

# A spoonful *of* sugar

Television food advertising aimed at children:  
An international comparative survey



**Consumers International**  
Programme for Developed Economies

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Please note that the information, conclusions and recommendations in this report are those of Consumers International's Programme for Developed Economies and may not necessarily reflect the policies of its individual members or the views of the above mentioned organisations.

Coordinated by Lucy Harris

Written and researched by Sue Dibb

Edited by Kelly Haggart, Lucy Harris and Alina Tugend

Designed and produced by Steve Paveley

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# Table of Contents

**Executive summary** *Page 4*

**Recommendations** *Page 6*

**1 Introduction** *Page 10*

**2 Background** *Page 11*

**3 Survey of advertising to children in 13 countries** *Page 14*

3.1 Quantity of advertising

3.2 Type of products advertised

3.3 Food advertising

3.4 Types of advertised foods

3.5 Nutritional analysis of advertised products

3.6 Programme sponsorship

3.7 Discussion (including effects of advertising)

**4 The regulation of television advertising to children** *Page 27*

4.1 International regulation

4.2 Advertising to children

4.3 Food advertising

4.4 Enforcement of regulations

4.5 Discussion

**5 Consumer action** *Page 48*

5.1 Australia

5.2 Germany

5.3 Greece

5.4 The Netherlands

5.5 Norway

5.6 Sweden

5.7 UK

5.8 United States

5.9 European initiatives

5.10 Discussion

**6 Conclusion** *Page 55*

**Appendix I – Participating organisations** *Page 56*

**Appendix II – Product categories** *Page 57*

**Appendix III – Food categories** *Page 57*

# Executive summary

**Children have become an increasingly important market for advertisers and therefore, not surprisingly, much television advertising is aimed at children. This study has examined the wide diversity in the practice and regulation of television advertising to and for children, with special emphasis on food advertising, in thirteen developed economy countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and the USA.**

## Main findings:

### Advertising to children

- Children are acknowledged to require special consideration in respect to advertising as they are less able than adults to understand fully the intent of advertising or its persuasive techniques and are therefore less able to judge it critically. However the extent to which such considerations are enshrined within regulations or codes of practice, whether internationally or nationally, varies considerably. For example, Sweden and Norway do not permit any television advertising to be directed towards children under 12 and, no advertisements at all are allowed during children's programmes. Australia does not allow advertisements during programmes for pre-school children and, in the Flemish region of Belgium, no advertising is permitted 5 minutes before or after programmes for children. Sponsorship of children's programmes is not permitted in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden while in Germany and the Netherlands, although it is allowed, it is not used in practice.
- The research for this report found the highest level of advertising to children was in Australia – an average of 34 advertisements an hour, more than double that found in many European countries and up to 15 times as many as in countries with the least advertising (Sweden and Norway). The second highest level was found in the USA with the UK having the most within Europe.

- Consumer organisations in this study expressed concerns about the amount of advertising to children; about marketing techniques such as the use of promotional gifts, cartoon characters and personalities as well as sponsorship, teleshopping and premium rate phone services targeting children.
- Lack of adequate enforcement of advertising regulations and lack of attention towards consumer concerns within regulatory bodies were identified by consumer organisations as problems in many countries.
- In cases of cross-border advertising, consumer organisations held the view that broadcasters should be obliged to observe the national advertising rules of the receiving state when the target audience is clearly citizens of that particular state, for example, when the programme is in the language of the receiving state.
- Consumer organisations have an important role to play at both the national and international level in ensuring that adequate consumer protection for children, in the area of television advertising, is maintained and strengthened where necessary.

### Food advertising

- Food advertising comprised the largest category of advertised products to children in virtually all countries.
- Confectionery, breakfast cereals (mainly sweetened) and fast food restaurants overall accounted for over half of all food advertisements. Confectionery was the largest category comprising nearly a fifth of all food advertising. Other types of food products that were widely advertised were savoury snacks, dairy products, ready prepared foods, soft drinks, cakes and biscuits and desserts. Participating consumer organisations have expressed concern about the negative effect such a largely 'unhealthy' diet of commercials for foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt may have on children's health and nutrition. Advertisements for healthier foods such as

fruits and vegetables were either non-existent or extremely few in number.

- The highest levels of confectionery advertising were found in Greece and the UK – four times more than found in Germany and over 35 times as much as in Sweden. The USA and Australia topped the league for breakfast cereal advertising. The most prolific advertiser was McDonald's, with adverts for the fast food chain found in virtually every country. Other widely advertised brand names were Nestlé, Kellogg's, Mars and Cadbury's.
- A nutritional analysis for this study of foods advertised on television to children in the UK found that 62% of advertisements were for products high in fat, 50% were for products high in sugar and 61% for products high in salt. Overall, 95% of advertisements were for foods that were high in fat and/or sugar and/or salt – a finding broadly consistent with studies in other countries.
- In most participating countries there are few or no specific rules concerning food advertising to children beyond the rules which must apply to all advertising.
- Considerable scope exists for the development of nutrition education and the promotion of positive nutritional messages to children using advertising and the media.

# Recommendations

**Children require special consideration with respect to advertising. This principle is enshrined in many national regulatory systems, at the European Union level and more broadly in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children should be free from exploitation ‘prejudicial to any aspect of the child’s welfare’.**

This report examines the differing ways in which the regulation of television advertising and the systems of enforcement, at the national and international level, give consideration to children. It highlights the concerns that consumer organisations share about aspects of television advertising to children, particularly that of food advertising. The following recommendations reflect a consensus, among participating organisations, for appropriate action.

## Advertising standards

This report illustrates the way in which advertising regulations concerning children differ markedly among countries, reflecting different cultural traditions and national priorities for consumer protection and public health. At an international level, bodies such as the European Union and the International Chamber of Commerce have sought to introduce regulations, or codes of practice, that are applicable internationally. From a consumer perspective, such internationally agreed standards are valuable where they encourage a high degree of protection and where they allow individual countries to set higher standards reflecting national priorities and traditions. However, consumer organisations are concerned about the growing pressures from trade interests for national regulations to be dismantled and the consequent decline in consumer protection for children.

*International standards bodies should set high levels of protection for children. Individual countries should be free to maintain or introduce their own advertising regulations over and above those agreed internationally where these reflect*

*cultural considerations or national policy objectives and priorities, such as those relating to public health or consumer protection.*

## Cross-border advertising

Increasing globalisation of trade, as well as developing broadcasting technology, have led to a rise in cross-border broadcasting. In this context, advertising regulations concerning children have become a focus of attention within the European Union. Disagreements currently exist over which advertising regulations should apply – those of the country from which the broadcast is transmitted, or those of the receiving country. Current convention is that the regulations of the country from which a transmission is broadcast should apply although this permits broadcasters to circumvent stricter rules by relocating to another country.

*Broadcasters should be obliged to observe the national rules on advertising of the receiving state when the target audience is citizens of that state and the programmes and/or advertisements are in their language or with subtitles in their language.*

*There should be greater co-operation among national regulatory bodies at an international level to facilitate the regulation of cross-border advertising and its enforcement.*

## Protection of children

The way in which advertising regulations in different countries provide protection will depend on prevailing cultural considerations.

*Advertisers should ensure that their marketing activities are socially responsible and take account of the concerns of consumer organisations and parents.*

*Advertising regulations should protect children from misleading, unfair or excessive amounts of advertising, particularly of products such as certain types of food, which may discourage healthy eating.*

Children’s ability to comprehend advertising depends on their age. Many young children,

especially under the age of six, have difficulty distinguishing between advertising and programmes, and most do not fully understand the purpose of advertising. It is not until around or after the age of 12 that most children have developed a fuller understanding of the purpose of advertising. Therefore advertising addressed to, or appealing to, children – particularly younger children – can be unfair and misleading.

*Advertising regulations should take account of the age of the likely child audience, with younger children requiring greater protection than older children and teenagers.*

The countries included in this report have adopted differing approaches in the degree to which their national regulations protect children.

*Regulatory bodies, in consultation with consumer organisations, should consider whether there is a need to introduce further restrictions than those that currently exist. Restrictions to be considered, which currently apply in some countries, include: no advertising during programming for pre-school children; no advertising to be directed to children under 12; no advertising during, or immediately before or after, children's programmes, and timing restrictions on the amount of advertising permitted during children's programming.*

## **Advertising techniques**

Consumer organisations have expressed concern about the way products are promoted to children, for example, the use of cartoon characters or other personalities in advertisements, which can make it harder for young children to distinguish between programmes and advertisements. In addition, the use of such characters can take advantage of children's sense of loyalty and affection for such characters, which can be considered to be an unfair marketing technique.

*Broadcasters should ensure there is a clear break between programmes and advertisements through the use of visual and auditory signals. In addition, advertising techniques should not cause confusion between programmes and advertisements.*

Sponsorship of children's programmes is also

of concern to many consumer organisations. As sponsorship can blur the distinctions between advertising and programming, and be a hard concept for young children to understand, it is not permitted in a number of countries. Similarly, in many countries, teleshopping and the promotion of premium-rate telephone services are not permitted to target children or be broadcast in association with children's programming.

*Where restrictions concerning marketing activities do not exist, or where there is concern over the spirit of their implementation, regulatory bodies, in consultation with consumer organisations, should consider whether further measures are needed.*

## **Food advertising**

This study found that food advertising is the single largest category of TV advertising during programmes of appeal to children. This and other studies have shown that much food advertising to children is for products which are not encouraged in a healthy, balanced diet. The importance of a good diet in childhood is well established not only for the promotion of good health during childhood but also for long-term health in later life.

*Appropriate bodies such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the European Commission and national regulatory bodies, in consultation with consumer organisations, should recognise the potential health impact of food advertising and draw up appropriate codes of practice and/or regulations on advertising of food specifically targeted at children.*

*Such rules should ensure that food advertising does not undermine progress towards national dietary improvement by misleading or confusing consumers or by setting bad examples. In particular, advertisements to children should not encourage excessive consumption of foods that are high in sugar, fat and/or salt.*

*Furthermore, food advertisements, particularly those to children, should pay regard to considerations of oral health. They should not encourage frequent consumption throughout the day of products liable to cause tooth decay (such as those containing sugar, and acidic drinks) or associate products with situations such as bedtime.*

In some countries, confectionery adverts must illustrate a toothbrush logo to remind children to brush their teeth.

As interest in health and nutrition has increased, so too has the use of health-related claims in the marketing of food.

*In countries where these are permitted, advertisers must be able to substantiate claims with sound scientific evidence, and such claims should not give a misleading impression of the nutritional or health benefits of the food.*

The increase in eating disorders among young people has caused concern. While recognising that the factors behind such disorders are complex, this report recommends that *advertising regulations should recognise the role that advertising has in promoting body images and should ensure that advertisements do not suggest that being underweight is desirable or attractive. Advertisements for slimming products or foods sold as an aid to slimming, should not appeal to children or teenagers nor be broadcast during programmes popular with young people.*

## Research

The extent to which advertising influences children's eating habits has become a matter of debate, with consumer organisations and advertising interests often taking opposing views. While evidence exists that advertising influences children's food preferences and choices, much of this research has focused on short-term, direct effects.

*There is a need for further independent research particularly into the longer-term, 'cumulative' and more indirect effects of food advertisements on the attitudes and behaviour of children.*

## Nutrition education

There is considerable scope for the development of nutrition education and the promotion of positive nutritional messages to children. In particular, the media and advertising could play an important role in promoting greater understanding of health and nutrition.

*Appropriate bodies, including the European*

*Commission, national governments, health and education agencies and broadcasters should investigate ways of using television to promote positive nutrition messages to children.*

This could include the greater use of public service announcements, a feature of broadcasting in a number of countries in this survey, to provide positive nutritional messages as a counterweight to the advertising appeal of foods of low nutritional value. Other options include the sponsorship of health and nutrition messages by advertisers, though that remains controversial.

## Consumer education

It is important for the media, schools, consumer bodies and parents to help children develop the ability to understand the purpose of advertising and develop a critical and questioning attitude towards it and other forms of marketing.

*Studies which address advertising and marketing from a consumer perspective should be part of children's school education from an early age. Consumer organisations can assist by providing advice and information for parents. Broadcasters should be encouraged to play a responsible role through programming or the use of public information announcements.*

## Regulatory structures and procedures

*There is a need for more effective enforcement of advertising regulations.*

*In order to ensure that they are effective and credible, advertising regulatory bodies, whether statutory or self-regulatory, should:*

- *be independent and impartial*
- *have a fully transparent decision-making process;*
- *include adequate consumer representation;*
- *have a majority of non-industry interests in decision-making bodies;*
- *pre-check and monitor advertisements to ensure compliance with regulations;*

- *be open to consumer complaints in which the burden of proof is on the advertiser;*
- *have the power to enforce decisions and to demand appropriate redress; and*
- *co-operate at the international level.*

In many countries, lack of awareness by consumers of a regulatory body and its complaints procedure was cited as a problem.

In addition, it was considered that more could be done to improve industry's knowledge of codes of practice.

*To increase the confidence of consumers and industry, regulatory bodies should conduct ongoing public awareness campaigns both for consumers and the advertising industry.*

# 1 Introduction

**Children have become an increasingly important market for advertisers, and much television advertising is directed towards children. Food advertising is one of the largest categories of advertised products to children, yet studies in a number of countries have found that the majority of food advertisements aimed at children are for foods that are not recommended in a healthy, balanced diet. Consumer organisations have expressed concern about the effect such commercials may have on children's health and nutrition.**

The aim of this project was to provide information on the practice and regulation of television advertising to and for children, with special emphasis on food advertising in 13 developed-economy countries. The research involved consumer organisations in these countries, as listed in Table 1, and took place during 1995/6. Participating consumer organisations undertook to monitor television advertising to children and to collect information on national regulations and systems of regulatory control.

This report provides results of the advertising monitoring survey (Section 3); examines advertising's effects on children (Section 3.7); provides a comparative analysis of regulations

and regulatory procedures in participating countries (Section 4), and provides details of consumer action on this issue (Section 5). More detailed country data on regulatory issues is provided in an annex published separately. The report makes a number of recommendations addressed to a wide range of agencies, at international and national level, which are in a position to control and influence advertising practice. It also highlights opportunities for promoting healthier nutrition to children.

The scope of the project is limited to an examination of advertising to children through the medium of mainly terrestrial television. It does not examine the range of other advertising and promotional activities that are aimed at children. Although newer forms of marketing to children are growing, television remains the major means by which advertisers aim to reach children. Newer forms of marketing to children, including children's clubs and other forms of sales promotions and marketing in European countries, are examined in the report *Children and Advertising*, published by the Dutch consumer organisation Consumentenbond and the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC)<sup>1</sup>.

For the purpose of this report, where the term 'child' is used, it refers to a person under the age of 12, unless stated otherwise. The term 'teenager' refers to a young person aged 12-18.

**Table 1: Participating organisations**

Country	Participating organisation
Australia	Australian Consumers' Association
Austria	Verein für Konsumenteninformation
Belgium	Verbruikersunie/Association des Consommateurs
Denmark	Forbrugerrådet
Finland	Suomen Kuluttajaliitto & Kuluttajat-Konsumenterna
France	Union Fédérale des Consommateurs
Germany	AgV/Verbraucher-Zentrale Nordrhein-Westfalen
Greece	E.K.P.I.ZO.
Netherlands	Consumentenbond
Norway	Forbrukerrådet
Sweden	Konsumentverket/KO
UK	Consumers' Association & National Consumer Council
USA	Consumers Union of the United States & American Council on Consumer Interests

NB Full details of participating organisations are listed in Appendix I

<sup>1</sup> Children and Advertising, A European survey on commercial communications directed at children and existing regulations to control them, Consumentenbond/BEUC, 1996.

## 2 Background

**As advertisers have increasingly seen children as a major force in the marketplace, so consumer organisations have become increasingly concerned that adequate safeguards exist to protect children.**

Consumer organisations recognise that advertising can be a useful source of information to consumers. However, advertising is not an impartial source of information since the purpose of advertising is to persuade. Therefore, there is a need for controls to ensure that advertising is legal, decent, honest and fair, and that consumers are protected from misleading advertising.

Children are acknowledged to require special consideration in this respect. They are less able than adults to understand fully the intent of advertising or its persuasive techniques and are therefore less able to judge it critically. Young children may not even be able to distinguish advertising from programming (see Section 3.7 of this report).

The principle of consumer protection for children is enshrined in advertising regulations and guidelines at national and international level. More broadly, the need for children's rights to be protected is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and ratified by all countries participating in this survey with the exception of the US. Article 36 of the Convention urges countries to protect children against all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child's welfare, while Article 17 recognises the important role of the mass media in providing the child with information, especially that which is 'aimed at the promotion of his or her... physical... health'. Section (e) of Article 17 urges countries to encourage the 'development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being'.

Provisions enshrined within advertising regulations and guidelines at national and international levels may seek to prohibit the exploitation of children's credulity, lack of experience or sense of loyalty and to protect them from high-pressure selling. However, as this report will illustrate, the degree to which regulations and their interpretation in practice support these objectives differ markedly between countries. Some countries place restrictions on the advertising of certain products or the way in which others can be advertised. Others do not permit television advertising to be directed to children at all, or may restrict the amount of advertising permitted.

Such differing regulations have become the focus of international attention. As international trade and communications increase and the use of new broadcast technologies, such as satellite and cable television, become more widely accessible, the control of advertising no longer remains a national issue. Cross-border advertising has raised questions as to whether the rules of the receiving state or the rules of the transmitting state should apply. The right for countries to maintain higher standards has come under threat.

The issue of cross-border advertising is being hotly debated within the European Union. Proposals to dismantle national regulations, including those concerning children, have come under scrutiny by the European Commission<sup>2</sup>. Pressures to reduce the ability of countries to set higher standards than those currently required as a minimum come largely from advertising and trade interests. The potential conflict between such pressures and requirements for consumer protection, and in particular the protection of minors, is one that concerns consumer organisations and is explored further in this report.

Consumer organisations have also raised concerns about whether advertising regulations provide adequate safeguards to protect children's health. In Europe, the

<sup>2</sup> Commission of the European Communities, Commercial Communications in the Internal Market, Green Paper from the Commission, COM(96) 192 final, Brussels 08.05.1996.

Maastricht Treaty provides a legal basis for the protection and promotion of public health. Article 129 of the treaty states that 'health protection requirements shall form a constituent part' of EU policies. Furthermore, Article 129A states that the EU shall contribute to the attainment of a high level of consumer protection through specific action to protect the health, safety and economic interests of consumers and to provide them with adequate information. Many developed countries have introduced restrictions on the marketing of tobacco and alcohol in respect of children. Yet despite its potential impact on health, food advertising has received little attention at a regulatory level. The potential impact of food advertising on children's diets is discussed further in Section 3.7.

The importance of children as consumers in the marketplace should not be underestimated. They have their own money to spend but they also have considerable ability to influence family purchases, not just what goes into the family's shopping trolley at the supermarket or which restaurant the family visits, but even the type of car a family buys. This 'pester power', as it has been termed, is not always welcomed by parents, as it can put unwanted pressures on parents and cause conflict. In addition, advertisers recognise children as the teenage and adult shoppers of the future and hence will try and instil brand loyalty from an early age, even for products with little immediate interest for children.

While children are the focus of a wide range of marketing activities, television advertising remains the main medium for reaching them. Television is a near-universal medium, and children watch a great deal of it. Indeed, watching television has become the favourite, and most time-consuming, daily spare-time activity for many children, who may even have their own TV set. It has been estimated that children in Europe watch an average of two hours a day<sup>3</sup>, though information provided by participating organisations from

national sources ranged from four hours a day in Greece and three hours a day in the UK to around one hour a day in Finland, Norway and Austria. In Australia, average viewing for 5-12 year olds is two hours a day, while in the US, children aged 6-11 watch on average three hours a day<sup>4</sup>. In the US it has been estimated that a 'typical' child is exposed to approximately 20,000 TV commercials a year<sup>5</sup>. Although viewing hours for children are generally lower in Europe, they could rise with increased access to new satellite and cable channels, some specifically aimed at children. One recent UK study found that in homes with cable and satellite TV, the children have significantly increased the amount of television they watch. Viewing hours increased by 90 minutes a week between 1992-95 with the Cartoon Channel, Nickelodeon and the Disney Channel (all launched since 1992) the most watched<sup>6</sup>.

How children watch television varies between countries. In one European study, more than half the children in Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland spend the majority of their TV viewing time with their families<sup>3</sup>. In contrast, two-thirds of British and Italian children were found to spend more than half their viewing time alone, thus providing much less opportunity for parental input into viewing choices.

## Children's diets

Diet in childhood is increasingly being recognised as important, not only for the prevention of childhood diseases such as obesity, anaemia and tooth decay, but also because eating habits developed in childhood are likely to persist into adulthood. It is widely recognised that health behaviours developed during childhood are strong predictors of adult health behaviours. Evidence indicates that early stages of heart disease can be detected during childhood and that preventing or slowing this process could extend years of healthful life for many adults<sup>7</sup>. Similarly, the

<sup>3</sup> Stockdale, J and Dockrell, J, European Television Magazines Association (ETMA) Classroom Project, August 1994, London.

<sup>4</sup> Information from participating consumer organisations from national sources.

<sup>5</sup> Adler RP, Lesser GS, Meringoff LK, Robertson TS, Rossiter JR, Ward S (eds), 1981, The effects of television advertising on children, Lexington Books, Lexington.

<sup>6</sup> Trends in viewing in cable TV homes 1990 - 1995, Independent Television Commission, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> American Public Health Association - Resolution No. 9202. The prevention of diet-related chronic diseases: a national plan for meeting the year 2000 objectives. Am.J. Public Health. 1993, 83:450 - 452.

World Health Organisation has found that the prevention of high blood pressure in children and adolescents is important for the prevention of hypertension in adult life<sup>8</sup>.

In developed economies, major nutritional problems result from the overconsumption of fat, sugar and salt and the underconsumption of fibre. Although there are regional variations in diet, for example between northern and southern Europe, such differences are diminishing. The trend is toward increasing consumption of foods of animal origin and decreasing consumption of foods of vegetable origin.<sup>9</sup> Processed foods, often high in fat, sugar and/or salt, are also increasingly consumed. While nutritional needs are biologically driven, diet is largely socially and economically determined.

Nearly half the deaths of people aged under 65 in Europe result from diseases to which diet makes an important contribution<sup>10</sup>. In Australia, the Commonwealth Department of Health reports that poor nutrition plays a part in 60% of all deaths<sup>11</sup>. In the United States, 9 out of 10 adults are at increased risk of diet-related chronic diseases because they eat too few vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes and too much fat<sup>12</sup>. Illnesses in which diet is related include heart disease, stroke,

some forms of cancer, hypertension, obesity, non-insulin dependent diabetes, bowel and gall-bladder complaints, anaemia, dental caries and various eating disorders.

Children's diets largely mirror those of adults, but may be worse. Research into diets of children aged 10-15 in Australia found that children's diets are worse than adults', mainly because of their higher consumption of confectionery and snack foods<sup>13</sup>. The same study found that 50% of children had high blood cholesterol levels and 30% were overweight. In the UK, 75% of children have been found to have fat levels above recommended levels<sup>14</sup>, and a European-wide study of dietary habits of teenagers identified 15% of boys and 10% of girls aged 15-24 as overweight<sup>15</sup>.

Although health promotion and food policies in some countries have been effective in reducing the incidence of diet-related disease, there is still much to be achieved. It is recognised that encouraging healthier eating habits while young is not only beneficial for health but also easier than changing diets later in life. Therefore, factors which may have a negative impact on children's health and nutrition need to be examined.

<sup>8</sup> World Health Organisation Study Group, 'Blood pressure studies in children: report of a WHO study group' WHO Technical Report Series 715, World Health Organization, Geneva, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> James WPT, Healthy Nutrition, Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1988:9.

<sup>10</sup> Lang T, Miller M, Millstone E. 'Final report of the study of the demand for differentiated food products in twelve Member States of the European Community'. European Commission Consumer Policy Service, Brussels, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> quoted in Morton H, A survey of the television viewing habits, food behaviours and perception of food advertisements among South Australian year 8 high school students, Journal of the Home Economics Association of Australia XXII, 1990; 2:34-36.

<sup>12</sup> American Public Health Association Resolution No 9202. The prevention of diet-related chronic diseases: a national plan for meeting the year 2000 objectives. Am J Public Health. 1993;83:450-452.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Community Services and Health, National dietary survey of school children (aged 10-15 years) Canberra: AGPS, 1988.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Health and Social Security, 'The diets of British school children.' Committee on medical Aspects of Food Policy. Report on health and social subjects 36. HMSO. 1989

<sup>15</sup> Mayer M, Young People & Consumption within the European Community in The Young European Consumer, Responsible Actor or Vulnerable Target? Proceedings of a colloquium organised in Brussels on 26 and 27 November 1993, Academia, Brussels.

### 3 Survey of television advertising to children in 13 countries

**The purpose of the survey was to provide information on television advertising directed to children in the 13 participating countries. It aimed to look at the amount of advertising being broadcast and the products being advertised, specifically the type of foods<sup>16</sup> being promoted. This section of the report provides details of how the survey was conducted and its results.**

Consumer organisations in the 13 countries undertook to monitor television advertising during approximately 20 hours of children's programming during January/February/March 1996. In countries with more than one commercial channel, the major national commercial channel for children's programming was selected. Programming aimed primarily at children under 12 was recorded. Where possible, this was dedicated 'children's programming' as defined by the broadcaster but for some countries additional programming was selected that has a large audience of children. Where possible

programming was selected during one week. Where this was not possible, additional hours were selected in the following week.

Table 2 shows, for each country, the channel recorded, the dates programming was recorded and the total number of hours recorded.

In Belgium two channels were recorded – the French-language Club RTL channel and the Flemish Kanaal 2. In Sweden and Norway both a national terrestrial channel, TV4 and TV2 respectively and a satellite channel, TV3, were recorded. In the Netherlands the total recording period was selected from two commercial channels, both of which are popular with child audiences.

In Finland only 5 hours 20 minutes of children's programming was recorded and in Austria 13 hours 10 minutes was recorded. In Norway only 3 hours of TV2 channel was recorded but as advertising is not permitted to be broadcast during children's programming, this was to check whether the rules were being complied with. In the following tables where

**Table 2: TV monitoring details for participating countries**

Country	Channel	Monitoring dates	Hours recorded
Australia	Channel 7	8 -14 February	19 hrs
Austria	ORF1	29 January - 2 February	13 hrs 10 mins
Belgium	Club RTL (French language)	29 January - 4 February	21 hrs 41 mins
	Kanaal 2 (Dutch language)		22 hrs 40 mins
Denmark	TV2	22 January - 2 February	20 hrs 30 mins
Finland	MTV3	14 - 20 January	5 hrs 20 mins
France	TF1	10-16 February	21 hrs
Germany	PRO7	22 - 28 January	22 hrs 54 mins
Greece	ANT1	3/4/10 February; 9/10 March	22 hrs 30 mins
Netherlands	RTL4 and VTV (Kindernet)	20-27 January	18 hrs
Norway	TV2	28 January; 3/4 February	3 hrs
	TV3 (satellite)	25-31 January; 6-9 March	20 hrs 20 mins
Sweden	TV4	23 January - 5 February	25 hrs 20 mins
	TV3 (satellite)	22 - 28 January	24 hrs 5 mins
UK	ITV Carlton	31 January - 10 February	20 hrs 10 mins
USA	Fox	12 - 17 February	20 hrs

data are presented on a 'per 20 hours programming' basis, it should be noted that data for these countries have been calculated from a shorter monitoring period.

Broadcasts were recorded using a video recorder and included the advertising breaks before and after the selected programming. Using the recorded tapes, the duration of advertising breaks and the number of advertisements were noted. Advertisements were then assessed and categorised according to the type of product advertised (see Appendix II). Teleshopping or 'home-shopping' spots were included but trailers for other programmes were excluded (although in some countries, particularly the US, these account for several minutes of broadcasting per hour). Food advertisements were further categorised according to the type of food product (see Appendix III).

### 3.1 Quantity of advertising

Table 3 provides details of the average number of adverts per hour recorded for each country, calculated on a 'per hour' and a 'per 20 hours' basis.

This illustrates the considerable differences found between the participating countries in the amount of advertising broadcast during

programming for children. The greatest number of adverts were recorded in Australia – 34 an hour or 589 over a 20-hour period, more than twice as much as in many of the European countries and up to 15 times as many advertisements as countries that were found to have the lowest level of advertising. High levels of advertising were also recorded in the US, and the UK had the highest level of advertising of the European countries. Countries with the lowest levels of advertising included Norway's TV2 channel, where no adverts were recorded during the limited monitoring period, Sweden, Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands.

Table 4 (*see over*) shows the average number of minutes of advertising per hour.

This shows a similar picture to Table 3, with Australia and the US having the highest levels with 13 and 11 minutes of advertising per hour. The UK had 9 minutes per hour with France, Denmark, Germany, Finland and Greece averaging between 5 and 6 minutes. Norway's TV2 and Sweden's channels had the lowest levels of advertising – none on Norway's TV2, and Sweden's TV4 and satellite TV3 channels averaging only 1 minute of advertising per hour. The Netherlands, Austria, Norway's TV3 and Belgium also had low levels of advertising, at 2 minutes or less per hour on average.

**Table 3: Average number of adverts**

Country	Average # of ads /hour	Average # of ads /20 hours
<b>Australia</b>	34	589
<b>USA</b>	24	484
<b>UK</b>	17	331
<b>France</b>	16	330
<b>Germany</b>	14	279
<b>Denmark</b>	12	250
<b>Finland</b>	12	248
<b>Greece</b>	12	233
<b>Norway TV3</b>	7	134
<b>Netherlands</b>	5	91
<b>Austria</b>	4	84
<b>Belgium Kanaal 2</b>	4	79
<b>Belgium Club RTL</b>	3	66
<b>Sweden TV4</b>	2	37
<b>Sweden TV3</b>	1	28
<b>Norway TV2</b>	0	0

NB Figures have been rounded up or down to nearest whole number

**Table 4: Average minutes of advertising per hour**

<b>Australia</b>	13
<b>USA</b>	11
<b>UK</b>	9
<b>France</b>	6
<b>Denmark</b>	6
<b>Germany</b>	5
<b>Finland</b>	5
<b>Greece</b>	5
<b>Netherlands</b>	2
<b>Austria</b>	2
<b>Norway TV3</b>	2
<b>Belgium Kanaal 2</b>	2
<b>Belgium Club RTL</b>	1.5
<b>Sweden TV4</b>	1
<b>Sweden TV3</b>	1
<b>Norway</b>	0

### 3.2 Type of products advertised

Using the product categorisation shown in Appendix II, Table 5 provides details of the top five categories of products advertised during the recorded programming for each country.

As Table 5 shows, food advertising accounted for the largest percentage of advertisements in virtually all countries. Only in Austria, where it comprised the second largest category, and on the satellite TV3 channel in Sweden, the third largest, was food not the largest category.

Advertisements for food products ranged from 84% of all advertisements (Netherlands) to 12% (Sweden TV3). In two-thirds of countries, food adverts accounted for more than 40% of all advertisements.

**Table 5: Top five advertised product categories by country**

<b>Australia</b>	39%	Food	15%	Toys	13%	Retailing/ mail order	12%	Public information	10%	Entertainment	11%	Other
<b>Austria</b>	46%	Ent'ment/ teleshopping	33%	Food	7%	Utilities	5%	Photography	4%	Public Information	5%	Other
<b>Belgium Club RTL</b>	62%	Food	24%	Entertainment	11%	Public information					3%	Other
<b>Belgium Kanaal 2</b>	44%	Food	19%	Entertainment	10%	Public information	8%	Publishing	7%	Household cleaners	12%	Other
<b>Denmark</b>	38%	Food	20%	Toiletries	19%	Entertainment	7%	Toys	7%	Household cleaners	9%	Other
<b>Finland</b>	47%	Food	11%	Entertainment	11%	Pharma- ceuticals	8%	Toiletries	8%	Household equipment	15%	Other
<b>France</b>	49%	Food	15%	Entertainment	10%	Toiletries	9%	Toys	6%	Household cleaners	11%	Other
<b>Germany</b>	41%	Food	12%	Toys	10%	Entertainment	10%	Toiletries	7%	Pharma- ceuticals	18%	Other
<b>Greece</b>	60%	Food	32%	Teleshopping	3%	Household equipment					5%	Other
<b>Netherlands</b>	84%	Food	12%	Toys	4%	Entertainment						
<b>Norway TV3</b>	29%	Food	25%	Toys	15%	Entertainment	12%	Toiletries	5%	Motoring	14%	Other
<b>Sweden TV4</b>	30%	Food	21%	Toiletries	11%	Entertainment	11%	Financial	9%	Household cleaners	18%	Other
<b>Sweden TV3</b>	50%	Entertainment	21%	Toys	12%	Food	6%	Financial	6%	Toiletries	5%	Other
<b>UK</b>	59%	Food	13%	Toiletries	7%	Household cleaners	5%	Entertainment	4%	Toys	12%	Other
<b>USA</b>	45%	Food	24%	Toys	21%	Entertainment					10%	Other

NB Norway's TV2 is not included as there were no advertisements during its monitoring period.

Other products of interest to children were also advertised. Entertainment (e.g., movies, videos, music, entertainment parks) and toy advertisements were shown in many countries although at a much lower level than food advertising, except in Austria and on TV3 in Sweden. The number of toy advertisements were relatively small although this is likely to reflect the monitoring period: the number of such adverts would probably be higher in the weeks preceding Christmas.

Other products advertised, such as toiletries and household cleaners and equipment, are generally not of direct interest to children. Such adverts are more likely aimed at adult viewers, particularly parents who may be watching with their children. However, such advertisements may still appeal to children, and advertisers may be seeking to establish brand loyalty among children in recognition of their potential as future customers.

### 3.3 Food advertising

Table 6 provides data on the average number of food advertisements broadcast, calculated as the average number of food adverts per hour and the average number of adverts during a 20-hour period.

Australia, US and UK had the most food advertisements – between 10 and 12 an hour or around 200 in a 20-hour period. This was between 6 to 10 times more than was found in Austria, Belgium and Sweden and approximately twice as many advertisements as in Denmark and Germany.

### 3.4 Type of advertised foods

The following charts illustrate the types of food products advertised and the average number of such advertisements broadcast during a 20-hour period for each country. Product categories which accounted for 3% or less of the total number of food advertisements are grouped under 'other'.

#### Australia

Product category	Average # of ads per 20 hours
Breakfast cereals	46
Restaurants	43
Desserts	20
Savoury snacks	19
Soft drinks	16
Confectionery	15
Ice cream/ice lollies	13
Jam/sweet spreads	11
Dairy products	9
Hot beverages	9
Other	8

**Table 6:** Average number of food advertisements

Country	Average # of food ads / hour	Average # of food ads / 20 hours
Australia	12	231
USA	11	215
UK	10	194
France	8	164
Greece	7	140
Finland	6	116
Germany	6	115
Denmark	5	95
Netherlands	4	77
Belgium Club RTL	2	41
Norway TV3	2	38
Belgium Kanaal 2	2	35
Austria	1	27
Sweden TV4	<1	11
Sweden TV3	<1	3

NB Norway's TV2 is not included as there were no advertisements during its monitoring period.

**USA**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Breakfast cereals	71
Restaurants	61
Confectionery	31
Dairy products	13
Savoury snacks	10
Ready prepared foods	9
Soft drinks	8
Cakes and biscuits	7
Other	5

**UK**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	55
Breakfast cereals	32
Ready prepared foods	30
Restaurants	23
Sauces & savoury spreads	18
Meat & meat products	14
Hot beverages	8
Other	15

**France**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	40
Breakfast cereals	31
Restaurants	18
Dairy products	17
Savoury snacks	15
Ready prepared foods	8
Fish & fish products	7
Hot beverages	7
Soft drinks	6
Cakes & biscuits	6
Other	11

**Greece**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	64
Breakfast cereals	26
Savoury snacks	18
Cakes & biscuits	12
Dairy products	11
Restaurants	5
Other	4

**Germany**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Breakfast cereals	32
Dairy products	16
Confectionery	15
Fats & spreads	9
Savoury snacks	7
Fish & fish products	7
Ready prepared foods	7
Restaurants	4
Slimming products	4
Other	14

**Finland**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Restaurants	30
Fruits & vegetables	15
Ready prepared foods	15
Meat & meat products	15
Desserts	11
Cakes & biscuits	8
Confectionery	8
Dairy products	8
Others	8

**Denmark**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	21
Bread	14
Breakfast cereals	11
Sauces/savoury spreads	10
Cakes & biscuits	8
Hot beverages	7
Dairy products	6
Meat & meat products	5
Soft drinks	5
Restaurants	4
Other	5

**Netherlands**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	36
Restaurants	14
Savoury snacks	13
Soft drinks	8
Desserts	6

**Norway: TV3**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	9
Soft drinks	8
Dairy products	5
Meat & meat products	4
Ready prepared foods	3
Savoury snacks	2
Restaurants	2
Other	6

**Belgium: Club RTL**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Restaurants	22
Confectionery	11
Breakfast cereals	6
Other	2

**Belgium: Kanaal 2**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	22
Restaurants	8
Hot beverages	3
Ready prepared foods	2
Other	1

**Austria**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	15
Breakfast cereals	6
Ready prepared foods	2
Fish & fish products	2
Savoury snacks	2

**Sweden: TV4**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Restaurants	2
Breakfast cereals	2
Savoury snacks	2
Fruits & vegetables	2
Other	3

**Sweden: TV3**

<i>Product category</i>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
Confectionery	2
Ready prepared foods	1
Hot beverages	1

Overall, confectionery, breakfast cereals and restaurants (virtually all for fast food restaurants) accounted for more than half of all food advertisements. Confectionery was the largest category, which overall accounted for about one-fifth of all food advertising. Other

types of food products advertised in many countries were savoury snacks, dairy products, ready prepared foods, soft drinks, cakes and biscuits, and desserts.

Although this pattern of food advertising was fairly typical for most countries, there were differences in the amount of advertising of such products. Tables 7 and 8 compare the amount of advertising for confectionery and breakfast cereals in the countries surveyed.

**Table 7: Confectionery advertising by country**

<b>Country</b>	<i>Average # of ads per 20 hours</i>
<b>Greece</b>	64
<b>UK</b>	54
<b>France</b>	40
<b>Netherlands</b>	36
<b>USA</b>	31
<b>Belgium Kanaal 2</b>	22
<b>Denmark</b>	21
<b>Australia</b>	15
<b>Austria</b>	15
<b>Germany</b>	15
<b>Belgium Club RTL</b>	11
<b>Norway TV3</b>	9
<b>Finland</b>	8
<b>Sweden TV3</b>	2
<b>Sweden TV4</b>	1

The highest levels of confectionery advertising were recorded in Greece and the UK, where there were about four times as many such advertisements as in Germany and more than 35 times as many as in Sweden. Confectionery advertising showed the widest range of products although many were for products manufactured by Nestlé, Mars and Cadbury's. From a nutritional perspective, this high level of advertising for confectionery products is a cause for concern. Confectionery products are typically high in sugar and many, particularly chocolate products, are also high in fat and saturated fat. Nutritional advice recommends that confectionery should be eaten infrequently not only because of its poor nutritional value but also because of its effects on dental health. Yet the high level of advertising found for such products can only encourage children to see confectionery as attractive and desirable products to be consumed regularly.

A high level of advertising of breakfast cereals was also found in many countries, the majority manufactured by Nestlé and Kellogg's. In a minority of countries (Finland and the Netherlands), there were no advertisements for breakfast cereals, possibly reflecting national eating patterns.

While breakfast cereals, particularly if eaten with milk, can contribute to a nutritious diet, the majority of advertised breakfast cereals in this survey were for products with high levels of added sugar. Such cereals are often also high in salt and low in fibre. Few advertisements were for low or unsweetened varieties. As the nutritional analysis of breakfast cereals advertised in the UK shows (see Section 3.5), 81% of breakfast cereal advertisements were for products high in sugar and 67% for products high in sodium.

**Table 8: Breakfast cereal advertising by country**

Country	Average # of ads per 20 hours
<b>USA</b>	71
<b>Australia</b>	46
<b>UK</b>	32
<b>Germany</b>	32
<b>France</b>	31
<b>Greece</b>	26
<b>Denmark</b>	11
<b>Belgium Club RTL</b>	6
<b>Austria</b>	6
<b>Sweden TV4</b>	2
<b>Norway TV3</b>	1

The third most frequent category of advertisements overall were for restaurants, almost all fast food restaurants. McDonald's was the most frequently advertised chain, adverts for which were found in nearly every country. Advertisements for fast food restaurants such as McDonald's usually promote the 'experience' and multi-item meals rather than a particular food item. However, the savoury foods available in fast food restaurants, such as burgers and fries, are typically high in fat and salt and low in fibre, and desserts and drinks are typically high in sugar.

Other food products commonly advertised in many countries included savoury snacks,

dairy products, ready prepared foods, soft drinks, cakes and biscuits, and desserts. Savoury snacks were largely crisps (or chips as they are known in some countries) and other similar products, which are typically high in fat and salt. Dairy products included yoghurt, mainly flavoured, cheese, milk and milk drinks. Ready prepared foods were often frozen foods such as pizzas and frozen potato products such as chips and fries, particularly in the UK. Soft drinks were mainly cola-type products though in France there were advertisements for mineral water and alcohol-free cider.

By comparison, advertisements for foods which are encouraged in a healthy diet, such as fruit and vegetables, fish, or starchy staples, if they existed at all, were extremely few. Only a handful of adverts was recorded: for mushrooms and canned vegetables in Finland, fruit in Denmark and Sweden, frozen peas in the UK and endive in France. No advertisements for fruit and vegetables were recorded in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway or the US.

There were a few advertisements for fish products in Austria, Belgium, France and Germany, though these were mainly for fish fingers and other battered fish products. Denmark recorded a relatively large number of advertisements for bread (14), with Australia and Germany recording six and two respectively.

### 3.5 Nutritional analysis of advertised products

To give a more detailed picture of the nutritional profile of advertised foods, a nutrition assessment was carried out on the food products from the UK monitoring. Greece and Sweden also wished to undertake such an assessment but in Sweden the number of products advertised was too small to be of significance while in Greece the consumer organisation E.K.PI.ZO. was unable to obtain sufficient nutritional information about the advertised products. E.K.PI.ZO. reported that there was limited information available on food packets, and many companies were unable to provide nutritional data on their

products, some replying that this information was confidential. As a result, the assessment was only carried out for the UK. Foods that are of negligible calorific significance in the diet – e.g., tea, coffee, mineral water, sauces used to flavour food, chewing gum and so on – were excluded. Advertised foods from restaurants or fast food retailers was included if there was a specific meal advertised.

Products were assessed as to whether they were high in fat, sugar and sodium using the following criteria:

High in fat = total fat comprises > 30% energy

High in sugar = total sugars comprise > 20% of energy

High in sodium = sodium content > 2.36g/10MJ (equivalent to >6g/10MJ salt)

The results of this assessment are shown in Table 9.

As this shows, 62% of advertisements were for products that are high in fat, 50% were for products high in sugar and 61% were for products high in sodium. In total 95% of advertisements were for products that were either high in fat and/or sugar and/or sodium.

### 3.6 Programme sponsorship

This survey also monitored the use of programme sponsorship as a means of advertising to children. Not all countries participating in the survey permit sponsorship of children's programmes. Children's programming in six of the countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Greece and the UK) had commercial sponsors. In some cases, segments in programmes, as well as the whole programme, were sponsored. Table 10 (*see over*) lists sponsored programmes and details of food company sponsors. These were largely manufacturers of confectionery, breakfast cereals, savoury snacks and fast food. Thus it can be seen that in a number of countries, sponsorship by food companies provided additional commercial messages to children over and above those provided by advertising.

No sponsored programmes were recorded in Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway or Sweden. In Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, sponsorship of children's programming is not permitted. In Germany and the Netherlands, it is permitted but not done in practice. The regulation of sponsorship is discussed further in Section 4.

**Table 9:** Nutritional profile of advertised foods (UK only)

Food category	Number of adverts	% high in fats (>30% energy)	% high in sugars (>20% energy)	% high in sodium (>2.36g/10MJ)
Confectionery	49	94	100	8
Breakfast cereals	36	0	81	67
Ready prepared foods	28	61	4	100
Restaurants (advertised meal)	21	100	–	100
Sauces	15	25	25	100
Meat/meat products	11	100	0	91
Desserts	3	67	100	0
Fats & spreads	3	100	0	100
Vegetables	3	0	0	0
Dairy products	2	0	100	0
Savoury snacks	2	100	0	100
<b>Total number of adverts</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>61%</b>

**Table 10: Programme sponsorship**

Country	Sponsored programmes	Food company sponsors
<b>Australia</b>	Disney Adventures & Agros Cartoon Connection: Programme sponsorship and sponsorship of segments within programme, e.g. competitions, environmental club, pen-pal segment. Cartoon programmes and Disney Adventures were sponsored. Sponsors were mainly food companies but also toy, retailing and entertainment companies.	Cadbury's (confectionery) Maggi (ready meals) Cottees (soft drinks) Uncle Toby's (breakfast cereals) Nutella (chocolate spread)
<b>Austria</b>	Confetti TiVi was sponsored by MB-Parker (a children's games manufacturer). Sponsors change, e.g. in the summer the sponsor is an ice-cream company.	None recorded
<b>Belgium Club RTL</b>	Bunny Club (Warner Bros Cartoons), Toon Club (cartoons), Goldorak & Dragon Ball (cartoons)	Nestlé Kix & Nesquick breakfast cereals; Quick Magic Box (fast food)
<b>Belgium Kanaal 2</b>	Kinder Atelier (young children's programme) was sponsored by toy and computer companies.	None recorded
<b>France</b>	Disney Club & Disney Parade	Crousibal de Findus (fish fingers)
<b>Greece</b>	Dragon Ball (cartoon); VR Troopers (adventure programme); Batman (cartoon); Power Rangers (adventure programme); Bugs Bunny (cartoon)	Kellogg's (breakfast cereals); Chipita (savoury snacks/ confectionery); Big Babol (confectionery); Tasty (savoury snacks)
<b>UK</b>	Potamus Park; The Chart Show	Hipo Yogofrais (yoghurt); Twix (confectionery)

NB No information was provided for the US.

### 3.7 Discussion

The results of this survey show clear variations between countries in the amount of advertising broadcast during the monitoring periods. On the basis of these results, children viewing 20 hours of programming, as recorded for this survey, would see nearly 600 advertisements in Australia, compared with fewer than 40 in Sweden – a 15-fold difference. Differences in the amount of television viewed could increase this even further.

This project examined advertising over a period of one to two weeks, and the picture it provides is thus a 'snapshot' view. The possibility that some variation in results might be obtained if monitoring were conducted at a different time or over a longer period must be

borne in mind. For example, in the run-up to Christmas it is likely that there would be more toy advertising and possibly a higher level of advertising overall. There are also seasonal differences in the advertising of certain foods, such as ice cream and Easter eggs. However, the recording period used in this survey (January/February) was chosen to minimise such seasonal variations which might unduly affect the type or amount of advertising to children. It can be assumed that levels of advertising are unlikely to be much lower than those found in this survey.

In considering the reasons for wide variations between countries in the amount of advertising, it is necessary to consider the different cultural attitudes towards advertising and children. In some countries, it is

considered unacceptable to subject children to commercial pressure on the basis that they cannot fully understand its intent. Neither Norway nor Sweden, for example, permits television advertising to be directed at children under 12 or to be broadcast during children's programmes.

In other countries, although questions may be raised about the ethics of some forms of commercial promotions where children are concerned, the prevailing cultural consensus is that certain forms of promotion, such as television advertising, is permissible within certain limits. A number of other European countries place timing restrictions on advertising shown during children's programming. In countries such as Australia, the UK and the US, where the highest levels of advertising were found in this survey, cultural attitudes and regulations are less restrictive.

The regulation of advertising to children is discussed in more detail in Section 4. However, this survey indicates that there is a strong connection between the amount of advertising that children are likely to see during children's programming and the amount that is permitted by national regulations.

## Food advertising

Food advertising is one of the largest sectors of television advertising expenditure<sup>17</sup> and much is directed towards children. There is evidence from the UK that during programmes of appeal to children and teenagers, food advertising accounts for a greater percentage of advertising than during programming directed to an adult audience<sup>18</sup>. This study found that 70% of adverts during weekday children's programmes were for food, compared with only 20% during programmes for adults after 9.30pm.

To some extent this is because a wider range of other products, such as cars and financial services, compete with food advertisers for space during adult programming.

Nonetheless, this means that children will see a lot of food advertising, particularly in those countries that place few restrictions on the amount of advertising generally.

The survey did find other products or services of interest to children advertised. This included entertainment, such as movies, videos, music and entertainment parks. Levels of toy advertising found in the monitoring period (January/February) were generally low, although the amount of such advertising before Christmas has raised consumer organisation and parental concern. In Greece, adverts for premium rate telephone services, offering quizzes and competitions, accounted for the majority of advertisements shown during weekend children's programmes. Such services are not permitted to be advertised to children in many other countries (see Section 4.2.10).

There have been a number of studies examining the amount and type of food advertising to children in participating countries, namely Australia, Germany, the UK and the US, all of which are broadly consistent with the findings of this survey. A 1994 US study<sup>19</sup> of 997 advertisements during children's programmes found that they promoted foods predominantly high in fat and/or sugar, many of which had relatively low nutritional value. The researchers concluded that the diet presented was the antithesis of what is recommended for healthful eating for children. Similarly, an assessment of the quantity and nutritional value of foods advertised on children's television in the US<sup>20</sup> found that food advertisements accounted for 47.8% of commercials, of which 91% were for foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt. By comparison with other studies, the proportion of advertised foods high in sugar, fat and salt had barely changed since 1978, the researchers concluded.

In Australia food advertisements have been found to make up three-quarters of advertising during children's programming, with virtually all advertisements for foods which either ran

<sup>17</sup> European Advertising, Marketing & Media Data (1992) Euromonitor, London.

<sup>18</sup> Dibb S, Castell A (1995) Easy to Swallow, Hard to Stomach, The results of a survey of food advertising on television, National Food Alliance, London.

<sup>19</sup> Kotz K, Story, M, Food advertisements during children's Saturday morning television programming: Are they consistent with dietary recommendations?, J Am Diet Assoc., 1994: 94:1296-1300.

<sup>20</sup> Taras HL, Gage M, Advertised foods on children's television, Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 1995; 149:649-652.

counter to Australian Dietary Guidelines or were neutral with respect to them<sup>21</sup>.

In Germany, a 1993 survey<sup>22</sup> of commercials aimed at children found that highly sugared foods, such as confectionery, sweetened breakfast cereals, soft drinks and sweetened milk products, accounted for 77% of advertisements during Saturday morning children's programmes. The researchers reported that this 'massive invitation to bad nutrition' was not balanced by advertisements promoting non-sugared foods. Neither were the powerful invitations to consume lots of sweets and other highly sugared foods accompanied by concomitant warnings about possible negative consequences such as overweight and tooth decay. The authors concluded that food advertising is deceptive, as it leads children to believe that these foods may be enjoyed even in greater amounts without remorse.

In the UK, a 1995 survey<sup>23</sup> of advertising during programmes appealing to children concluded that food advertising presents a grossly unbalanced nutritional message. Fatty and sugary foods accounted for a disproportionately large percentage of all food advertising while there were comparatively few advertisements for healthier options. The report concluded that the cumulative effect of food advertising undermines progress towards a healthy diet.

This cumulative effect is one which is rarely taken into consideration in the regulation or research of advertising, yet it is the long-term impact of individual foods which affects nutritional health. It is often argued that there are no 'good' or 'bad' foods, rather it is the overall nutritional balance of the diet which is important. However the 'diet' that advertising presents in this and other surveys is not one which can be described as nutritionally balanced – rather, the complete opposite.

Advertising is often credited with promoting that bastion of consumer freedom – choice. But the choice that food advertising presents children is largely one between one candy bar

and another, the latest savoury snack or sweetened breakfast cereal or fast food restaurant – hardly the kinds of choices which encourage a healthy balanced diet.

Indeed, advertising is likely to confuse children about healthy eating messages. In one Australian survey<sup>24</sup> of nutritional views of nine and ten-year-olds, just over half thought Ronald McDonald (the character used to promote McDonald's to children) probably knows best what is good for children to eat. It must surely be confusing for children to learn at school or from their parents what foods are healthy to eat and those which should be eaten infrequently, and then to find the latter so attractively presented in television advertisements. It is unrealistic to expect children not to want products that are made to appeal to them.

It was beyond the scope of this survey to examine in detail the techniques that advertisers use to make their products appeal to children. Advertisers devote much research to determining effective techniques for advertising to children, although little of this research reaches the public domain. However, advertisers seek to address children 'in their own world'. Adults often complain that they can't understand children's advertisements: they move too fast, the music is too loud, the words not clearly understood. Advertisements for children are often designed to exclude parents, which makes it more difficult for parents to mediate or discuss them with children.

The singing of jingles and the discussion of humorous commercials all become part of playground lore, with the advertisers' message being reinforced through peer group pressure. Typically, advertisements associate a product with fun images, appealing to children on an emotional level rather than providing useful information. This makes it more difficult for them to make rational judgements about products.

Other effective techniques involve collectable items or other forms of inducements, such as

<sup>21</sup> Morton H, Television Food Advertising: A challenge for the new public health in Australia, Community Health Studies Vol. XIV, No2, 1990.

<sup>22</sup> Diehl J & Daum I, Television Food Commercials Aimed at Children and Parents. Personal communication.

<sup>23</sup> Dibb S & Castell A (1995) Easy to Swallow, Hard to Stomach: The results of a survey of food advertising on television. London: The National Food Alliance.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in 'Into the mouths of babes', Choice, Australian Consumers Association, October 1990.

special offers with products. As most children love to collect things, this can make products more desirable. Also the use of characters or personalities popular with children can act as an endorsement or added inducement to buy. Many techniques used in advertising to children have raised concerns among consumer organisations, and their regulation is discussed further in Section 4.

In the short term, advertising aims to promote the awareness and purchase of products. Advertising can also aim to establish long-term positive attitudes towards a product or company. Given advertising's persuasive intent, it is logical to assume that a repetitive, high level of advertising for foods that do little to promote healthy eating will encourage their desirability and consumption and thus have a detrimental effect on children's diets.

In determining appropriate controls, or ways in which children can be helped to become more critical viewers of advertising, it is necessary to look at children's understanding of advertising and its effects on their food choices and thus its effects on diet and health.

## Effects of advertising

Advertising is one of a number of factors that will shape and determine children's food preferences. Debate has focused on the impact of advertising relative to other factors such as family and cultural influences, peer group pressure, availability and price of food, and learnt preferences for certain foods. The relationship between such factors is complex. Although a report<sup>25</sup> by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council subcommittee on nutrition education suggests that the media, and particularly television, are probably more powerful in determining children's food preferences than is the family, the relative influence of advertising remains contentious. Advertising's ubiquity, with effects that are as much indirect and long term as immediate, means this is an area of research which poses many methodological challenges.

The advertising industry often claims that

advertising is an 'innocuous' aspect of daily life with little effect and therefore that it cannot be detrimental to children. In response, consumer organisations have questioned why advertisers spend considerable amounts of money on advertising if its effects are so limited.

Despite such disagreements and the need for further research, there is much that is known about children's ability to identify and understand advertising and advertising's effects on children's requests, purchase and consumption of advertised foods. Literature reviews by Young in the UK and Bjurström in Sweden<sup>26</sup> have sought to examine these issues.

Both Young and Bjurström agree that children's ability to identify and understand advertising's purpose largely depends on their age. Bjurström concludes that while some children possess a cognitive ability to distinguish between advertising and programmes as early as age 3 or 4, in most children this ability does not develop until the age of 6 to 8, and it is only by age 10 that practically all children have developed this ability.

It is, however, children's ability to understand the purpose of TV advertising that is one of the most important prerequisites for the development of a critical understanding or questioning attitude toward it. Studies indicate that it is only after the age of 10-12 that most children develop a fuller understanding of the purpose of advertising. It has thus been argued that advertising directed at children is inherently unfair. It is for this reason that countries such as Norway and Sweden ban television advertising directed at children under 12, arguing that if children are not fully aware of the purpose of advertising and do not have the ability to question it critically, advertising should not be addressed to them.

Whether children do or do not fully understand the intent of advertising, they are subject to its influence. Pre-school children are brand conscious and able to ask for advertised products.

<sup>25</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council. The media and public health. Canberra: AGPS, 1985.

<sup>26</sup> Bjurström E, Children and Television Advertising, A critical study of international research concerning the effects of TV-commercials on children, Konsumentverket, 1994, Vällingby, Sweden; and Young B, et al, The Role of Television Advertising in Children's Food Choice, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, London, 1996.

In his literature review, Young identifies a number of studies which demonstrate the effect of advertising on food choice and also those which identified a clear impact of food advertising on purchase requests made to parents. Studies on children's dietary behaviour have shown that the amount of time spent viewing television directly correlates with the request, purchase and consumption of food advertised on television. For example, in 1989 Taras and colleagues<sup>27</sup> found that the number of viewing hours per week among children aged 3-8 years correlated significantly with reported requests by children and with purchases by parents of foods advertised on television. Similarly Galst & White<sup>28</sup> found that the amount of television children watched correlated with the consumption of foods advertised on television and children's attempts to influence their mothers' food purchases.

Other controlled-experiment studies have demonstrated direct effects of exposure to advertising for high-energy foods on actual snack-food choices and consumption. For example, Gorn and Goldberg<sup>29</sup> found that children's food choices were significantly related to foods advertised on television; children who viewed confectionery advertisements chose significantly more confectionery than fruit for snacks. Signorielli and Lears<sup>30</sup> found that even when controlling for sex, reading level, ethnicity, parents' occupation and parents' educational level, television viewing of fourth and fifth graders is positively correlated with bad eating habits and faulty understanding of the principles of nutrition.

Channel One, the US classroom-based news broadcast with advertisements, has been shown to increase high school students' knowledge of current affairs – as well as their purchases of advertised products<sup>31</sup>. In Australia, Morton<sup>32</sup> has found that heavily advertised foods have high status. They were named as favourite foods, and parents were

pestered to buy them even when children knew it was not nutritionally desirable to do so.

Because of the difficulties in researching the subject, most studies have tended to focus on short-term effects. While additional experimental and longitudinal research is needed, particularly on the effects of exposure and food preference development, there is evidence that televised food advertisements do influence children's food choices.

It is often argued by advertisers that advertising's effects on diet is neutral because it only influences brand selection. Thus, it is argued, as it influences whether we buy one brand of chocolate bar or a different one, the overall effect on diet will be insignificant. But this argument is far too simplistic. Firstly, even switching between brands within a particular food category may have nutritional significance. For example, one breakfast cereal may have less sugar or more fibre. But secondly, food choices are not made strictly within brand limitations. When a child wants a snack, he or she may choose a chocolate bar, a bag of crisps or a piece of fruit; when thirsty the choice might be between a glass of milk, water or a sweetened fizzy drink. These choices can have considerable nutritional implications in the long term.

This report recognises that the extent to which advertising influences children's eating habits has become a matter of debate. Advertising interests, in their defence, often attempt to explain its effects as minimal, at least publicly, if not to their clients. While this report has cited academic research which does trace the links between food advertising and children's food preferences and choices, it also recognises the need for more research which looks at the 'cumulative' long-term, more indirect effects, which may be more considerable than the short-term, direct effects on the attitudes and behaviour of children.

<sup>27</sup> Taras HL et al, Television's influence on children's diet and physical activity, *J Dev Behav Pediatr.* 1989;10:176-180.

<sup>28</sup> Glast J, White M. The unhealthy persuader: the reinforcing value of television and children's purchase-influencing attempts at the supermarket. *Child Dev.* 1976; 47:1089-1096.

<sup>29</sup> Gorn GJ, Goldberg ME, Behavioural evidence of the effects of televised food messages on children, *J Consumer Res.* 1982;9:200-205.

<sup>30</sup> Signorielli N, Lears M, Television and children's conceptions of nutrition: unhealthy messages. *Health Communication.* 1992;4:245-257.

<sup>31</sup> Greenberg BS, Brand JE, Television news and advertising in schools: the 'Channel One' controversy. *J Communication.* 1993;43:143-151.

<sup>32</sup> Morton H, A Survey of the television viewing habits, food behaviours and perception of food advertisements among South Australian Year 8 High School Students, *Journal of the Home Economics Association of Australia XXII, 1990; 2:34-36.*

## 4 The regulation of television advertising to children

**Advertising regulations generally recognise children as a special category. However, every country has its own criteria and system for regulating television advertising to children and there are clear differences in the degree of regulation demanded, the procedures for enforcing regulations, and consumer involvement in such processes. This section highlights those differences by providing a comparative analysis of the regulation of TV advertising with particular regard to children and food advertising, and places these national regulations in the context of European and international regulation.**

National information was provided by consumer organisations in the participating countries. Organisations were requested to provide information about the nature of regulatory bodies; how regulations are drawn up, enforced and monitored; details of consumer involvement and representation, and details of critiques that have been made. Further information was sought from regulatory bodies and from other published sources. An annex published separately to this report provides more detailed information for each country.

The regulation of advertising is based on both a legal framework and on self-regulation in all countries included in this survey. However, the degree to which emphasis is given to regulation versus self-regulation varies.

Laws on unfair or misleading advertising and broadcasting legislation normally provide the legal framework for regulations which may include some provisions regarding advertising to children. More detailed provisions are generally enshrined within codes of practice.

### 4.1 International regulation

At an international level, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) International

Code of Advertising Practice<sup>33</sup> provides a widely adopted framework for self-regulation and also regulatory procedures in many countries.

The stated aim of the ICC Code is to promote high standards of ethics in marketing by self-regulation against the background of national and international law. It refers to children and advertising both within its general and specific provisions. Within its general provisions, Article 13 states that advertisements should not exploit the natural credulity or lack of experience of children and should not strain their sense of loyalty. Nor should advertisements addressed to or likely to influence children or young people contain any statement or visual presentation which might result in harming them mentally, morally or physically.

The Code includes Guidelines for Advertising Addressed to Children which apply to advertisements for products, whether paid or given free, in all media, not just television, addressed to children under 14 years of age, or whatever age is considered appropriate at the national level.

The Guidelines state that:

- Because of the particular vulnerability of children, if there is any likelihood of advertisements being confused with editorial or programme material, they should be clearly labelled 'advertisement' or identified in an equally effective manner;
- Advertisements should not appear to condone violence in situations or actions which might contravene the law and/or generally accepted national standards of social behaviour;
- Advertisements should not undermine social values when suggesting that possession or use of a product alone will give the child a physical, social or psychological advantage over other children of the same age, or that non-possession of this product would have the opposite effect;

<sup>33</sup> International Chamber of Commerce International Code of Advertising Practice Guidelines for Advertising Addressed to Children (1986)

- Advertisements should not undermine the authority, responsibility, judgement or tastes of parents, taking into account the current social values;
- Advertisements should not contain any statement or visual representation that could have the effect of bringing children into unsafe situations or of encouraging them to consort with strangers or to enter strange or hazardous places;
- Advertisements should not include any direct appeal to children to persuade others to buy the advertised product for them;
- Special care should be taken to ensure that advertisements do not mislead children as to the true size, value, nature, durability and performance of the advertised product. If extra items are needed to use it (e.g., batteries) or to produce the results shown or described (e.g., paint), this should be made clear. A product which is part of a series should be clearly indicated, as should the method of acquiring the series;
- Advertisements should not understate the degree of skill required to use the product. Where results of product use are shown or described, the advertisement should represent what is reasonably attainable by the average child in the age range for which the product is intended;
- Price indication should not be such as to lead children to an unreal perception of the true value of the product, for instance, by using the word 'only'. No advertisement should imply that the advertised product is immediately within reach of every family budget.

#### 4.1.1 European Union Controls

As 11 of the 13 countries participating in this project are European Union (EU) members or, in the case of Norway, subject to EU regulations through its membership of the European Economic Area (EAA), it is relevant to look at relevant European legislation.

Directive 84/450/EEC on misleading advertising constitutes a horizontal directive applicable to all advertising sectors and contains general rules on truthfulness that also apply to advertising directed to children.

Directive 89/552/EEC (Television without Frontiers Directive) covers matters of broadcasting, including minimum standards for member countries on advertising regulations and includes specific provisions concerning children and advertising. All countries, with the exception of Austria, which is currently in the process of implementing the Directive, base their framework legislation concerning television advertising on this Directive. It does, however, provide for countries to impose stricter regulations.

This Directive recognises that children require special protection and Article 16 specifies that television advertising to children shall not cause moral or physical detriment to minors. It must not:

- a) directly exhort minors to buy a product or a service by exploiting their inexperience or credulity;
- b) directly encourage minors to persuade their parents or others to purchase the goods or services being advertised;
- c) exploit the special trust minors place in parents, teachers or other persons;
- d) unreasonably show minors in dangerous situations.

Article 15 prohibits advertising for alcoholic drinks from being aimed specifically at minors and prohibits minors consuming alcoholic beverages within advertisements. In addition, Article 11 prohibits advertisements from being inserted in children's programmes of less than 30 minutes.

The Directive is currently under review<sup>34</sup> and teleshopping will in future be included within its scope. Although the European Commission has not proposed any amendments concerning children, debate surrounding the Directive has included much reference to children. A number of European consumer and viewers organisations<sup>35</sup> have lobbied for a total ban on TV advertising directed at children. Recognising current concerns about broadcasting and marketing for and to children, the European Parliament proposed a number of amendments<sup>36</sup> to strengthen the

<sup>34</sup> COM (95) 86 final of 31 May 1995, European Commission.

<sup>35</sup> Television Advertising Directed to Children, A Proposal to the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, from Consumer, Viewer and other Organisations, Consumer and Media Researchers, December 1994.

<sup>36</sup> Official Journal of the European Communities, OJ C 65 - 4.3.96.

intention of the Directive on the protection of minors. It proposed the removal of the word 'directly' from paragraphs a) and b) above and for member states to ensure that advertising or programme announcements during children's programmes are not detrimental to children morally or psychologically. In addition, the parliament proposed that national broadcasters should be obliged to provide special children's viewing time and supported the so-called 'V' chip, a device for filtering TV programmes in the home. This has concerned the advertising industry and broadcasters as, in theory, such a device could be used to filter out advertising.

The Council of Ministers' Common Position<sup>37</sup> strengthens the protection of minors as regards television, stating that 'teleshopping must not exhort minors to contract for the sale or rental of goods and services'. However, it has not endorsed the rewording of Article 16 a) and b) nor supported the obligation of broadcasters to provide specific children's programming. Parliament's second reading of the Common Position was scheduled for November 1996.

An important issue for many European consumer organisations is that of cross-border advertising following the development of cable and satellite broadcasting technology. Current convention enshrined within the Television Without Frontiers Directive holds that the advertising regulations of the country from which the broadcast originates should apply (home country rule), rather than the rules in the receiving country (host country).

This is proving unsatisfactory in a number of member states as this enables advertisers who want to market their products or services in a member state with stricter rules to choose broadcasters established in member states with lower standards to transmit their advertisements.

Cross-border advertising to children illustrates the conflict which may exist between the principle of free movement of goods and services (programmes and advertising) and national consumer protection measures. This conflict is currently the subject of intense debate at the European level and particularly

centres on satellite broadcasts into Norway and Sweden from outside their borders. Those countries want their national regulations to apply to the foreign broadcasters, so that they can maintain the ban on advertising directed to children under 12 years of age.

EU member states are permitted to introduce legislation governing broadcasting within their territory that is stricter than the minimum standards set out in the Television Without Frontiers Directive. However, they are not permitted to prevent cross-border broadcasting, including advertising. Although Norway is not a member of the European Union, it is bound to EU legislation by being a signatory of the European Economic Area (EEA) Treaty.

Both Sweden and Norway are concerned about advertisements aimed at children transmitted on TV3, a satellite channel broadcast from the UK. As these target separately the Norwegian and Swedish market and cannot be received in the UK, the Consumer Ombudsmen in both countries consider that broadcasters violate good business practice by evading the legislation in the receiving country. In 1996 the Court of Justice of the European Communities ruled that Sweden could not take action against television advertisements broadcast from another Member State but that it had the right to prohibit advertising directed at children under 12 on its domestic channels.

In Norway, where the Consumer Ombudsman has been seeking to ban advertisements aimed at children on TV3, two leading toy manufacturers, Lego and Mattel (makers of Barbie dolls), have fought the ban in the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) Court. Following a ruling by the EFTA Court that the Norwegian restrictions on advertising to children were not compatible with EU rules, the industry has been putting pressure on Norway to overturn its ban on children's advertising in programmes produced within the country. However, the Consumer Ombudsman has argued that Norwegian rules should apply for broadcasters with Norwegian licences.

<sup>37</sup> Council of the European Union, Common Position, C4-0380/96 10.7.96

Similarly in Belgium, cross-border TV advertising has become an issue. The restrictions that prohibit advertising before and after programmes aimed at children under 12 and also prohibit teleshopping are under attack from the commercial channel (VTM). VTM is concerned about major financial losses against its competitor, VT4, which operates from the UK and is not required to comply with these regulations. France also receives cross-border transmissions with advertising that conforms to less restrictive regulations. The French regulatory body, the CSA, has proposed an agreement between channels in different countries concerning the advertising of tobacco and alcohol when foreign football matches are transmitted.

In the Netherlands, one of the two commercial stations which broadcasts from abroad (Luxembourg) has agreed to respect the Dutch Advertising Code. The other (from the UK) is subject to UK rules which the Dutch consider to be adequate compared with their own code.

The consumer organisations participating in this survey believe strongly that individual countries should be free to maintain or introduce their own national advertising regulations, over and above those agreed internationally, where these reflect cultural considerations or national policy objectives such as those relating to public health or consumer protection. With cross-border transmission, they also consider that broadcasters should be obliged to observe the national rules of the receiving state when the target audience is citizens of that particular state and where the programmes and/or advertisements are in their language or with subtitles in their language.

However, there is growing pressure for many national regulations to be dismantled. Differing national regulations in the European Union – in particular, controls on advertising to children in Nordic countries, limits on toy advertising in Greece, and French restrictions on alcohol – are regarded by the advertising sector as barriers to trade preventing companies from marketing their products and services freely. The desire to see the removal of such differing regulations provides the

impetus behind the most recent development from the European Commission, the publication of a Green Paper on Commercial Communications in the Internal Market<sup>38</sup>.

Commercial Communications are defined as paid-for forms of marketing activity, including advertising, direct marketing, sponsorship and sales promotion. The Green Paper proposes a framework for assessing whether existing regulations are admissible under Community law and whether they are proportionate (i.e., no more than is needed to fulfil immediate objectives) in meeting public interest requirements. Such reviews may eventually lead to national measures being dismantled or replaced by secondary EU legislation.

Consumer organisations are greatly concerned that the Green Paper is less influenced by the need to establish adequate safeguards for consumers and a high level of protection of minors than the desire to promote trade interests. It fails to give adequate consideration to consumer protection, particularly that of children; nor does it recognise that harmonisation of laws on marketing practice can be upwards rather than downwards. The Green Paper also fails to recognise that the major barriers to pan-European advertising are cultural and linguistic rather than regulatory. Such cultural differences will remain even if national rules are removed.

Different cultures and legal traditions have led to different regulatory expressions. In addition to EU framework regulations and international guidelines, each country has its own national advertising regulations and systems of regulatory control.

## 4.2 Advertising to children

In all participating countries, advertising regulation is a function of both regulatory and self-regulatory bodies responsible for statutory rules and self-regulatory guidelines. The degree to which emphasis is given to regulation versus self-regulation is largely a result of the legal tradition within each country (although, even where self-regulation is the norm, this normally exists within a legal framework).

In the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), regulation is based on a general legislative clause which prohibits unfair marketing practices. Due to the legal tradition in Belgium, France, Germany and Greece, the legislative framework is the most important source, with self-regulation considered an addition. In Australia, advertising regulation is a mixture of industry self-regulation and government-guided 'self-regulation' (co-regulation). In the UK, TV advertising is regulated through a code of practice backed up by statute.

In Germany and the US, regional or state bodies play an important role in advertising regulation. In Germany, broadcasting legislation for the commercial sector is administered by 15 regulatory authorities (*Landesmedienanstalten*) for the 16 *Länder* (Federal States), although there is agreement between authorities on procedures. In the US, advertising regulation is highly fragmented between federal and state bodies. The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has primary jurisdiction over most advertisements in 'interstate commerce', but the individual states have concurrent jurisdiction over advertising within their borders. State-level regulation of advertising intensified during the 1980s in response to reduced aggressiveness on the part of the FTC. Often a case brought by one state attorney-general generates publicity and action at a national level. In Belgium, there are separate bodies and codes regulating advertising for the French-speaking and Flemish-speaking communities, although in the area of children's advertising, they are similar in many respects.

In some countries, such as the UK and the US, deregulation has led to greater self-regulation. In the US, broadcasters draw up codes and each major national broadcast network now has its own pre-broadcasting review process of advertisements and a set of general guidelines.

#### 4.2.1 Definition of 'child'

Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as being below the age of 18, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. For the purpose of advertising regulation, there is no

universally accepted definition of 'a child'. The age definition of 'a child' differs between countries and between international bodies. The International Chamber of Commerce Code of Advertising Practice considers that children are aged 14 or under or whatever age is considered appropriate at the national level. The European Union, in its Television without Frontiers Directive, makes no age definition of a 'minor'.

In Denmark, TV advertising regulations consider children to be under 18. In the UK, it is 15 and under. Regulations or codes of practice covering advertising and children in Australia, Belgium, France, Germany and Greece apply to children aged 14 or under, whereas in the US, under 12 is considered appropriate by the self-regulatory Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) guidelines. In Norway and Sweden, restrictions on advertising to children are for those addressed to under 12s.

As this report recognises (see Section 3.7), many young children are unable to distinguish advertising from programming, and their ability to understand the purpose of advertising increases with age. Therefore, this report recommends that advertising regulations should take account of the age of the likely child audience, with younger children requiring even greater protection than older children and teenagers.

#### 4.2.2 Time restrictions on advertising to children

A number of countries impose time restrictions on advertising in connection with children's programming or advertisements directed at children. In the US, advertising is limited to 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends and 12 minutes per hour on weekdays during children's programming. Within the EU, Directive 89/552/EEC limits advertisements to 15% of daily broadcasting time (12 minutes per hour). Children's programmes of less than 30 minutes are not permitted to be interrupted by advertisements, and there must be at least 20 minutes between two breaks in the same programme. Table 11 (*see over*) indicates restrictions above this minimum.

**Table 11: Restrictions on advertising to children**

<b>Australia</b>	No adverts during 'P' classified programming for pre-school children. No more than five minutes of ads for each days 30 minutes of 'C' classified children's programming
<b>Austria</b>	No advertising during children's programmes
<b>Belgium</b>	In the Flemish region, no advertising is permitted 5 minutes before or after programmes for children under 12. Also no teleshopping permitted.
<b>Denmark</b>	No advertising breaks during programmes (for all broadcasting). Maximum transmission time of adverts is 10% of daily programme time.
<b>Norway</b>	Adverts not permitted to be broadcast during and in connection with children's programmes, nor can ads target children specifically.
<b>Sweden</b>	TV advertising aimed at children under 12 is not permitted. Neither is it permitted to transmit advertisements during or immediately before or after children's programmes. No programmes (with certain exceptions) may be interrupted by commercial breaks.
<b>UK</b>	For terrestrial channels, advertising is limited to an average of 7 minutes per hour. Between 18.00-23.00 and 7.00-9.00, advertising must not exceed an average of 7.5 minutes/hour.
<b>USA</b>	Advertising limited to 10.5 minutes per hour on weekends and 12 minutes per hour on weekdays during children's programming

Norway and Sweden have the highest level of protection in that they do not permit any advertisements to target young children or permit advertising immediately before, during or after children's programmes. The effect of these regulations is to limit to a great extent the exposure of children to TV advertising. As the monitoring survey of advertising practice for this report has found, Norway and Sweden's terrestrial channels had the lowest levels of recorded advertising. This is in contrast to the other countries which, although they may limit advertising in connection with children's programming, do not prohibit advertisements from appealing directly to children.

A number of countries place restrictions on advertising in connection with children's programming. In Australia, no adverts are permitted to be broadcast during specially classified 'P' programming for pre-school children and, although not part of this survey, the Irish broadcaster RTE introduced a ban on advertising during programmes for pre-school children in 1995. In Austria, advertising is not permitted during children's programmes, and in the Flemish region of Belgium, no advertising is permitted five minutes before or after programmes for children under 12. Similarly in Sweden, no advertisements are

permitted before or after children's programmes.

However 'advertisements that target children' can sometimes be difficult to define. In 1993, the Consumer Ombudsman in Norway was obliged to intervene to determine whether advertisements were said to 'target children'. In one case, the ombudsman ruled that adverts for Kellogg's Smacks breakfast cereals were aimed especially at children, an infringement of Article 2 of the Act relating to broadcast advertising. Kellogg's claimed that the advertisement was aimed at the whole family and was therefore not subject to the ban, since children themselves would hardly be likely to buy breakfast products. The Marketing Council evaluated the impact of the advertisement on the basis of product, content and time of broadcast and a majority of the council concluded that the advertisement was specially aimed at children. An injunction was served forbidding the advertisement to be broadcast on television aimed at Norwegian viewers.

In Europe, there are concerns that some broadcasters are breaking the spirit of EU rules that prohibit the interruption of children's programmes of less than 30 minutes by

advertising breaks. For example, in Germany, where children's programming consists largely of a series of cartoons with puppets and other characters appearing between them, broadcasters have sought to get round this restriction by considering every individual cartoon to be a separate programme, thus enabling them to insert advertisements between each one. One broadcaster recategorised its children's programmes as family programmes in order to be allowed to continue broadcasting commercials. This has since been prohibited by the Broadcasting Board and by the courts.

In Germany, there is concern about the amount of advertising permitted. The German consumer organisation Verbraucher-Zentrale NRW reports that the maximum amount of 12 minutes per hour is reached particularly on Saturday and Sunday mornings and, especially in the pre-Christmas period, has sometimes been exceeded. There is said to have been discussions between regulatory authorities and private stations on reducing the number of commercials before and after children's programmes.

In Greece, too, concern has been expressed about the amount of advertising aimed at children. Although this is restricted to 12 minutes per hour - the EU maximum - this limit has been exceeded by some channels. Breaches in the rule that prohibit children's programmes of less than 30 minutes from being interrupted by commercials have also been noted. According to the Greek consumer organisation, E.K.PI.ZO., the four largest channels were found to interrupt such programmes with up to 10 minutes of commercials. And in France there have been complaints that commercial breaks appear too frequently during children's viewing hours.

In Denmark and for UK terrestrial channels, this EU maximum is not permitted. In Denmark, advertising to children is limited to 10% of programme time. In the UK, there are no special restrictions on the amount of advertising to children but all advertising on terrestrial channels is limited to a maximum daily average of 7 minutes an hour. During peak viewing hours, advertising must not exceed an average of 7.5 minutes an hour. This

survey found an average of 9 minutes of advertising per hour during children's programming - the highest level recorded for all the European countries. Only Australia and the US had higher levels.

Another contentious area is the definition of 'children's programming'. Broadcasters are typically obliged to transmit a certain number of hours of programming suitable for children, and it is usually this defined period which is known as 'children's programming' and to which restrictions may apply. However, in some countries 'children's programming' is limited to only a few hours a week. In these, as in other countries, children see programming outside dedicated children's programmes and therefore are exposed to advertising that is not subject to the restrictions surrounding children's programming.

Although advertising is not permitted during dedicated 'children's programmes' in Sweden, a small amount of advertising was recorded in this survey due to the inclusion of other programmes of appeal to children. This is despite the fact that Sweden does not permit any television advertising to be directed towards children under 12. In Austria, no advertisements are permitted during children's programmes but they are broadcast in programmes directly after this dedicated period during other programmes that are popular with children. However, in these countries, although children watch programmes which do include commercials, the levels of advertising, as confirmed by this survey, are far lower than in countries which have fewer restrictions. In Australia, most programmes for children do not fall into the 'C' category to which time restrictions apply. Most are 'G' classified programmes which are permitted to include 13-15 minutes/hour of non-programme material. The monitoring survey for this report found that Australia had the highest level of advertising of all participating countries. Although it is the case that children will see some advertising on TV, this does not reduce the importance of time restrictions in protecting children from excessive commercialisation.

A phrase that is used in some aspects of regulations on advertising and children in the

UK is 'at times when large numbers of children are likely to be viewing'. While this is open to interpretation, it nonetheless takes account of the fact that children regularly watch programmes other than 'children's programming'. Another approach has been adopted in the Canadian province of Quebec. There, no advertising is permitted when children under 13 years of age comprise 15% or more of the audience. According to the Supreme Court of Canada, 'freedom of speech for advertisers ends at a point where their manipulative sales pitches reach the impressionable minds of children'.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Prohibited advertising to children

In no country included in this survey are tobacco products permitted to be advertised on TV. However, tobacco companies may sponsor sports events or participants in sporting events, and thus their names may appear prominently on television broadcasts which may be popular with children and teenagers.

In addition, no country permits alcohol advertising to be targeted towards minors. In Finland (except for drinks with less than 2.8% alcohol), France (except for drinks with less than 1.2% alcohol) and Sweden (except for drinks with less than 2.25% alcohol), alcohol advertising is not permitted on TV at all. As with tobacco sponsors, alcoholic drinks companies may also appear as sponsors of sports programmes or in advertisements at sports events.

In the Netherlands, two out of five alcohol adverts on TV must include an educational

slogan encouraging the consumer to adopt a responsible attitude or include a warning against abuse. Slogans are compulsory for all adverts broadcast during or immediately before or after sports programmes. Examples include 'enjoy a drink, but only in moderation' and 'keep it pleasant, drink in moderation'.

Table 12 summarises other products which are not permitted to be advertised to children.

The Greek ban on toy advertising has been a contentious matter, and toy manufacturers and broadcasters have sought to overturn it through the European Courts. In 1987, the European Commission intervened on the basis of Article 30 of the EC treaty on free movement of goods and services.

Consequently the Greek government limited their prohibition to war toys which the Commission considered compatible with Article 30. However in 1994, by amending the Greek Consumer Protection Act, the advertising of toys on TV between 07.00 and 22.00 is prohibited.

In Greece, concern has also been expressed about the number of trailers for adult programmes previewed during children's television hours. In the UK, trailers for 15- and 18-rated film are not permitted to be broadcast during children's programmes.

Of note is the recent introduction in the UK of restrictions on advertising any slimming product or food or drink sold on a slimming platform. Such advertisements must not be addressed to people under 18 or use elements likely to be of particular appeal to them. In

**Table 12: Restrictions on product advertising to children**

<b>Austria</b>	Medicines and other health-related or nutritional products
<b>Greece</b>	Toys (between 7am and 10pm). Total ban on war toys.
<b>UK</b>	Liqueur chocolates, matches, medicines, vitamins and dietary supplements. Trailers for 15 & 18 rated films are not permitted during or immediately before or after children's programmes. Adverts in which children are shown having any medicine, or vitamin/dietary supplement or which use techniques which are likely to appeal to children are not permitted until after 9pm. Advertisements for merchandise based on children's programmes must not be broadcast in the two hours before or after the programme is broadcast. Slimming products may not be targeted at or appeal to children or adolescents under 18.

<sup>39</sup> Biggins B, Television advertising to kids: Canada's Supreme Court shows us the way. *Small Screen* 1989; 35:1-2.

addition, such advertisements must not be broadcast during the breaks in, or immediately adjacent to, children's programmes or those likely to be of particular appeal to an audience under 18. In introducing these measures, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) took into account the rapidly expanding market for such products, accompanied by the widespread public concern about eating disorders. While recognising that the causes of eating disorders were complex, the ITC had regard for concerns that certain types of media promotion of slimming might create a climate in which eating disorders are more likely to occur.

#### 4.2.4 Advertising techniques

Advertising's primary purpose is to persuade, and advertising techniques aim to make products attractive and desirable to the target audience. Consumer organisations in this survey have expressed concerns about advertising's ability to mislead and about techniques used in advertising to children.

The Dutch consumer organisation, Consumentenbond, would like to see more detailed regulation on misleading advertising. It considers the UK code is more concrete in specifying what is misleading for children, in particular in toy advertising. In Australia, concern about advertising's potential to mislead children has led to the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs to call for research into aspects of advertisements which may mislead or deceive children.

Many children, particularly younger ones, may find it difficult to distinguish advertising from programmes. Commercial breaks are generally required to be separated from programmes by a visual marker, although this may not eliminate possible confusion between advertisements and programming. In Finland, the Consumer Ombudsman intervened over the distinction between commercial breaks and children's programming when it considered taking the broadcaster MTV (Channel 3) to the Market Court because it failed to separate advertisements from programmes with markers. MTV agreed to add its logo at the end of all children's programmes to signify the programme had ended and to distinguish it

from the following commercials. In Germany, there have been calls for announcements before and after children's programmes to identify advertising, in addition to a visual marker.

As many children's programmes and advertisements use animated characters, this may also add to confusion among children. In Finland, the Consumer Ombudsman is currently considering the use of animated commercials broadcast in connection with children's animated programmes, which could confuse the distinction between advertising and programming. In Germany, it is expected that advertising using animation will be prohibited in advertising breaks before and after cartoon programmes.

In addition to animation, popular techniques used in advertising to children include fast-moving action, music and jingles, and humour. The use of role models and the use of other children are also techniques which are successful in attracting children to an advertised product. As well as responding positively to sports stars, pop idols or other well-known personalities, advertisers know that children respond positively to other children, particularly those that are slightly older than themselves – they want to do what they are doing or have what they have. Of note is that boys are more popular in adverts as girls are not generally accepted by boys, but boys are accepted by both sexes.

Another popular marketing tool is the use of promotional gifts and competitions. These and the use of children and well-known personalities in advertisements to children are subject to restrictions in some countries.

#### 4.2.5 Use of free gifts, premiums and special offers

Many marketers use these techniques to attract children, knowing that children are often avid collectors. A free gift can make an otherwise uninteresting product highly attractive. In food advertising, breakfast cereals often include free toys or other activities/offers/competitions on the packet. McDonald's Happy Meals for children regularly offer toys or other collectible items of interest to children,

often tied to a film release or sporting event. To collect the full set, it is usually necessary to return each week over a number of weeks, with obvious commercial advantages for the company.

In Greece, the use of such free gifts, particularly in association with food advertising, is of concern. To be more attractive, the majority of food advertisements offer gifts to children such as 'magic stickers', fluorescent figures, cards with TV or cartoon characters, or the possibility of winning trips to EuroDisney. Some of the gifts are related to the TV programmes that follow the advertisements.

Table 13 summarises restrictions on such promotional activities. These rules may also cover the use of prizes or other give-aways to children during programmes.

In Finland, the Consumer Ombudsman has investigated Yoplait Frutos yoghurt adverts aimed at children. The Market Court decided that the adverts did not adhere to good practice because they encouraged children to

participate in a lottery draw by calling a service number subject to charge ('ring up and win').

#### 4.2.6 The use of personalities/endorsements

Table 14 summarises rules relating to the use of personalities or other characters in advertising to children.

As the table shows, some countries have regulations which prevent characters from children's programmes appearing in advertisements. Again the primary purpose of this is to limit confusion between programming and advertisements. In no country are there restrictions on the use of popular personalities, even though regulations often state that advertisements must not play on children's sense of loyalty. It can be argued that children feel very loyal towards their favourite personality and that advertisers are exploiting that sense of loyalty by using such personalities to promote their products.

In Australia, the Federal Bureau of Consumer

**Table 13: Restrictions on promotional activities**

<b>Australia</b>	No prizes during pre-school programming. Where prizes are offered during children's programmes, presenters may not endorse products or encourage children to buy them.
<b>Denmark</b>	No prizes may be offered as a reward to children and young people.
<b>Norway</b>	The use of irrelevant premiums is not permitted, e.g., competitions or stamps/coupons to enhance the sale of a product. This applies to all advertising.
<b>Sweden</b>	Sales promotion offers must make clear its conditions, nature and value and any restrictions applicable to the offer.
<b>USA</b>	Adverts should not make the premium the central focus of the advertisement. However, free product premiums are cited by the Children's Advertising Review Unit to be one of the most common violations of children's advertising guidelines.

**Table 14: Restrictions on the use of personalities / endorsements**

<b>Australia</b>	Personalities or characters from children's programmes broadcast within preceding 12 months may not endorse, recommend or promote products in ads.
<b>Denmark</b>	Characters from children's programmes may not be used in adverts for products of particular interest to children.
<b>Sweden</b>	Individuals or characters from children's programmes are not permitted to appear in advertisements.
<b>UK</b>	Adverts in which personalities and other characters who appear regularly in any children's programme present or positively endorse products or services of particular interest to children must not be transmitted before 9pm.

Affairs<sup>40</sup> has asked broadcasters to implement more fully the regulations which prohibit advertising which misleads or deceives children and to seek an end to the practice of 'host selling' using personalities and characters to advertise products to children.

#### 4.2.7 Use of children in advertisements

Advertising should not unreasonably show children in dangerous situations. However, a number of countries have additional restrictions on the use of children in advertisements which are summarised in Table 15.

The behaviour of children in advertisements can cause concern. In Finland, the Market Court prohibited the transmission of advertisements for yoghurt which showed a child acting antisocially by overturning sales counters and colliding with people. Rather than being punished, the child in the advertisement was rewarded with a yoghurt. A McDonald's advert was banned in 1989 on the grounds that the advertisement exploited the loneliness of a child. The Finnish court ruled that the advertisement could not be broadcast because it might convey the wrong impression – that eating in McDonald's or buying its takeout products can banish loneliness or serve as a substitute for friends. The court imposed an injunction on the advertisement with the threat of a \$50,000 fine if McDonald's again employed a child's loneliness to promote its business.

Although the spirit of these rules is to protect children from being exploited in advertisements and from using their appeal to persuade others of the benefits of advertised products, in practice these rules are open to interpretation and do not preclude the use of children in advertisements.

#### 4.2.8 'Pester power'

Children are generally recognised as having an increasing role in family decision-making about purchases, particularly food. Yet if it is of such intensity, this so-called 'pester power' causes concern and irritation among many parents. It could be argued, for example, that to be successful any advertisement directed towards children for products which they cannot reasonably be expected to buy for themselves relies on children asking or 'pestering' their parents to buy the product. Certainly very young children cannot reasonably be expected to buy anything for themselves. A logical argument can be made for such advertisements to be addressed only to parents rather than to children directly, as is the case in Norway and Sweden.

Advertising codes generally incorporate the principle that advertisements should not *directly* 'exhort' or 'encourage' children to buy a product or service. Article 16 of The EU Directive 89/552 states that advertisements must not *directly* exhort minors to buy a product or service by exploiting their

**Table 15: Restrictions on the use of children in advertisements**

<b>Belgium</b>	Use of children in advertisements is restricted by employment law
<b>Denmark</b>	Children under 14 are only permitted in ads if they are a natural part of the described environment or if their appearance has a relevance to the product
<b>France</b>	Rules have been relaxed. Before 1992, children were not permitted in advertisements for products that were not relevant to them, nor could they be used as 'dictators of consumers' choice' by boasting about a product's qualities or describing its features.
<b>UK</b>	Children in advertisements should be reasonably well-mannered and well-behaved. Children must not be used formally to present products or services which they could not be expected to buy themselves. This applies whether or not such products are of interest to them. Nor may they make in relation to any product or service, significant comments on characteristics of which they cannot be expected to have direct knowledge. Children must not be used to give formalised personal testimony. This does not, however, preclude children giving spontaneous comments on matters in which they would have an obvious natural interest.

<sup>40</sup> 'Advertising directed at children' Final report, Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs. Canberra. June 1995.

inexperience or credulity, or *directly* encourage minors to persuade their parents or others to purchase the goods or services being advertised. Similarly the ICC guidelines state that advertisements should not include any *direct* appeal to children to persuade others to buy the advertised product for them (emphases added).

Such regulations are normally interpreted to preclude the kind of direct statement such as 'ask Mummy to buy this for you', although other phrases which it could be argued fall within the spirit of such rules have been used, such as children in advertisement saying 'I want x' or 'I must have x'. It is concern over whether the spirit of such rules is being followed that has led the European Parliament to seek to broaden the interpretative scope. Under the current review of the Television Without Frontiers Directive, the European Parliament voted for the word 'directly' to be removed from Article 16.

In Australia, where advertising rules forbid advertisers to 'put undue pressure on children to ask their parents to buy advertised products', the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs considered that this standard had been breached when 80% of respondents in a 1993 survey believed that advertising directed at children does put pressure on parents to buy.

#### 4.2.9 Teleshopping

Teleshopping, or home shopping as it is sometimes known, is not permitted to target children in several countries, including Belgium, France, Greece and the UK. However, in other countries advertisers have used teleshopping to circumvent restrictions on advertising to children. In Austria, the broadcaster ORF gets around the prohibition on advertising during children's programmes by offering products to children by teleshopping. The Austrian consumer organisation, Verein für Konsumenten-information, would like to see a prohibition on teleshopping during children's programming. Also in Germany, there have been calls for teleshopping before and after children's programmes to be banned.

#### 4.2.10 Premium-rate telephone services

In some countries, advertising to children which uses premium-rate telephone services are not permitted. In the UK, no advertisement may invite children to purchase products by mail or telephone. In the US, premium-rate telephone services to children are permitted within certain guidelines. In 1990, the Federal Trade Commission prohibited advertisements for '900 numbers' to children under 12 years old, unless the services are truly educational. And any 900 number advertisements directed to children under 18 must warn them to get their parents' permission before calling.

In this survey, the greatest concern was expressed by the Greek consumer organisation, E.K.PI.ZO., which found that the majority of advertisements broadcast during children's programmes were by a company promoting the provision of telephone services. These include 'personality tests', quizzes with cash prizes, astrological advice, and competitions to judge 'what happens next' – for example, in a football match – where viewers can win money by answering correctly.

Such advertising is permitted although details of the exact charge per minute should be shown while the telephone number is shown on screen. In practice this requirement is not respected.

Concern centres on the appeal of such services to children and young people and their ability to run up large telephone bills. There have been many complaints from parents following calls their children have made. E.K.PI.ZO. considers that such services should be banned during children's programmes.

#### 4.2.11 Sponsorship of children's programmes

The survey found children's programmes in a number of countries were sponsored, often by food companies. The regulations between countries differ as Table 16 shows.

**Table 16: Sponsorship of children's programmes**

<b>Australia</b>	Permitted
<b>Austria</b>	Permitted
<b>Belgium</b>	Permitted in both French and Flemish regions
<b>Denmark</b>	Not permitted
<b>Finland</b>	Not permitted
<b>France</b>	Permitted
<b>Germany</b>	Permitted but not used in practice
<b>Greece</b>	Permitted
<b>Netherlands</b>	Not permitted on public channels. Commercial channels have agreed to abandon sponsorship of children's programmes.
<b>Norway</b>	Not permitted
<b>Sweden</b>	Not permitted for programmes aimed at under 12s.
<b>UK</b>	Permitted

Sponsorship of children's programmes has raised concerns, particularly over the difficulty children may have in understanding this relationship. In the UK, it is permitted. However, the regulatory body, the Independent Television Commission (ITC), requires that sponsors, particularly for programmes for younger children, should be 'appropriate', bearing in mind the difficulties children may have in comprehending a sponsorship relationship and the reservations of parents. The ITC is due to relax its rules on sponsorship in 1997. Recent qualitative research by the ITC found that some parents felt that sponsorship aimed at children aged 8-12 was unacceptable under any circumstances; others considered it acceptable if certain sponsors were avoided. Educational, constructive or healthy products were considered permissible. Negative views were expressed about sweets, toys (especially violent or expensive one), clothing (also because of expense), tobacco and alcohol.<sup>41</sup>

Participating consumer organisations in Austria and Belgium would like to see sponsorship of children's programmes prohibited, especially those for younger children. In Denmark, problems have arisen

over sponsorship as the regulatory body does not have the power to prosecute violations of the ban against product placement. In Germany, where sponsorship of children's programmes is permitted but in practice it is not used, there have been calls for it to be formally prohibited. In the Netherlands, commercial channels have agreed to abandon sponsorship of children's programmes.

Sponsorship has also raised concerns in Greece as the name or logo of the sponsor is shown, often followed immediately by an advertisement for the product/company at the beginning and end of the programme, as well as during commercial breaks in the programme. Examples E.K.PI.ZO. have noted include children's cartoons sponsored by Kellogg's, the breakfast cereals company, Chipita, manufacturers of savoury snacks and confectionery, and Tasty, manufacturers of savoury snacks. E.K.PI.ZO. proposes that manufacturers of confectionery and similar products related to nutrition of children should not be permitted to sponsor children's programmes.

The organisation also is concerned about the sponsorship of sports programmes that many children watch and which they consider should not be sponsored by alcohol brands. Additionally, there have been complaints about product placement in programming, which is not permitted.

### 4.3 Food advertising

Food advertising to children has raised concerns in all countries in the survey. For example, in Denmark, the Ministry of Culture reports that while the number of complaints about television advertising is small compared to the number of advertisements broadcast, a large number of complaints are about food advertisements and advertisements to children.

As the monitoring survey shows (see Section 3), food advertising is the largest category of products advertised to children in virtually every country. Concern centres not just on the amount of such advertising but on the nutritional profile of the advertised foods, in

<sup>41</sup> 'Sponsorship of children's programmes' Independent Television Commission, London, 1996.

particular, the predominance of advertisements for foods which are high in sugar and fat and which do little to contribute towards a healthy diet.

In most participating countries, there are few or no specific rules concerning food advertising to children beyond the rules which must apply to all advertising. Table 17 summarises rules on food advertising which do exist in participating countries.

As the table shows, the UK and the Netherlands have the most extensive codes concerning food advertising and children. US broadcasters have also adopted codes concerning the nutritional presentation of food advertisements.

In the UK, following concern from consumer organisations and as recommended by a government initiative<sup>42</sup>, in 1995 the Independent Television Commission

**Table 17: Regulations concerning food advertising**

<b>Australia</b>	Food adverts may not contain any misleading or incorrect information about its nutritional value
<b>Belgium</b>	In Flemish region, adverts for confectionery must carry toothbrush logo. In French-speaking region, no pictogram is required but advertisers must insert health message.
<b>Denmark</b>	Commercials for confectionery, chocolate, soft drinks, snacks, etc., may not state that any of these can be a substitute for a proper meal.
<b>Finland</b>	Children may only appear in a passive role in confectionery commercials.
<b>Netherlands</b>	Confectionery adverts must not encourage excessive consumption, nor may consumption of this kind be held up as an example or be excused. Adverts may not suggest that confectionery can replace a meal, nor contain negative statements about people who do not wish to consume or who limit their consumption of confectionery. Adverts may not establish a link between the consumption of confectionery and health. A reference to a relatively low sugar content may not be used to create the impression that the chance of dental caries occurring is remote. Situations in which confectionery is consumed by a person immediately after brushing their teeth and before going to bed shall not be shown, nor shall consumption at such times be encouraged. Television advertising for confectionery shall show a toothbrush as approved by the Advertising Code Commission.
<b>UK</b>	Advertisements must not encourage children to eat frequently throughout the day; to consume food or drink (especially sweet, sticky foods) near bedtime; or to suggest that confectionery or snack foods can be substituted for balanced meals. Food advertising in general must not encourage or condone excessive consumption, or disparage good dietary practice. Comparisons must not discourage selection of foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Advertisements, particularly those addressed to children, must pay regard to oral hygiene and must not encourage frequent consumption throughout the day (particularly of products containing sugar) or depict situations where teeth are unlikely to be cleaned after consumption. Nutrition or health claims must be supported by sound scientific evidence and must not give a misleading impression of the food as a whole.
<b>USA</b> (Children's Advertising Review Unit's guidelines)	Representation of food products should encourage sound use of the product with a view toward healthy development of the child and development of good nutritional practices. Advertisements representing mealtime should clearly and adequately depict the role of the product within the framework of a balanced diet. Snack foods should be clearly represented as such, and not as substitutes for meals. In addition, broadcasters have their own guidelines.

<sup>42</sup> Eat Well; An action plan from the Nutrition Task Force to achieve the Health of the Nation targets on diet and nutrition. Department of Health, HMSO, London (1994).

introduced a new section in its code on food advertising. In the introduction to the rules, the ITC states that 'Public health policy places increasing emphasis on good dietary behaviour as a means for preventing illness and promoting health. Competitive product advertising cannot reasonably be expected to perform the same role as education and public information in promoting a varied and balanced diet. At the same time it is important that such advertising should not undermine progress towards national dietary improvement by misleading or confusing consumers or by setting bad examples, particularly to children.'

Thus, the code acknowledges the potential health impact of food advertising. While consumer organisations in all countries have expressed concern about the health impact of much food advertising, few regulatory bodies have enshrined such concerns into specific advertising regulations.

While the Dutch code is more extensive than all but the UK's, its focus solely relates to confectionery and not to other foods. Both the Dutch and the UK codes include rules restricting the depiction of confectionery consumption before bedtime. As a result of this, one UK advertiser was criticised for using a child dressed in pyjamas in a confectionery advertisement on the grounds that this contravened the rule prohibiting the association between confectionery products and bedtime. However, the advertiser attempted to argue that the advertisement depicted an early morning scene rather than bedtime, perhaps illustrating the lengths to which some advertisers will go in the attempt to circumvent the spirit of such rules.

Until November 1991, the Dutch advertising codes did not permit the broadcasting of confectionery advertising until after 8pm. According to the Dutch regulatory body, this rule was withdrawn at the request of the confectionery industry which argued that, because of harmonisation of European rules and the fact that the incidence of dental cases had fallen, the rule was no longer appropriate.

In the US, where there has been concern about the effects on nutrition of food advertising to

children since the 1970s, broadcasters' guidelines generally include a specific section on food and nutrition. For example, the NBC guidelines state that advertisements for foods shall be in accord with the commonly accepted principles of good eating and that each commercial for breakfast-type products shall include at least one audio and one video depiction of a balanced meal. Special enriched foods designed to serve as a substitute for a meal may be advertised as such, provided their purpose and nutritional value are featured in the advertising, the claims are supported by adequate documentation, and the language used is easily comprehended by children. Ingredients shall be accurately represented, and commercials for foods shall not, directly or by implication, suggest or recommend indiscriminate or immoderate use or consumption.

In Greece, food advertising is also a major concern, particularly advertisements which are likely to mislead and therefore breach advertising rules. Documented breaches include the assertion that a Kinder chocolate bar is equivalent to a portion of milk; the presentation of Nesquik chocolate drink as a milk substitute; and the creation of misconceptions about the effectiveness of slimming products. Adverts for Kinder chocolate eggs have also been criticised for contravening the code which states that adverts must not incite minors to purchase products by exploiting their innocence and good faith or to pressure their parents into buying the products for them. In the Kinder commercial, a mother is shown offering the eggs to children because 'she knows how to make them happy'.

While the effects of any one advertisement may not be greatly significant, it is the repeated or cumulative effect of high levels of food advertising for food products with limited nutritional benefits that concerns many consumer organisations. No country has regulations which consider the cumulative effect of advertising.

#### 4.3.1 Health-related claims

Consumer organisations have also expressed concerns about the increasing use of health-

related claims in food advertising, in particular, their ability to mislead due to lack of regulations or guidelines concerning their use. Food advertising to children does not use health-related claims to a large extent; the emphasis tends to be on taste and enjoyment. However, as children are becoming more aware of nutrition issues, and parents are increasingly concerned about their children's nutrition, the use of health claims may increase.

Such claims may include the use of terms such as 'natural' or 'organic'; the use of nutrient claims such as 'low in fat' or 'high in fibre', and the association of ingredients or constituents in food such as vitamins and minerals, polyunsaturated fats, fibre and so on with the prevention of disease. Although not specifically part of this particular survey, it is interesting to note the action taken in the US to regulate the use of such claims.

During the 1980s, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), as part of its mandate to regulate all advertising, attempted to define certain health-related claims (e.g., organic or natural) and to require a nutrition declaration if a nutrition-related advertising claim was made. The deregulatory mood of the 1980s prevented the FTC from officially promulgating this rule.

However, some state attorneys general, acting separately and in concert through the National Association of Attorneys General, brought cases against individual companies (e.g., Campbell Soup Company for its 'soup is good food' campaign and Quaker Oats for its claims about the health benefits of oat bran in its hot cereals). The attorneys general called for stricter federal policy regarding food advertising claims.

In 1992 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) introduced definitions relating to the use of nutrition claims (e.g., free, low, good source, light) and specified allowable health claims following the Nutrition Labelling and Education Act of 1990. In light of the Act, the FTC announced that it would use largely the same principles in regulating food advertisements as the FDA would use in regulating labels<sup>43</sup>.

The European Commission has ruled that any nutrition claim on food labelling – for example, one that relates to a specific nutrient such as low fat, high fibre or reduced sugar – must trigger nutrition information on the label. This does not, however, apply to advertising. On the issue of health claims and definitions of nutrition claims, the Commission has yet to regulate. Draft directives did not receive a positive response from the food industry, which sees stricter regulation in this area as detrimental to its marketing strategies, and further action has not been forthcoming from the Commission.

In Australia, the Food Standards Code (policed by State Territory Health Departments) prohibits health claims on food advertising and labelling. This includes not only written statements but also symbols, images, endorsements and other forms of communication. The code specifies that a food label or advertisement shall not make a therapeutic or prophylactic claim, nor should it include the word health or any words to similar effect. In addition, reference to any disease or physiological condition is not permitted.

## 4.4 Enforcement of regulations

To be effective, regulations or codes of practice need to be adequately enforced. This section examines the various regulatory systems that exist in participating countries; their procedures for enforcement and monitoring of advertising rules; their systems of complaint, consumer representation, and possibilities for redress.

### 4.4.1 Enforcement and sanctions

As part of this survey, consumer organisations identified enforcement of regulations and sanctions as being key to an effective regulatory system. In some countries the lack of such an effective system and inadequate sanctions, particularly for self-regulatory bodies, were identified as a problem.

The Belgian consumers' association, Verbruikersunie, has been critical of the lack of adequate and effective enforcement of rules on

advertising to children. Although breaches of the codes and regulations occur, there are almost no complaints and sanctions are inadequate. In Greece, consumer organisations report that the regulation of advertising is not adequately controlled. E.K.P.I.ZO. has complained that breaches of the advertising code are everyday occurrences, yet their complaints to television channels are often ignored. Lack of legal powers by the self-regulatory Austrian Advertising Council was cited as a problem.

Regulatory systems in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) are generally held in high regard by consumer organisations, which are generally satisfied with the system of regulation. In these countries, advertising regulation is administered by the Consumer Ombudsman. In Norway and Sweden, the Consumer Ombudsman investigates complaints, although in Denmark this is the role of the Radio and Television Advertisements Board, one of whose three members is the Consumer Ombudsman. In these countries, most complaints to the Consumer Ombudsman are settled through negotiation without recourse to the law. However, breaches of the law can be referred to the Market Court, which can prohibit the practice and impose a fine. Lack of compliance with self-regulatory codes can be interpreted as contrary to good practice under the Marketing Act.

A number of countries not only seek to ensure effective enforcement but also have the powers to order some form of redress. In the Netherlands, the Advertising Code Foundation can impose fines and demand that advertisers make the ruling known to those who would have seen the advertisement or oblige the advertisers to publish a rectification. In Denmark, the Radio and Television Advertisements Board has the power to instruct broadcasters to publish details of decisions taken and to require broadcasters to transmit a correction if misleading information of a factual nature is transmitted in advertisements.

#### 4.4.2 Pre-vetting of advertisements

One effective way of ensuring that advertising meets required standards is for advertising to

be pre-vetted, that is, checked in advance before being broadcast. This is required in a minority of countries, but may take place on a voluntary basis by broadcasters. In Finland, it is a requirement if children are used in advertisements and in Greece, in theory, it is compulsory, but according to the consumer organisation, E.K.P.I.ZO., it does not happen in practice.

In Norway and Sweden, there is no pre-vetting of advertising but the Consumer Ombudsman in Norway and the Swedish Consumer Agency (Konsumentverket ko) carry out a continuous monitoring of commercials, which is intended to have the same effect of ensuring compliance with regulations.

#### 4.4.3 Complaints procedures

Complaints procedures exist in all participating countries except the US, where there are no real procedures for consumers to complain about individual advertisements. Individuals and organisations can contact the Federal Trade Commission, state regulators or self-regulatory bodies, but none are obliged to respond to complaints.

This survey has identified a number of consumer issues regarding complaints procedures. Many consumer organisations emphasise the importance of a complaints procedure that is sensitive to consumer concerns.

Although pre-vetting can ensure the worst excesses are prevented, any rules and regulations are open to interpretation. In addition, complaints about taste and decency are often matters of personal opinion. An accessible complaints procedure is therefore important as part of effective regulation, although responding solely to complaints is inadequate as a tool of effective enforcement of regulations. Acting to prohibit an advertisement after it has been broadcast does not typically provide any form of consumer redress.

Consumer organisations report that too many consumers are unaware of the regulatory bodies and the complaints procedures and in some countries, such as Greece, fees charged to

investigate complaints can act as a disincentive. In the Netherlands, the existing procedures for complaints and enforcement are considered adequate, but not sufficiently known by parents, children and educators. In the UK, the complaints procedure has been criticised for the length of time taken to investigate complaints, often ensuring that advertising campaigns are long finished once a ruling is made. Consumer organisations have proposed that there should be better consumer information and awareness about the complaints procedure.

Another factor considered important is the degree of openness and transparency prevailing in the complaints procedure. In Greece, breaches of the Greek Code of Advertising are kept by the self-regulatory body, EDEE, but this information is not publicly available. In the UK, complaints have been made about the lack of transparency of the complaints procedure, although details of all Independent Television Commission (ITC) rulings are published. Inter-industry complaints, however, are dealt with by an industry body, the Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre, and its findings are not made public - only the parties concerned are informed of the outcome. In the Netherlands, complaint hearings are conducted in public and in some cases a press release is issued announcing its ruling.

#### 4.4.4 Consumer representation

In all countries, consumers and consumer organisations are free to submit complaints, and in most countries consumer organisations are consulted over proposed rule changes. However, when it comes to drawing up and implementing codes, there is typically very little formal consumer involvement.

Self-regulatory bodies tend to be set up by industry interests which can lead to criticisms of inadequate consumer representation within decision-making bodies. The Dutch system is fairly unique in that its self-regulatory body (SRC) includes a consumer representative who is one of five members who rule on complaints. However, when the consumer organisation Consumentenbond submits a complaint, the consumer representative is

obliged to withdraw during its consideration. This is considered unsatisfactory

In Belgium, for the French-speaking community, consumer organisations have three representatives on the French Council for Advertising and Sponsorship on Radio and Television. However, in the Flemish Council, consumer organisations are not represented. In the UK, consumer organisations are represented on the Independent Television Commission's Advertising Advisory Committee. In the Nordic countries, the Consumer Ombudsman defends consumer interests. In Greece, consumer organisations are now able to take collective action before the Greek courts over misleading advertising.

Consumer organisations propose that regulatory bodies should include adequate consumer representation and that decision-making bodies should have a majority of non-industry interests.

## 4.5 Discussion

This review of advertising regulations and systems of regulation has shown the wide diversity that exists between participating countries both in the rules governing advertising to children and food advertising, and in the regulatory bodies and their systems of procedure. To a large extent these differences in regulatory structures reflect different legal traditions, whereas differences in regulations and codes of practice largely reflect consumer protection priorities and cultural attitudes. For example, in Norway and Sweden, the countries which impose the greatest restrictions, television advertising to children is considered ethically questionable. In many other European countries, there are restrictions which in some way seek to limit the amount of advertising that children may see on television. Although the monitoring period for this survey was limited, the results did to a great extent reflect such differing attitudes and restrictions. Countries such as Australia, the UK and the US, where the most advertising was found, are less questioning of the ethics of exposing children to commercialisation from a young age. Indeed, in the US, the 'right to free speech' enshrined within the constitution and interpreted to include the 'right to commercial

free speech' has been a barrier to those wishing to see greater restrictions on commercial messages, such as those on tobacco.

In some countries, consumer organisations have raised concerns that the spirit of restrictions are being circumvented and that there should be more effective enforcement in others. However, it does appear that such regulations do have an impact on the amount of television advertising that children are likely to see.

Of paramount importance to participating consumer organisations is the right for individual countries to be free to set and maintain their own standards at a national level, over and above those required internationally, such as EU standards. Such international standards should set a high level of consumer protection, particularly for children. But where differing national standards affect cross-border advertising, participating consumer organisations consider that broadcasters should be obliged to observe the national advertising rules of the receiving state when the target audience is citizens of that particular state, and the programmes are in their language or with subtitles in their language.

This survey has found that there is no consistent definition of a 'child' in national or international regulation or codes of practice. This report recognises that children's ability to fully comprehend advertising is largely a factor of their age. Many young children under the age of 6 have difficulty distinguishing commercials from programming and their ability to fully understand the purpose of advertising only is complete around the age of 12. Therefore, advertising addressed to or appealing to children, particularly younger children, can be unfair and misleading. This report recommends that advertising regulations should take into account children's developing abilities and the likely age of the child audience of programmes and ensure that all children receive adequate protection, but that younger children receive greater protection.

This report recommends that regulatory bodies in many countries need to consider

whether it is appropriate to introduce further restrictions to those currently in place. Appropriate restrictions which already apply in some countries include no advertising during programmes for pre-school children, no advertising to be directed to children under 12, and restrictions on the amount of advertising permitted in association with children's programmes.

In addition, consumer organisations have raised concerns about many of the techniques used in advertising directed at children and their potential ability to mislead. In particular, many consumer organisations felt that more should be done to ensure a clear distinction between advertising and programming, not only in the way in which breaks are distinguished but also in the use of cartoon characters, which can make it harder for young children particularly to distinguish between them.

In this context, the sponsorship of children's programmes has raised concerns among consumer organisations. Sponsorship can blur the distinction between advertising and programming and in some countries, such as Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, its use for children's programmes is not permitted and in Germany and the Netherlands, although it is permitted, it is not used in practice.

This report recommends that broadcasters should ensure a clear distinction between programmes and advertisements and that advertising techniques should not confuse between programmes and advertisements.

Although any rules are open to interpretation, there is also concern about the spirit in which some rules about advertising to children are interpreted. The concept of 'misleadingness' was thought to be in need of clearer definition for children's advertising. While adverts are generally not permitted to take advantage of children's sense of loyalty and affection for characters and personalities, their use can be considered to be an unfair marketing technique. Similarly, rules which prohibit children from 'directly' asking their parents to buy an advertised product may prohibit the most obvious incitements, but do not prohibit

other means of making products attractive and desirable, for example, free gifts and other special offers, so that children do, often repeatedly, ask their parents for products. This has commonly become known as children's 'pester power' and is knowingly exploited by advertisers, aware that children have limited direct spending power but a great deal of influence over parents' spending power.

This report recommends that where restrictions do not exist or where there is concern about the spirit of their implementation, regulatory bodies in consultation with consumer organisations should consider whether it is appropriate to introduce further measures to ensure that marketing activities and techniques are socially responsible.

Despite the large amount of food advertising directed towards children and its implications for children's nutritional health, this review of national and international regulations has found that only in a minority of participating countries is food advertising given special consideration. There are no regulations which limit the amount of food advertising to children beyond restrictions which limit all advertising to children. One measure introduced in the Netherlands which prevented confectionery from being advertised until after 8pm was withdrawn mainly due to pressure from advertisers who claimed that it was unnecessary because dental health had improved in the Netherlands. It appears that the nutritional implications beyond dental health were not taken into consideration.

This report recommends that appropriate bodies, such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the European Commission and national regulatory bodies, should recognise the health impact of food advertising and draw up appropriate codes of practice and regulations on advertising of food, particularly that addressed to children. Such rules should ensure that food advertising does not undermine progress towards national dietary improvement by misleading or confusing consumers or by setting bad examples, particularly to children. In particular, advertisements should not encourage excessive consumption of foods that are high in sugar, fat and/or salt.

Furthermore, food advertisements, particularly those addressed to children, should pay regard to considerations of oral health in that they should not encourage frequent consumption throughout the day of products liable to cause tooth decay (such as those containing sugar, and acidic drinks) or associate products with situation such as bedtime after which it is unrealistic to expect teeth to be cleaned. Many consumer organisations identified the growing use of health-related claims in advertisements as cause for concern because of their potential to mislead. As interest in health and nutrition has increased, so too has the use of health-related claims in the marketing of food. This report recommends that in countries where such claims are permitted, advertisers must be able to substantiate claims with sound scientific evidence and such claims should not give a misleading impression of the nutritional or health benefits of the food as a whole.

While this survey found few adverts for slimming products during the monitoring period, consumer organisations are concerned about the rise in eating disorders among children and teenagers. While recognising that the factors behind such disorders are complex, this report recommends that advertising regulations should recognise the role that advertising has in promoting body images and should ensure that advertisements do not suggest that being underweight is desirable or attractive. In addition, it recommends that advertisements for slimming products or foods sold as an aid to slimming, should not appeal to children or teenagers nor be broadcast during programmes popular with young people.

Many participating consumer organisations identified the lack of effective enforcement of advertising regulations and codes of practice as a matter of concern. Alongside regulations and codes of practice that set high standards, their effective enforcement by regulatory bodies is of paramount importance.

This section of the report has identified the wide diversity in the nature of bodies charged with responsibility for regulating advertising at a national level. In the Nordic countries, the Consumer Ombudsman plays an important role, thus ensuring that consumer interests and

protection are paramount. At the other extreme are industry self-regulatory bodies which include no consumer representation. In most countries, however, the regulation of television advertising is a function of both statutory controls and self-regulation.

While statutory bodies tend to have more power to impose sanctions or take legal action than self-regulatory ones, self-regulatory systems can be more responsive. Compared to taking legal action, costs are low and procedures are relatively fast and simple. However, it is important from a consumer perspective that regulatory bodies, whatever their constitution, should be held in high regard by advertisers and broadcasters as well as by consumers, and that they are able to balance the interests of these different interest groups in the pursuit of the public interest.

With certain exceptions, namely regulatory bodies in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands and the UK, many regulatory systems in this survey were not held in such high regard by consumer organisations, generally because of their apparent inability or unwillingness to take action against transgressors or be responsive to complaints by consumer organisations. In the US, for example, there is no regulatory body that is obliged to investigate individual consumer complaints.

This report proposes that there are a number of criteria which regulatory systems, whatever their nature, should meet to be effective and credible. This report recommends that bodies should be independent and impartial and should have a fully transparent decision-making process. They should include adequate consumer representation and have a majority of non-industry interests in decision-making bodies. To ensure compliance with advertising regulations there should be a system for pre-vetting or checking adverts in advance of

broadcast and there should be regular monitoring and reviews of regulations or codes of practice, particularly of sensitive areas such as advertising to children and food advertising.

In addition, there should be an accessible and free complaints systems open to consumers. The burden of proof should be placed on the advertiser and where there is disagreement of opinion, the weight of evidence should be given to the public interest. Most importantly, bodies should have the power to enforce their decisions, if necessary, by the imposition of sanctions if enforcement cannot be reached by negotiation, and they should be able to demand appropriate redress.

A particular problem that was identified in almost all countries was the lack of awareness by consumers of regulatory bodies and their role in investigating complaints. In addition, to improve adherence to codes, it was considered that more could be done to improve industry's knowledge of regulations or codes of practice. Therefore, this report recommends that to increase the confidence of consumers and of industry, regulatory bodies should conduct ongoing public awareness campaigns both for consumers and among the advertising industry.

Given that advertising is increasingly a global and cross-border issue, with concomitant problems of regulation, this report also recommends that it is vital that regulatory bodies co-operate at an international level to establish high levels of consumer protection and redress.

Finally, this report recognises the need for strong consumer organisations, both at a national and international level, with the resources and expertise to be able to lobby effectively for consumer rights.

## 5 Consumer action

**This section summarises some of the action that consumer organisations and others have taken in respect of advertising to children and in particular food advertising. It also highlights examples of opportunities for promoting healthier nutrition to children.**

### 5.1 Australia

The Australian Consumers' Association (ACA) has raised concerns about television food advertising, particularly to children, since the early 1980s. Its surveys of food advertising on children's TV have found that adverts for foods like chocolate, ice lollies, biscuits, soft drinks, sugary cereals, fries and other fatty and salty foods made up almost three-quarters of the total.

In 1990, the ACA released an information and action kit, *Into the Mouths of Babes*<sup>44</sup>, 'for parents, grandparents, educators and all who are concerned about the way TV advertising of food distorts and undermines our attempts to promote balanced healthy eating'. This urged campaign supporters to sign an open letter to the prime minister, to write to the TV networks to complain, and to carry out a survey at home of TV advertising with their children.

A 1988 study<sup>45</sup> funded by the South Australian Health Commission had found that 72% of adults surveyed favoured restricting the time permitted for food advertising directed at children. A survey of attitudes carried out in December 1993 by the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs<sup>46</sup> found that 58% of respondents were very concerned about the amount of advertising directed to children; 59% were concerned about advertising of snack or junk food to children; 73% believed advertising encouraged materialistic values; and 58% worried about the expense incurred by parents buying advertised products. While a majority of respondents did not want to see advertising directed at children banned, 79%

believed that there should be stricter controls on such advertising. The Federal Bureau expressed its concern over the finding that 80% felt that advertising puts pressures on parents to buy. Advertising regulations state that advertisements must not put 'undue pressure on children to ask their parents or other people to purchase an advertised product or service'. The Federal Bureau reported 'clearly this standard has been breached as far as many people are concerned, particularly parents of young children'.

In July 1995, the ACA's Choice Books published a monograph written by the Communications Law Centre, *Media Rights, Consumer Action*<sup>47</sup>, which provides information and a critique of media regulation in Australia.

In June 1995, the Australian Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs published a report, *Advertising Directed at Children*<sup>48</sup>. The Bureau, which aims to ensure consumers' interests are recognised and accepted in the Australian market, produced the report following a 1994 discussion paper that provided an overview of the many ways in which advertising is directed to children, described the regulation of children's advertising, surveyed the literature, reported on a survey of community attitudes to children's advertising, suggested some options for the future and invited comment from a range of individuals and organisations involved in the issues.

As in other countries where advertising aimed at children has been a focus of consumer concerns, industry organisations opposed the Bureau's conclusions that young children may be misled or deceived by advertisements directed at them. For their part, many consumer organisations, community groups, educators, child development professionals and individuals emphasised their concerns to the Bureau. Due to this interest, a national conference – *Children and Advertising: a fair game?* – was convened by Young Media Australia and the Institute for Values Research

<sup>44</sup> Into the Mouths of Babes, An information and action kit, Australian Consumers' Association (1990).

<sup>45</sup> Baghurst KI, Crawford D, Attitudes of South Australians to government interventions to improve nutritional health, Unpublished data. CSIRO, 1988.

<sup>46</sup> Advertising Directed at Children, Discussion Paper, Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs, Canberra (1994)

<sup>47</sup> Communications Law Centre, Media Rights, Consumer Action, Choice Books, Sydney (1995).

<sup>48</sup> Advertising Directed at Children, Final Report, Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs, Canberra (1995).

(18-19 July 1994), followed by a workshop hosted by the Bureau, *Children and Advertising: Future Directions*.

As a result of such consumer action, the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs has asked broadcasters to implement more fully the regulations which prohibit advertising that misleads or deceives children and to seek an end to the practice of 'host selling' – using personalities and characters to advertise products to children. In addition, the Bureau has called for adequate regulation of children's advertising on pay television due to be permitted after July 1997 and to which the Children's Television Standards will not apply and for further research into the economic and programming implications of any changes to children's advertising regulation.

In Australia, Community Service Announcements (CSA) on television have been used to promote healthy living, including healthier eating. Health campaigners report that while such announcements deserve encouragement, there are few such messages compared to the numbers of adverts for unhealthy foods. One Australian study<sup>49</sup> found fewer than one CSA for every five hours of viewing.

## 5.2 Germany

In Germany the consumer organisation AgV has formulated a number of recommendations concerning advertising with and for children:

- No commercials must be shown before, during or after programmes which directly address children. Commercials must not contain statements which:
  - suggest the purchase of a product is a precondition for social acknowledgement.
  - state that the purchase of a product could replace personal attention or be regarded as a reward for 'good deeds'.
  - use children as carriers of advertising messages for products which are untypical for children.
- increase one-sided stereotyped roles.

- show or describe children as sex objects.
- undermine the efforts of parents, teachers, doctors and health professionals with regard to healthy diets.

## 5.3 Greece

The Greek consumer organisation, E.K.PI.ZO., has been active on the issues of children and television advertising. The organisation has produced a number of consumer awareness publications including brochures advocating '12 rules for appropriate TV viewing'<sup>50</sup> and 'TV and advertisements'<sup>51</sup> as well as a poster for children. It has also conducted research into TV programmes and gambling games addressed to children and into the so-called 'pink lines' (premium-rate telephone sex lines) and gambling games advertised through electronic media<sup>52</sup>.

In December 1995, E.K.PI.ZO. organised a press conference on 'Children and Television' to mark the World Day of the Child, which it followed with a further press conference in February 1996 on the subject of 'Children, Free time and Television'. It has lobbied the Ministry of Development and other authorities as well as the European Commission, calling for the prohibition of advertisements for children on TV.

Together with two other consumer organisations, E.K.PI.ZO. filed a complaint in April 1995 with the European Commission against seven television channels for infringement of Directive 89/552/CEE as implemented in Greece by Presidential Decree 236/1992. It had also filed two complaints with the National Radiotelevision Council (NRC), the first in 1993 and a second in January 1995. No official examination of the complaints took place. However, E.K.PI.ZO. reports that the NRC has imposed fines on a few channels, an unofficial recognition of their concerns. In addition, the organisation submitted a report to the Minister of Mass Media concerning infringements of the legislation by the television channels and the inertia of the NRC. The submission also

<sup>49</sup> Morton H, Television Food Advertising: A challenge for the new public health in Australia, Community Health Studies XIV, 2, 1990.

<sup>50</sup> '12 Rules for Appropriate TV viewing', E.K.PI.ZO., Athens, January 1996.

<sup>51</sup> 'TV & Advertisements', E.K.PI.ZO., Athens, 1994.

<sup>52</sup> 'TV programmes and gambling games addressed to children, E.K.PI.ZO., Athens, 1995; 'Pink lines and gambling games advertised through electronic means,' E.K.PI.ZO., Athens, 1995.

included proposals for better communication channels for consumers' organisations for consultation and dealing with complaints, and for improved administrative structures.

E.K.PI.ZO. is concerned about the cumulative effect of repetition of adverts on children. While individual adverts may comply with the code, repeated adverts for sweets, chocolate, desserts and drinks can affect children's understanding of nutrition.

E.K.PI.ZO. considers that children are too young to fully understand the purpose of advertising and to judge what constitutes a healthy diet. Since children are inexperienced and credulous they may easily be tempted by advertisements and exercise pressure on their parents to buy advertised products. At a minimum, E.K.PI.ZO. believes there should be a prohibition on the encouragement of the excessive consumption of such kinds of food which add little to a healthy diet.

## 5.4 The Netherlands

In 1994, the Dutch consumers organisation Consumentenbond published *The Unequal Struggle of the Young Consumer Against Commercialism*<sup>53</sup>, which examined the ways in which manufacturers and advertisers sell their message to children between the ages of 6 and 12. The report questioned whether the Advertising Code was sufficient to protect children against the increasing number of adverts and increasingly cunning marketing techniques to which children are now exposed.

Discussions between Consumentenbond and the Dutch Advertising Steering Committee have led to recognition of the need to make a clearer differentiation between editorial and commercial content, and for there to be concerted efforts to improve overall awareness among advertisers and agencies regarding the existence and scope of regulations related to children in the Dutch Advertising Codes.

In 1996 Consumentenbond, in association with the European consumer organisation, the Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs, published *Children and Advertising*, a survey of all 15 member states of

the European Union, outlining recent developments in marketing practices directed towards children primarily aged between 6 and 12. It also examined the scope and nature of regulations covering children and advertising at an EU level and in the member states.

The survey found that commercial pressure has become part of the fabric of children's daily lives. Advertising is now only part of an integrated marketing mix, as more sophisticated, and often more covert marketing techniques are increasingly being used. These include children's clubs, contests and sweepstakes, advertorials, sponsorship of children's events, free gift offers as part of a series with products, direct mail, teleshopping, character merchandising and in-school marketing. These 'new' techniques, the report concludes, make it increasingly difficult for children to distinguish between advertising and ordinary entertainment such as programmes, films and magazines.

The report makes a number of recommendations, including EU-wide legislation to protect children in relation to all forms of marketing practice, for greater enforcement of existing rules and for the right of member states to establish or maintain national standards on their own territories in relation to children and marketing practices.

The report also calls for information and education campaigns in member states with the support of the European Commission, to educate children to allow them to recognise commercial messages and make their own decisions, and to alert parents and teachers to the issues. As a pilot project, Consumentenbond has produced a leaflet for use in the Netherlands, entitled *Children and Advertising: Teach them to look!*

## 5.5 Norway

In Norway, the Consumer Ombudsman has assisted in an information campaign intended for schools, 'Youth and Advertising'. All lower secondary schools received a booklet for pupils on advertising and a video produced by the Youth Section of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (also shown on TV)

<sup>53</sup> The Unequal Struggle for the Young Consumer against Commercialism, Summary of a research project, Consumentenbond, The Hague, Netherlands, 1994.

which highlighted the power of advertising to exert influence, the use of effects, and information about regulations and supervisory bodies. Many orders were received for the pupils' booklet and feedback from teachers indicated that this was an important counterweight to the amount of printed advertising sent to the schools.

## 5.6 Sweden

Konsumentverket KO (the Swedish Consumer Agency) collects information for use in school discussions on the influence of advertising, to help children become knowledgeable and critical consumers. To this end, the organisation has also published a number of reports<sup>54</sup>.

The organisation is lobbying to maintain the current prohibition on advertising aimed at children under 12, in face of pressure to relax the rule since Sweden joined the European Union. The ban is supported by a majority of Swedes: 69% do not want to see advertising directed at children under the age of 7, while 51% do not think it should be aimed at children under 12<sup>55</sup>. The organisation believes that advertising is not only a trade issue, but also one of culture, autonomy and identity. Support for this view is shared by other Swedish consumer and viewer organisations. Konsumentverket KO is promoting an EU Directive on Television that would explicitly allow for prohibitions of this kind in the interests of children.

## 5.7 UK

Concerns about the effects of food advertising to children on public health and nutrition, raised by consumer organisations, led to the introduction of new UK regulations on food advertising in 1995. In 1992, the National Consumer Council<sup>56</sup> urged the Independent Television Commission to develop guidance

on the frequency of commercials for foods with high sugar and/or fat content aimed at children, and to consider whether such advertising should be directed at children at all. In 1991, the British Dental Association<sup>57</sup> called for foods and drinks containing non-milk, extrinsic sugar to be depicted in advertisements as being consumed only at clearly depicted meal times. And in 1993, the government agency the Health Education Authority<sup>58</sup> outlined a number of options for the promotion of healthier eating which included a proposal on amending advertising codes on food advertising.

In 1993, the National Food Alliance (NFA), an umbrella organisation of public health, consumer, environmental and other public interest organisations, launched a project on food advertising with a number of recommendations to the regulatory bodies. The NFA has called for advertising to present a more balanced nutritional message to children, with restrictions on the advertising of 'fatty and sugary' foods and for encouragement of healthier food advertising, such as for fruits and vegetables, in line with nutritional guidelines. The NFA has also argued that advertising codes should take into account the cumulative effect of food advertising. It has published surveys on the nature and extent of food advertising, particularly to children<sup>59</sup>.

A MORI survey<sup>60</sup> commissioned by the National Food Alliance in 1996 found that 74% of parents do not believe that current patterns of food advertising encourage their children to eat a healthy, balanced diet and 65% want to see tougher restrictions on advertising of food and soft drinks to children.

In 1996, the National Heart Forum, an alliance of health, medical and consumer organisations working to reduce coronary heart disease, published a teaching resource for children aged 7-11. Entitled *Eat Your Words*, it aims to

<sup>54</sup> These include Children and Television Advertising, a critical study of international research concerning the effects of TV commercials on children (1994), Covert Advertising aimed at children and young people (1991) and A Hold on Life, Material for debate on body fixation in advertising (1993).

<sup>55</sup> Allmänhetens inställning till TV-reklam, a report about the public's attitude towards TV commercials, Konsumentverket (1993).

<sup>56</sup> National Consumer Council (eds), Your Food: Whose Choice?, HMSO, London (1992)

<sup>57</sup> British Dental Association, press release, 15 July 1991.

<sup>58</sup> Stockley L, The Promotion of healthier eating: a basis for action, the Health Education Authority, London (1993).

<sup>59</sup> These include: Children; Advertisers' Dream, Nutrition Nightmare? The Case for More Responsibility in Food Advertising, National Food Alliance, London (1993); Responsible Food Advertising, Proposals for the review of advertising codes of practice, National Food Alliance, London (1994); Easy to Swallow, Hard to Stomach, The results of a survey of food advertising on television, National Food Alliance, London (1995).

<sup>60</sup> Parents' attitudes towards children's food advertising, the results of a MORI survey conducted in February 1996, National Food Alliance, London.

help children understand healthy eating and food messages, and includes activities that encourage them to think critically about food messages and to recognise the selling intention behind food marketing and advertising. The National Heart Forum also launched a national schools competition to design a poster promoting fruits or vegetables.

In May 1996, the National Consumer Council (NCC) published guidelines for business-sponsored educational materials<sup>61</sup>. The NCC has criticised some such so-called educational resources for promoting company and brand names or those which actively encourage children to eat chocolate and fast food. The guidelines seek to prevent materials or activities which are biased or inaccurate, which encourage unhealthy and unsafe activities, which play on children's fears, loyalty or lack of experience, which actively encourage children to pester parents and those which offer sponsors' products as merit awards.

## 5.8 United States

The amount of advertising to children has long been a matter of concern in the US. In 1978, in response to petitions from two consumer groups, Action for Children's Television and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) made an ill-fated attempt to reduce children's exposure to television advertising, particularly food advertising. It proposed:

- (a) banning all televised advertising for any product which is directed to, or seen by, audiences composed of a significant proportion of children who are too young to understand the selling purpose of, or otherwise comprehend or evaluate, the advertising;
- (b) banning televised advertising to, or seen by, audiences composed of a significant proportion of older children for sugared products, the consumption of which poses the most serious dental health risks;
- (c) requiring that advertising for sugared food products be balanced by nutritional and/or health disclosures funded by advertisers.

The FTC's proposals received a hostile reaction from affected businesses in the food, toy,

broadcast and advertising industries. Industry opposition to the proposals was directed at the US Congress. Congress, in turn, ended the FTC's rule-making proceedings in 1980, limiting the agency to issues of deception, not 'unfairness', in regulating advertising to children.

Consumers Union (CU) was also involved in attempts to end TV adverts aimed at children. As part of its campaign, CU produced a video on how children actually used toys, as opposed to how the toys are pictured in advertisements; produced a 16mm film on how television ads are created to be deceptive and produced a paper on First Amendment aspects of restricting advertising to children.

As part of its educational work for young people, CU publishes *Zillions, a Consumer Reports for Kids Magazine*, which aims to help 8-14 year olds evaluate the products being pitched to them, develop healthy scepticism about ads and product hype, and see the full range of marketplace choices open to them.

In 1995, CU published *Captive Kids*, which found that 68% of sponsored educational material aimed at schools it examined was either biased or contained inaccurate information. The report also gave details of Channel One Television, a 12-minute daily news programme which includes two minutes of advertising. Where schools sign up for it they are provided with free equipment (a satellite dish, TVs and video recorder) in return for the channel being made a compulsory part of the school day. Research has shown that as well as increasing high school students' knowledge of current affairs, it also increases their purchases of advertised products<sup>62</sup>.

In other action, the public interest organisation, Public Advocates, brought a class action suit against General Foods, the American food conglomerate that produced the top-selling breakfast food cereals in the US, for deceptive advertising to children. The suit lasted many years and was finally settled, with General Foods agreeing to create a fund to educate children and pregnant teenagers on nutrition.

<sup>61</sup> Sponsorship in School, National Consumer Council, London, 1996.

<sup>62</sup> Greenberg BS, Brand JE, Television news and advertising in schools: the 'Channel One' controversy. *J Communication*. 1993;43:143-151.

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest has carried out analyses of food advertising and, together with Action for Children's Television, petitioned the FTC to regulate 'kidvid' in the 1970s. In the 1990s, the Center for the Study of Commercialism (CSC) was set up to oppose the excessive intrusion of commercial interests in everyday life. CSC's stated aim is to help 'immunize citizens against the acquisitive mindset fostered by the purveyors of "more"'.<sup>63</sup>

In 1990, the Children's Television Act was passed. While this does not specifically address advertisements for food, it places obligations on broadcasters to transmit a minimal amount of educational programming or public service announcements (PSAs), creating the possibility for the broadcasting of positive nutrition messages. PSAs that have been broadcast on a nutritional theme include messages promoting general healthy eating, a warning about eating too much sugar, encouraging children to drink water and to brush their teeth. However, the frequency of such messages is extremely low. One study<sup>63</sup> found that approximately 2.5 minutes out of 95 hours of surveyed television time were for PSAs on a healthful nutrition topic; this was 0.2% of all non-programme time.

More controversially, PSAs on nutrition have been sponsored by McDonald's. Produced in collaboration with the Society for Nutrition Education, the 12 PSAs, which feature the McDonald's logo, entitled What's On Your Plate, 'translate today's nutrition recommendations into fun-loving language children can relate to and understand'. The PSAs were originally shown on Saturday mornings on the CBS network and are also available for educational use in schools. While the messages promote the USDA/DHHS Food Guide Pyramid and Dietary Guidelines for Americans, opinion has been divided over the involvement of McDonald's. Critics argue that by associating their name and logo with healthful nutrition, McDonald's is giving a misleading impression to children about the nutritional value of its foods. Others argue that the value of the nutritional messages outweighs these concerns. Less controversially, Dole, the fresh and packaged fruit company,

made a PSA using rap music to encourage kids to eat fresh fruit and vegetables.

In 1995, with the aim of promoting healthier foods, the US Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) successfully used paid broadcast adverts and community activities to double the market share of reduced-fat milks in a town in West Virginia. Describing its '1% or less' campaign as one of the most effective nutrition-improvement campaigns ever undertaken in the United States, the CSPI reported that the cost was just \$50,000, or about the same as one coronary-bypass operation. Although not directly aimed at children, the overall goal was to reduce saturated fat intake and the consequent risk of heart disease. CSPI intends to expand the campaign to much larger populations through co-operation with supermarkets, broadcasters and city and state health departments. Commenting on the success of the campaign, Alan Berg, senior nutrition advisor at the World Bank, said: 'Rarely do we see market shares change so rapidly. Clearly, CSPI is onto something that should be expanded. An impressive achievement with important implications.'

## 5.9 European initiatives

In 1995, the European Inter-regional Institute for Consumer Affairs, with the financial support of the European Commission, organised its European Young Consumer Competition on the theme of advertising and food. The subject of the competition was 'Young consumers and advertising – how to promote a healthy foodstuff through an advertising message'. The participants – 505 teams of young people aged 12-14 from schools throughout the European Union – had to take a critical look at existing advertising, study foodstuffs and nutritional problems and finally prepare an advertising message for a healthy food. The winners were a team from Spain which used a computer game, board game, video and a song to promote fruit.

## 5.10 Discussion

This section has highlighted the diversity of research, information, educational initiatives

<sup>63</sup> Taras HL and Gage M, Advertised foods on children's television, Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med, Vol 149, June 1995.

and campaigns that consumer organisations and others have undertaken. This report recognises the considerable scope that exists for the development of nutrition education and the promotion of positive nutritional messages to children. In particular, it recognises the important role that the media and advertising could play in promoting greater understanding of health and nutrition.

For example, this could include the greater use of public service announcements (PSAs). Broadcasters in the US are required to transmit PSAs, though their use to promote positive nutrition messages has barely been taken advantage of. Similarly, in Australia their use is not extensive. Although it is unlikely that such messages would ever balance the messages that most food advertising provides, they could nonetheless provide a valuable counterweight to the advertising appeal of foods of low nutritional value. As lack of funding for such messages is often cited as a reason for their non-existence, there remains the possibility of sponsorship of health and nutrition messages by advertisers although this is controversial. More acceptable sponsors might include trade bodies promoting healthier foods such as fruit

and vegetables or bread and other starch staples.

However this report believes that support for messages that promote good nutrition should be part of national and international strategies for health promotion. Thus, it recommends that appropriate bodies, including the European Commission, national governments, health and education agencies and broadcasters should investigate means of using television to promote positive nutrition messages to children.

This report also recognises that it is important for the media, schools, consumer bodies and parents to help children develop critical faculties towards advertising and other forms of marketing. To this end, the report recommends that studies which address advertising and marketing from a consumer perspective should be part of children's school education from an early age. Consumer organisations can assist by providing advice and information for parents. And broadcasters should be encouraged to play a responsible role through programming or the use of public information announcements.

## 6 Conclusion

**Commercial communications have become part of the fabric of our daily lives. It is unrealistic to imagine that we can shield our children from these pressures and many would argue that it would not be in their interests to do so. However the messages that television advertising promotes to children do raise ethical questions about the values we wish to pass on to our children. In putting forward its recommendations, this report argues strongly that advertising to children, and particularly that of food advertising, should be socially responsible and respect differing national priorities for consumer protection, public health and cultural considerations.**

That children require special consideration in respect of television advertising is well accepted and enshrined within international and national regulations and codes of practice. But as this study has found, the degree to which children are afforded protection, both in terms of regulations and in terms of their enforcement, varies considerably.

As international trade and broadcasting increase, such differing national regulations have increasingly become a focus of attention. Some trade interests wish to dismantle national consumer protection measures, including those to children, in the interest of 'free trade'. However, what is often ignored in their arguments is that it is largely cultural differences, rather than differing regulations, which are the real obstacle to transnational

advertising campaigns. And long may it last. Do we really want a world where cultural differences are eliminated in the interest of global consumerism?

Yet culturally diverse eating habits are diminishing fast, with children and young people often the target for promotions of globally marketed food products in both developed and developing economy countries. As this study found, there were few identifiable cultural differences in the types of foods being advertised. Of course advertising is not alone in influencing children's diets, but its overall effect can only be a negative one – the 'diet' that food advertising presents so attractively is the antithesis of healthy eating. Repeated messages shape young minds both in the short term and perhaps, more importantly although more subtly, in the longer term. This report has identified the important role that the media and advertising could have in promoting more positive nutritional messages.

Televisions are now found in some of the remotest communities of the world. This study has focused on developed economy countries, but the devastating cultural and health impact of similar advertising in developing economy countries is of considerable concern. It is the intention of Consumers International to share the experiences of the consumer organisations participating in this study not only within other developed economy countries but internationally with consumer organisations in developing economy nations.

# Appendix I

## Participating Organisations

### **Australian Consumers' Association (ACA)**

57 Carrington Road  
Marrickville NSW 2204, Australia  
Tel: +61 29 9577 3333  
Fax: +61 29 9577 3377

### **Verein für Konsumenteninformation (VKI)**

Linke Wienzeile 18  
A-1060 Vienna, Austria  
Tel: +43 1 588 770  
Fax: +43 1 588 7773

### **Verbruikersunie/Association des Consommateurs**

13 rue de Hollande/Hollandstraat  
1060 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 542 3211  
Fax: +32 2 542 3250

### **Forbrugerrådet**

PO Box 2188  
DK-1017 Copenhagen K, Denmark  
Tel: +45 33 136 311  
Fax: +45 33 134 115

### **Kuluttajat-Konsumenterna ry**

Käenkuja 3-5 M 4.krs  
SF 00500 Helsinki, Finland  
Tel: +358 9 753 72 33  
Fax: +358 9 753 72 33

### **Suomen Kuluttajaliitto**

Mannerheimintie 15A  
FIN-00260 Helsinki, Finland  
Tel: +358 9 448 288  
Fax: +358 9 448 725

### **Union Fédérale des Consommateurs (UFC)**

11 rue Guénot  
75555 Cedex 11  
Paris, France  
Tel: +33 1 4348 5548  
Fax: +33 1 4348 4435

### **Verbraucher Zentrale NRW (AgV)**

Mintropstrasse 27  
D-40215 Düsseldorf, Germany  
Tel: +49 211 38090  
Fax: +49 211 3809172

### **E.K.PI.ZO.**

43-45 Valtetsiou Str  
Athens 106 81, Greece  
Tel: +30 1 330 0673 +30 1 330 4444  
Fax: +30 1 330 0591

### **Consumentenbond**

Postbus 1000  
2500 BA The Hague, Netherlands  
Tel: +31 70 445 4545  
Fax: +31 70 445 4590

### **Forbrukerrådet**

PO Box 8104 Dep  
N-0032, Oslo 1, Norway  
Tel: +47 67 599 600  
Fax: +47 67 583 606

### **Konsumentverket/KO**

S-118 87 Stockholm, Sweden  
Tel: +46 8 429 0500  
Fax: +46 8 429 8900

### **Consumers' Association (CA)**

2 Marylebone Road  
London NW1 4DF, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 171 830 6000  
Fax: +44 171 830 6220

### **National Consumer Council (NCC)**

20 Grosvenor Gardens  
London SW1W 0DH, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 171 730 3469  
Fax: +44 171 730 0191

### **American Council on Consumer Interests**

240 Stanley Hall  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO 65211, United States  
Tel: +1 573 882 3817  
Fax: +1 573 884 6571

### **Consumers' Union of U.S. Inc.**

101 Truman Avenue  
Yonkers, NY 10703-1057, United States  
Tel: +1 914 378 2200  
Fax: +1 914 378 2905

## Appendix II

### Product categories:

**Alcoholic drinks**

**Clothes/shoes**

**Education**

**Entertainment** (e.g., music, video, films, entertainment parks)

**Financial** (including building societies, banks, insurance, pensions)

**Food** (all food including soft [non-alcoholic] drinks)

**Household cleaners/detergents** (e.g., washing up liquid, washing powders, cleaning fluids)

**Household equipment** (including electrical appliances)

**Motoring** (including cars and petrol)

**Pet products** (including pet food)

**Pharmaceutical** (including medications, vitamin pills, breathfresheners)

**Photography**

**Public information announcements**

**Publishing** (e.g., magazines, books, newspapers)

**Retailing & mail order** (including supermarkets, catalogues)

**Toiletries** (e.g., soap, hair shampoo, cosmetics, nappies, sanitary protection)

**Toys**

**Travel/transport/holidays**

**Utilities** (e.g., telephone, gas, electricity)

## Appendix III

### Food categories:

**Bread**

**Breakfast cereals** (including sweetened and unsweetened, muesli, etc.)

**Cakes and biscuits**

**Confectionery** (all sweets [candy] and chocolate including chewing gum)

**Dairy products** (including cheese, milk, cream, yoghurt)

**Desserts** (e.g., mousse, creme caramel)

**Fats/spreads** (including butter, margarine, low fat spreads, oils)

**Fish and fish products** (including frozen, tinned, fresh)

**Fruit and vegetables**

**Hot beverages** (tea, coffee, hot chocolate)

**Ice cream/ice lollies**

**Jam/sweet spreads**

**Meat and meat products**

**Ready prepared foods** (e.g., TV dinners, frozen, chilled ready meals)

**Restaurants** (including fast food, e.g., McDonald's, Burger King)

**Sauces/savoury spreads** (e.g., mustard, ketchup)

**Savoury snacks** (e.g., crisps, extruded snack products, nuts)

**Slimming products** (e.g., meal replacement foods. Not including diet soft drinks)

**Soft drinks** (all non-alcoholic drinks including fruit juice, mineral water, diet drinks)

**Sugar**

## About Consumers International

Founded in 1960, Consumers International (a non-profit organisation registered in The Netherlands as the International Organization of Consumers Unions, registration number S1 49999) is a federation of consumer organisations dedicated to the protection and promotion of consumer interests worldwide through institution building, education, research and lobbying of international decision-making bodies. An independent, non-profit foundation, Consumers International has over 200 members in more than 80 countries.

## About PRODEC

The Programme for Developed Economies (PRODEC) brings together consumer organisations from Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan to exchange information, debate common challenges and collaborate over joint research projects.



## Consumers International

### Programme for Developed Economies

Consumers International  
Programme for Developed Economies  
24 Highbury Crescent,  
London, N5 1RX, UK  
Tel: +44 171 226 6663  
Fax: +44 171 354 0607  
e-mail: [prodec@consint.org.uk](mailto:prodec@consint.org.uk)  
Web site: <http://www.consumersinternational.org>

CI - Head Office, 24 Highbury Crescent, London, N5 1RX, UK, Tel: +44 171 226 6663, Fax: +44 171 354 0607  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, PO Box 1045, 10830 Penang, Malaysia, Tel: +60 4 229 1396  
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Las Hortensias, 2371, Santiago, Chile, Tel: +562 335 1695  
Regional Office for Africa, Private Bag A6215, Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe, Tel: 263 4 737 8067  
Programme for Economies in Transition, 24 Highbury Crescent, London, N5 1RX, Tel: +44 171 226 6663