



PURPOSE: For information  
CONCERNING: Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)  
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**Open Letter to the Members of the Committee on Culture and Education  
about the Audiovisual Media Services Directive**

Please find below a joint open letter and its Annex addressed to the members of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) about the Audiovisual Media Services Directive.



## Open letter to the members of the Committee on Culture and Education

Brussels, 10 April 2017

Dear members of the Committee on Culture and Education,

### Time to put words into action

On 25 May 2016, the European Commission adopted a proposal to revise the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), which includes provisions governing commercial communications for foods high in fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS food) and alcoholic beverages to children and minors.

MEPs from all parties have repeatedly voiced their concerns about the rising levels of childhood overweight and obesity and the alarming levels of youth binge drinking that persist in Europe today. Yet, when the opportunity arises to put declarations into action, the response falls short. The draft report of your Committee has at various instances even weakened the Commission proposal, which is striking for the European Parliament that most closely represents the interests of Europe's people.

Any realistic attempt to tackle child obesity and alcohol harm in youth must reduce children's and adolescents' exposure to marketing. It is well-established that advertising influences consumption patterns – especially for children – by increasing overall consumption of the product category advertised, and not just of a certain brand. Nevertheless, the co-rapporteurs of your Committee propose to delete the one article that explicitly addresses the marketing of HFSS food.

Effective rules to limit exposure to health-harmful marketing, including restrictions on advertising during peak viewing hours and on sponsorship and product placement, will protect minors and empower parents in their efforts to educate children about healthy lifestyles. Self-regulation has failed to achieve this result. To ensure that frontrunner governments can take firm action they should be able to limit broadcasts from other countries on public health grounds.

We, members of this coalition of health organisations, draw your attention to the evidence we have repeatedly presented on the links between marketing and health, and highlight that with the AVMSD you have a once in a decade opportunity to protect the well-being of Europe's future generation. We also strongly recommend that you propose WHO's nutrient profile model as the mechanism by which to define HFSS foods.

As ever, we remain at your disposal for further discussion.

Yours sincerely

*Names of organisations*

European Public Health Alliance  
European Heart Network  
European Alcohol Policy Alliance  
European Centre for monitoring Alcohol Marketing  
International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies – AIM  
IOGT-NTO  
European Association for the study of the liver  
Standing Committee of European Doctors  
British Medical Association  
European Kidney Health Alliance  
United European Gastroenterology  
Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems  
Institute of Alcohol Studies  
Alcohol Action Ireland

*For more detail on evidence for the impact of marketing to children, please consult the list of studies attached*

## Annex to

## Open letter to the members of the Committee on Culture and Education of 10.04.2017

### Impact of marketing on consumption patterns

- G. Hastings et al., “Review of Research on the Effects of Food Promotion to Children” (University of Strathclyde, 2003)
- WHO: The extent, nature and effects of food promotion to children: a review of the evidence to december 2008
- WHO report on Marketing of foods high in fat, salt and sugar to children: update 2012–2013
- WHO European region report: Tackling food marketing to children in a digital world: trans-disciplinary perspectives
- WHO report Monitoring food and beverage marketing to children via television and the Internet
- European Commission report: Study on the impact of marketing through social media, online games and mobile applications on children's behaviour
- ECORYS (2015) Study on the exposure of minors to alcohol advertising on linear and non-linear audio-visual media services and other online services, including a content analysis – Final Report
- Anderson, P., du Bruijn, A., Angus, K., Gordon, R. & Hastings, G. (2009). Impact of alcohol advertising and media exposure on adolescent alcohol use: A systematic review of longitudinal studies. Pubmed, Alcohol and Alcoholism, 44 (3), 229-243
- Science Group of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (2009) Does marketing communication impact on the volume and patterns of consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially by young people?

### Self Regulation and Public Health

- Noel et al. (2016) Industry self-regulation of alcohol marketing: a systematic review of content and exposure research, pubmed, 2017 Jan;112 Suppl 1:28-50. doi: 10.1111/add.13410. Epub 2016 Oct 11.
- Ronit et al. (2014) Obesity and industry self-regulation of food and beverage marketing: a literature review, pubmed, Eur J Clin Nutr. 2014 Jul;68(7):753-9. doi: 10.1038/ejcn.2014.60. Epub 2014 Apr 9.
- Galbraight-Imami and Lobstein (2013) The impact of initiatives to limit the advertising of food and beverage products to children: a systematic review. <http://bit.ly/2fsmfeq>
- Bartlett and Garde (2013) Time to Seize the (Red) Bull by the Horns: The European Union’s Failure to Protect children from alcohol and unhealthy food marketing.
- The Regulation of Alcohol Marketing: From Research to Public Health Policy Addiction, Volume 112, Issue Supplement S1Pages 1–127

### WHO nutrient profile model

- WHO Regional Office for Europe’s Nutrient Profile Model

## **Calls to address marketing of unhealthy foods and alcohol**

- EP resolution of 1 February 2007 on 'Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases'
- European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 on Alcohol Strategy
- EU Commission White paper on A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues
- EU Action plan on childhood obesity 2014 -2020
- WHO Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children: <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/recsmarketing/en/>
- WHO: Report of the Commission on ending childhood obesity
- WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2014
- OECD (2015) Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use
- Set of 9 voluntary global NCD targets for 2025
- Sustainable development goals: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>
- WHO Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in the WHO European Region (2016 – 2025)