

Children's Rights Alliance

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Children's Rights Alliance Calls for a Ban on Commercial Broadcast Advertising Targeted at Children under 12

Alliance also Calls for Restrictions on Alcohol and Junk Food Advertising

The Children's Rights Alliance has called on the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) to ban all commercial broadcast advertising targeted at children under the age of 12. The Alliance has also called for restrictions on junk food and alcohol advertising.

In its second submission to the BCI in connection with the development of the Children's Advertising Code, the Alliance has given its support to an approach similar to that in effect in Sweden. The Alliance notes that Sweden's Radio and TV Act banned advertisements aimed at children under the age of twelve from the first day that commercial television was allowed in the country, 1 July 1991.

Research undertaken by the European Consumers' Organisation suggests that it is increasingly difficult for children to distinguish between advertising and ordinary entertainment and that children are often not fully aware of the purpose of advertising.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, States are obliged to protect the child "from information and material injurious to his or her well being". The Alliance maintains that this obligation can best be met by prohibiting advertising specifically targeted at children under the age of 12.

The Alliance also advocates a ban on the advertising of alcohol. International research indicates that advertisements for alcohol have a high appeal to children and young people, being considered humorous, stylish, having plenty of action and using music appealing to children and young children. The first national study, *the Impact of Alcohol Advertising on Teenagers in Ireland*, commissioned by the Health Promotion Unit, showed that the favourite

advertisements of all boys and girls between twelve and seventeen were those for alcohol.

Advertisements for alcohol were perceived by the young people in the study as promoting a desirable lifestyle and image, as portraying alcohol as a gateway to social success, as helping to provide confidence and social skills and to enlarge one's circle of friends, as increasing sexual attractiveness, and as giving people more energy.

The Alliance considers that the drinking patterns among Irish children and young people represent a serious threat to their health and well-being in both the short and long term. Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires the Government to take effective steps to ensure that children enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Banning broadcast advertising of alcohol products would represent an important step in achieving that goal and in promoting the best health for children.

In addition, the Alliance has called for an end to junk food advertising aimed at children under 18. Obesity and illnesses linked to a poor diet, such as type II diabetes, represent a growing public health problem in Ireland and a threat to the well-being of children. The type of food that is promoted in advertising is often greatly at variance with the requirements of a nutritious diet, as recommended by public health experts.

“Broadcast advertisements for ‘junk food’ show unhealthy foods in the best possible light. Fatty and sugary foods are associated with popularity, happy playground relationships and sporting success. In contrast, foods that feature in diets recommended by nutritionists get little promotional support through advertising”, according to Margaret Burns, Vice Chairperson of the Alliance.

The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of 75 non-governmental organisations concerned with the rights and needs of children. The Alliance works to secure the full implementation in Ireland of the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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