

# EU alcohol beverage producers agree to common marketing standards, reinforced self-regulation

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: Leading producers from the beer, wine and spirits sectors have launched a comprehensive initiative to strengthen independent advertising self-regulatory schemes for alcohol beverage marketing by establishing a set of common, rigorous standards for their marketing communications throughout the European Union.



Under the Responsible Marketing Pact, AB InBev, Bacardi, Brown-Forman, Carlsberg, Diageo, Heineken, Pernod Ricard and SAB Miller, which together represent a majority of European alcohol advertising spend, will work with the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA), EU and national associations to agree and implement common standards for responsible advertising and marketing aimed at adults of legal purchase age, which will be subject to external scrutiny through independent monitoring and public reporting.

For the first time ever, the Responsible Marketing Pact will create common standards supported by beer, wine and spirits producers throughout the EU to:

- Prevent minors from inadvertently seeing alcohol beverage marketing communications on social media. This will include common standards for effective age controls, Facebook sponsored stories, user-generated content, sharing/forwarding functionality, etc.
- Set a common adult demographic standard for alcohol beverage marketing communications across all media, thereby limiting undue exposure of minors to drinks ads. This will take the form of a common baseline standard that ads may only be placed in media where at least 70% of the audience is reasonably expected to be above legal purchase age.
- Prohibit any alcohol beverage marketing communications that might be particularly attractive to minors by ensuring that the content of ads appeals primarily to adults. The initiative will provide consistent guidelines and enforcement in both letter and spirit of rules to ensure ads primarily appeal to adults of the legal purchase age.

Once these standards have been agreed, implementation and compliance will be independently monitored by Accenture and national advertising self-regulatory organisations (SROs) across Europe, and will be publicly reported. SROs will also be tasked with enforcing the standards at the national level with sanctions including public naming and shaming, mandatory pre-clearance for future campaigns, and referral to the competent national regulatory authorities in cases of repeat offences.

## A 'commitment'

The Responsible Marketing Pact takes the form of a "commitment" by WFA and the companies to the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF). The EAHF is the flagship programme of the European Strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol-related harm. Chaired by the European Commission, it brings together alcohol beverage producers, civil society and consumer representatives, the medical profession, the advertising and retail sectors and others to promote voluntary actions to help reduce alcohol-related harm in Europe.

The promotion of effective standards to ensure responsible alcohol beverage marketing has been an important area of focus for the EAHF. The Responsible Marketing Pact demonstrates the continuing commitment of the beer, wine and spirits sectors to the objectives of the Forum.

As an EAHF commitment, the Responsible Marketing Pact has to comply with the monitoring and reporting requirements of the EAHF. It will be subject to continuous oversight by the European Commission and WFA will present a first progress report on implementation and compliance with the agreed common standards by June 2013. A final report is due by February 2015.

## **'A turning point'**

Stephan Loerke, WFA managing director, said: "Today marks a turning point in the long-standing commitment of alcohol beverage producers to responsible marketing. The Responsible Marketing Pact breaks new ground because it is the first time major companies from the beer, wine, and spirits sectors have come together to seek unified responsibility standards for all alcohol beverage marketing communications".

"Alcohol beverage producers take seriously the expectations from our consumers and society at large that our marketing communications must respect the highest standards. We are joining forces with our partners to show that meeting and exceeding these expectations continues to be our priority," said Jean-François van Boxmeer, CEO of Heineken.

"This is a unique case of our industry pooling its collective resources and experiences to build common alcohol marketing standards that will stand the test of time. The pact represents a major milestone in responsible marketing," said Andrew Morgan, president of Diageo Europe.

"By setting self-regulatory standards that go significantly further than the law, and verifying that these are complied with, we will make a tangible difference to the governance of beverage alcohol marketing. This is an excellent example of the contribution of voluntary action to the objectives of the European Strategy on reducing alcohol-related harm," said Christian Barré, CEO of Domecq Bodegas, Pernod Ricard.

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