. Egta is a member of European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), the body of self-regulation at European level, which in turn is a member of the Media Literacy Expert Group. Self-regulation is about the definition, enforcement and monitoring of qualitative standards for advertising. In this respect, commercial messages and the products/services they promote are submitted to self-regulatory codes. These range from internationally agreed ICC codes to specific national codes that set high standards for the advertising of products. Abiding by these codes, sales houses ensure that advertising does not abuse the credulity of vulnerable consumers.

9. What is being done in your region in order to define, highlight and spread best practices?

Egta particularly welcomes the Commission's approach to Media Literacy when it recognises the "valuable"⁴ role that self-regulation already plays in the area of advertising. Egta member sales houses strongly believe in the value of self-regulation in making sure that advertising, including is decent, legal, honest and truthful. Egta and its members promote best practices in the area of self-regulation.

¹ For more information, please go to <http://www.mediasmart.org.uk/>

² Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market- 2005.

³ Directive 1989/552/EEC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities – 1989.

⁴ Media Literacy Questionnaire, p2

At national level, egta member sales houses are key members of self-regulatory organisations, contributing both to their funding and to their management. In practice, television and radio sales houses screen ads before they are broadcast to make sure these comply with industry codes and companies' own ethical guidelines. In this respect, they can be depicted as the last "gate-keepers" in the self-regulation process.

At European level, egta takes an active part in an EASA initiative which promotes a Best Practice model through a 'get fit programme' for European advertising standards bodies. This programme aims at improving the operational mechanisms of advertising self-regulatory bodies across Europe. The results from this initiative is already demonstrating that effective self-regulation criteria are being met and thus reinforce the quality of advertising standards, which contribute to a better understanding from viewers of the commercial nature of advertising.

Conclusion

In conclusion, egta is committed to improving media literacy among children and young people by taking an active part in the Responsible Advertising and Children Programme (RAC), by supporting the Media Smart literacy programme and by ensuring that advertising can be easily deciphered and evaluated. Furthermore, egta member television and radio sales houses invest in advertising self-regulation as a means of making sure advertising is always honest in delivering high levels of consumer confidence. In this context, egta looks forward to the European Commission's findings and proposals in the resulting Communication on Media Literacy in 2007.

About egta

egta is the trade **association of television and radio advertising sales houses** (both independent of a channel or in-house), whose members commercialise the advertising space of both private and public TV/radio channels all over Europe.

§ 57 TV members

§ 25 Radio members

§ 26 European countries including 19 EU Member States

§ Nearly 70% of the European TV advertising market

§ 50% of radio advertising market in countries represented by the egta members

egta provides a network for its members based on **relationships with more than 1000 high-level advertising executives**. Egta fulfils different functions for its members in fields of activities as diversified as regulatory issues, audience measurement, sales methods, interactivity, cross-media, etc. Over its 32 years of existence, egta has clearly become **the reference centre for television and radio advertising in Europe**.

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