



Responsible
commercial
communications
for alcoholic beverages

EGTA ISSUE BRIEF ON ALCOHOL ADVERTISING

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// Context

Alcoholic drinks are not ordinary consumer goods. When inappropriately consumed, there is the potential for alcoholic beverages to be abused, which can lead a small proportion of the population - and particularly those most vulnerable - to dependence and/or harmful conduct.

For these reasons, legislative measures have been put in place for the advertising of alcoholic beverages in Europe. In particular, broadcast advertising for alcoholic beverages is subject to various regulatory limitations established at both European and national level.

Sales houses take their role seriously in monitoring the content of alcohol advertisements and as a result are constantly reviewing their practices. However, it has been proven that alcohol advertising does not cause alcohol-related harm, and further restrictions to marketing communications are not a solution. By voluntarily complying with many different self-regulatory standards and industry codes of conduct, TV and radio sales houses complement the safeguards in place at national level to ensure the highest level of responsibility on all broadcast advertising on any media platform.

// Legislation

The level of regulation on alcohol advertising varies from country to country. Television is the most restricted media, with partial or total bans (based on time and/or products) existing in over one third of EU member states.

The principal EU legislative act that tackles audiovisual alcohol advertising is the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), 2007.

AVMSD rules on alcohol

Article 9(e) states that: audiovisual commercial communication for alcoholic beverages "*shall not be aimed specifically at minors and shall not encourage immoderate consumption of such beverages.*"

Article 22 provides further criteria to be followed for television advertising of alcoholic beverages. 2013 saw the final transposition of the Directive into national law by all member states.

// EU level action

The first **EU Alcohol Strategy** was adopted by the European Commission in October 2006 in response to the growing recognition of the public health impact of harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption in the EU. The Strategy identified five priority themes for action and came to an end in 2012.

The **European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF)** was created in 2007 by the European Commission. The forum is a multi-stakeholder, action-oriented group that meets twice a year. To become a member, representatives of the alcohol industry, advertising sector, NGOs and public health organisations have to make a commitment aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm. At the same time the **Committee on National Alcohol Policy and Action** was launched. The Committee is made up of representatives from the national governments and meets twice a year to share information,

knowledge and good practice on reducing harmful alcohol consumption. The **European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (2012–2020)** was published in 2012. Among other things the plan calls for countries to have systems in place to prevent inappropriate and irresponsible alcohol advertising and marketing that target children and young people. In 2013 DG SANCO published its final report on the *“Assessment of the added-value of the EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm”*. It shows that work carried out as part of the EAHF’s work, or in connection with it, has contributed to strengthening and expanding self-regulatory systems, in particular for the marketing of alcoholic beverages.

// Global level

In 2010, the World Health Organisation (WHO) released a *Global Strategy to Confront the Harmful Use of Alcohol*. It recommends setting up regulatory or co-regulatory frameworks, to regulate the content

and volume of direct or indirect marketing, sponsorships, promotions in connection with activities targeting young people, and new forms of alcohol marketing techniques such as social media.

// egta position

Any restrictions on TV and radio advertising for alcoholic beverages would have a significant economic impact on the European audiovisual industry given that revenues from this sector may reach up to 5% of the turnover of European sales houses.

In view of the importance of television and radio advertising and its impact on society, egta members are well aware of their responsibilities when it comes to advertising alcoholic beverages.

In order to highlight the fact that the advertising of alcoholic beverages on TV is strictly regulated, both through legislation and self-regulatory codes, egta, as part of a commitment to the European Al-

EGTA'S OPINION

egta works with its members to ensure responsible audiovisual marketing of alcoholic beverages across Europe, contributes actively to the debate at European and international levels as a founding member of the EU Alcohol and Health Forum, and is a firm supporter of a multi-stakeholder approach.



cohol and Health Forum, published in 2009 a compendium of the legislation and self-regulation on alcohol advertising that exists across the EU. The compendium also provided advertising professionals with a benchmarking tool and facilitated the exchange of best practices across Europe in the area of responsible alcohol advertising.

This was followed in 2011 by the launch of egta's website on responsible alcohol advertising which built upon the existing compendium and includes the latest news relating to the debate on alcohol advertising taking place at both the EU and national level and a collection of useful studies that, together with egta's position papers and analysis documents, help to clarify how TV and radio sales houses ensure the highest level of responsibility on all broadcast advertising on any audiovisual media platform.

// Self-regulation

In the field of advertising, self-regulation is well established in many European countries and has matured over the years so that its added-value is now recognised by decision-makers and numerous stakeholders. In addition to standards developed and agreed on by all three parts of the industry, (i.e. advertisers, agencies and media), advertising self-regulation is characterised by the existence of independent bodies, self-regulatory organisations, responsible for drafting and providing interpretations of the codes, as well as for ensuring compliance with the codes themselves.

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Consolidated Code of Advertising and Marketing Communication Practice is the foundation for all national self-regulatory advertising codes that cover the advertising of alcoholic beverages. This code applies to all marketing communications, and at the heart of the ICC code is the principle that *"advertisements should be legal, decent, honest and truthful. They should conform to accepted principles of fair competition and good business practice."* The

national and international codes are committed to ensuring that audiovisual advertising for alcoholic beverages is neither directly targeted at, nor appealing to minors. Furthermore, alcohol producers' own codes of conduct and alcohol sector-specific codes set additional safeguards to be respected internally. These cover various aspects of commercial communications, from the issue of appeal to the one of placement.

additional egta information available upon request:

- **egta's database on alcohol advertising regulation.**

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