

What is the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA)

The EASA is a non-profit making organisation based in Brussels, Belgium which is the co-ordination point for the views of national advertising self-regulatory bodies across Europe. The Alliance has 27 members, 24 of these members are from 22 European countries including all Member States of the EU, Czech, Slovak Republics, Slovenia, Hungary, Russia, Switzerland and Turkey.

Why was it created? It was created in 1992 in response to a direct challenge from then EU Competition Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, to show how the issues affecting advertising in the Single Market could be successfully dealt with through cooperation rather than detailed legislation. The national self-regulatory bodies and the European Advertising Industry have endeavoured to respond by demonstrating their strong commitment to effective self-regulation as a means of promoting high standards in advertising across Europe and safeguarding the consumers interests, and by establishing the Alliance with a clear mission to achieve these aims.

Who created the Alliance? The national self-regulatory bodies, with the support of the respective parts of the European Advertising Industry i.e. the advertisers, the agencies and the media. The Alliance and its members have the moral and financial support of the EU Advertising Industry with which it liaises on policy issues.

What are its aims? To promote and support the development of effective self-regulation; to co-ordinate the handling of cross-border complaints; to provide information and support on advertising self-regulation in Europe.

Who are its members? Its members are the national self-regulatory bodies responsible for administering their respective national self-regulatory systems and applying national codes of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) principles of advertising practice.

What are its publications? It publishes a quarterly newsletter the *Alliance Update* containing both Alliance and national self-regulatory news including a regular report on cross-border complaints. This is sent free to interested parties. Trilingual brochures exist on the Alliance and the cross-border complaints system. Surveys of Alliance members have been published on: *National Regulatory Systems for Television, Self-Regulation for Advertising & Children, Self-Regulation for Advertising and the Portrayal of Women & Men*. The Alliance has recently published a *Guide to Self-Regulation* and a comprehensive 124 page analysis of advertising self-regulatory systems and their codes of advertising practice in 20 European countries, *Advertising Self-Regulation in Europe*.

Is the Alliance a pan-European authority? No. The Alliance has no regulatory function; it does not enforce codes neither does it have any decision-making responsibility or give copy advice.

Cross-Border Complaints

What is a cross-border complaint? A cross-border complaint is where the complainant is situated in a country other than that in which the medium carrying the advertisement originates, e.g. a consumer situated in the UK complaining about an ad appearing in an Irish newspaper, but circulating in the UK.

How can you complain? You can complain directly to any self-regulatory body simply by sending a letter or fax stating where and when you saw the advertisement and what is the nature of your complaint. Your complaint will then be forwarded to the competent Alliance member in the country of origin of the medium in which the advertisement appeared.

How is your complaint handled? Your complaint will be adjudicated according to the rules and principles of the competent Alliance member in the country of origin of the medium concerned. Subsequently, the SRO in the complainant's country will be informed of the outcome and will in turn inform the complainant. This system respects the national cultural, economic, legal and social context as well as the principle of subsidiarity.

Is there a charge? The handling of complaints by consumers is free of charge.

How is the Alliance involved? The Alliance co-ordinates the cross-border system by ensuring that cases are transferred to the competent Alliance member, suggesting appropriate action and information exchange to be undertaken and reporting on the outcome of cases handled. The complaints are published in the *Alliance Update*. Since 1992, the Alliance has handled approx. 203 cases under its cross-border complaints system.

What is a Euro-Ad Alert? In cross-border cases which appear to demonstrate evidence of genuine sharp or illegal practice, it may be necessary to issue a Euro Ad Alert. This, as its name suggests, alerts interested parties to the advertisers' activities. It is sent to Alliance members, the advertising profession, consumer organisations and the European Commission.

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