

Study on the exposure of minors to alcohol advertising on TV and in online services

This study provides an overview of minors' exposure to alcohol advertising on TV, on-demand services and other online services. It covers a number of EU Member States and an analysis of the content of some alcoholic beverages advertisements.

In 2012, the first report on the application of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) indicated that further investigations were necessary to assess the exposure of minors to commercial communications for alcoholic beverages.

The purpose of the present study was to answer three research questions:

1. How much alcohol advertising does an average minor watching linear audio-visual media services (i.e. television broadcasting) in the European Union (EU) see?
2. How much alcohol advertising does an average minor see on non-linear audio-visual media services (i.e. on-demand audio-visual media services) and other online services in the EU?
3. For audio-visual media services (both linear and non-linear) and other online services, what type of alcohol advertising does an average minor see in the EU? Are minors specifically targeted by alcohol advertising? In how far is alcohol advertising appealing to minors and how? In particular, in how far do the provisions of the AVMSD and their application afford the required level of protection?

The study shows that 7.3% of the total number of alcohol impacts^[1] on television services in 2013 were seen by minors (under age 18). This means that on average, a minor in the EU saw 200 alcohol impacts during one year (as compared to over 450 by an adult). 1.8% of all advertising seen by minors (under age 18) in 2013 was for alcoholic beverages (as compared to 2.2% for ads seen by adults).

The study also shows that online services and alcohol industry try to ensure minimal exposure through the implementation of measures and self-regulation. Yet at the same time, minors have the perception to have been exposed to alcohol advertising online.

In addition, the study found that the most common themes employed in alcohol advertisements include the association of alcohol with sociability and the depiction of drinking with humorous tones. Respectively, 87% and 63% of 90 analysed TV advertisements and 33 online alcohol advertisements contained at least one element that can be considered appealing to minors. In addition, 25% of the analysed advertisements contained at least one of the elements described in the AVMSD, though this does not imply that the Directive was necessarily breached.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the ex-post evaluation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and the Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal for a future revision of the AVMSD.

SMART 2013/0080

[1] Impact is a measure of how often a spot is viewed: it yields the absolute number of times a spot was seen over a given timeframe.

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