

# Code of Marketing Communication Self-Regulation Italy

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## Preliminary and General Rules

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### a) Purpose of the Code

The Code of Self-Regulation aims to ensure that marketing communication, while performing an extremely useful role in the economy, is carried out as a service to the public, with special consideration given to its influence on consumers.

The Code defines activities that, while legal, are in contrast with the aforesaid; the rules reflect the behaviour that communication must conform to, and constitute the legal basis for marketing communication self-regulation.

### b) Complying Parties

The Code of Marketing Communication is binding for advertisers, agencies, advertising and marketing consultants, media of any kind, and for anyone who has accepted the Code directly or by membership of an association, or through an agreement to execute marketing communication as described under para. d).

### c) Obligations of signatories

Signatories undertake to observe the Code and its Regulations and to ensure compliance by their members, to efficiently disseminate the rulings of the Jury and to adopt appropriate measures towards members who fail to comply with or repeatedly disregard the Jury's decisions.

### d) Acceptance clause

To more effectively ensure compliance with the decisions of the Jury, signatories undertake to ensure that their members and associates shall include a special clause in their contracts specifying acceptance of the provisions of the Code, its Regulations and the rulings of the Jury including publication of the latter, as well as acceptance of final desist orders issued by the Review Board.

### e) Definitions

For the purposes of the Code, the term "marketing communication" shall refer to advertising and all other forms of communication including corporate and institutional messages whose aim is to promote the sale of goods or services irregardless of the modalities used, as well as forms of communication regulated by Title VI. The

term does not refer to sales policies or marketing techniques as such.

The term "product" refers to the object of marketing communication and therefore also includes services, methods, treatments, rights, obligations and the like. The self-regulatory code does not refer to the nature of the product or service being offered.

The term "message" refers to any form of public presentation of the product and therefore includes the outer packaging, wrapping, labelling etc.

The term "consumer" refers to any individual, legal person or any group of individuals to whom the marketing communication is addressed or is liable to receive it.

For the purposes of the Self-Regulatory Code, the distribution of promotional material for educational aims, as requested by public or private schools and supervised by teaching staff, does not constitute marketing communication.

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## Title I Rules of behaviour

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### Art. 1 – Fairness in marketing communication

Marketing communication must be honest, truthful and correct. It must avoid anything likely to discredit it.

### Art. 2 – Misleading marketing communication

Marketing communication must avoid statements or representations that could mislead consumers, including omissions, ambiguity or exaggeration that are not obviously hyperbolic, particularly regarding the characteristics and effects of the product, prices, free offers, conditions of sale, distribution, the identity of persons depicted, prizes or awards.

In assessing whether or not a marketing communication is misleading, the benchmark is the reasonable consumer belonging to the relevant target group.

### Art. 3 – Terminology, quotations, technical and scientific tests, statistical data

Terms, quotations and references to scientific and technical tests must be used appropriately. Technical and scientific tests and statistical data with limited validity must not be

presented in such a way as to make them appear generally valid.

#### **Art. 4 – Testimonials**

Testimonials must be authentic, responsible and verifiable.

#### **Art. 5 – Guarantees and warranties**

Mandatory guarantees cannot be communicated in such a way as to convey the belief that they offer rights greater or different to those provided by law, when they do not.

Should guarantees or warranties be communicated that are greater or different to those that are mandatory, such marketing communication must specify the contents and conditions of the guarantee or warranty offered, or alternatively provide a brief but comprehensive description thereof together with reference to the written sources of information available at the point of sale or supplied with the product.

#### **Art. 6 – Substantiation**

The contents of marketing communication must be capable of substantiation; such substantiation should be available to the Jury or Review Board to prove the truthfulness of the data, descriptions, statements, illustrations used and the consistency of any testimonies.

#### **Art. 7 – Identification**

Marketing communication must be clearly distinguishable as such. When a medium presents news and other editorial matter to the public together with marketing communication, it should be ensured that the marketing communication is readily distinguishable as such.

#### **Art. 8 – Superstition, credulity, fear**

Marketing communication should not play on superstition, credulity or, except in justifiable cases, fear.

#### **Art. 9 – Violence, vulgarity, indecency**

Marketing communication should not contain statements, audio or visual treatments depicting physical or moral violence or, that may be considered indecent, vulgar or repugnant to prevailing standards.

#### **Art. 10 – Moral, Civil, and Religious Beliefs and Human Dignity**

Marketing communication should not offend moral, civil and religious beliefs. Marketing communication should respect human dignity in every form and expression and should avoid any form of discrimination, including that of gender.

#### **Art. 11 – Children and young people**

Special care should be taken in messages directed to children, i.e. less than 12 years of age, and young people or to which they may be exposed. Such messages should avoid material that could cause psychological, moral or physical harm, and should not exploit the credulity, inexperience or sense of loyalty of children or young people.

In particular, such marketing communication must not suggest:

- violating generally accepted rules of social behaviour;

- acting dangerously or seeking exposure to dangerous situations;

- that failure to possess the promoted product means either their own inferiority or their parents' failure to fulfil their duties;

- that the role of parents and educators is inadequate in supplying healthy nutritional advice;

- adopting poor eating habits or neglecting the need for a healthy lifestyle;

- soliciting other people to purchase the promoted product.

The portrayal of children and young people in marketing communication must avoid playing on the natural sentiments of adults towards the young.

Visual depictions of children, or persons resembling children, engaged in or seeming to engage in sexually explicit conduct are forbidden.

#### **Art. 12 – Protection of the natural environment**

Advertising claiming or suggesting environmental or ecological benefits must be based on truthful, pertinent and scientifically verifiable evidence.

Such advertising must ensure a clear understanding of which aspect of the product or activity the claimed benefits refer to.

#### **Art. 12bis – Safety**

Marketing communication involving products that may potentially endanger health, safety or the environment, especially when such dangers are not immediately recognisable, should indicate such dangers clearly.

In any case marketing communication should not contain descriptions or representations that may lead consumers to be less cautious than usual or less watchful and responsible towards their own health and safety, and that of others.

#### **Art. 13 – Imitation, Confusion and Exploitation**

Marketing communication should not copy or slavishly imitate that of others even if it concerns non-competitive products, especially if there is the risk of generating confusion with the marketing communication of others.

Moreover, any exploitation of the name, trademark, notoriety and corporate image of other marketers should be avoided, if it is intended to generate an undue advantage.

#### **Art. 14 – Denigration**

Marketing communication should not denigrate the activities, companies or products of others, even if not specifically named.

#### **Art. 15 – Comparative advertising**

Comparative advertising is permitted when it helps to explain the technical or financial features and benefits of promoted products and services, objectively comparing the relevant basic, technically verifiable and representative features of competitive goods and services, that meet the same needs or are intended for the same purpose.

Comparisons should be fair and not be misleading, nor generate the risk of confusion, or discredit or denigrate others. Comparisons should not draw unfair advantage from the notoriety of others.

## **Art. 16 – Variability**

Marketing communication which is acceptable for one medium or product may not necessarily be acceptable for another, due to the different characteristics of the various media and products.

In the cases referred to in articles 17, 18, 21, 27, 28 and 46 below, messages that are limited to general statements are permitted to omit all the relevant necessary information.

Compliance of a marketing communication with the provisions of the Code does not rule out the right of the media to decide, based on their contractual autonomy, to reject it on the grounds that it breaches stricter criteria they may have put in place.

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## **Title II Special rules**

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### **A) Sales systems**

#### **Art. 17 – Sale by instalment**

Marketing communication concerning sales by instalment should clearly specify the amount of any deposit or payment on account and of all subsequent payments, the interest rate and ancillary charges, and the total price of the product. It should also specify the terms under which financing is granted, conditions of ownership and property, and leasing or rental with redemption rights.

#### **Art. 18 – Distance selling**

Marketing communication relating to distance selling should clearly provide a description of the products offered for sale, the price, payment terms, delivery/handling charges and all other charges payable by the consumer, conditions of supply and, if applicable, cancellation or return clauses must also be indicated, as well as the existence and procedures for withdrawal from the sale.

The name, address, registered offices and geographical location of the marketer should also be specified.

#### **Art. 19 – Unsolicited supply of goods**

Any marketing communication associated with the practice of sending unsolicited products to consumers, suggesting that recipients are obliged to pay for goods unless they are refused or returned to the supplier, shall be forbidden.

#### **Art. 20 – Special sales**

Marketing communication relating to special sales of any kind, in particular promotional sales, should clearly specify the additional benefit deriving from the purchase, as well as the duration of the offer. The duration of the offer does not need to appear on the packaging.

#### **Art. 21 – Prize promotions**

Marketing communication relating to prize promotions involving competitions or premium operations, should provide consumers with clear and simple information on eligibility to participate, closing dates and prizes; for competitions the information should include the number

and total value of prizes, the procedure for awarding prizes and the media to be used for publicising the results.

### **B) Product categories**

#### **Art. 22 – Alcoholic Beverages**

Marketing communication concerning alcoholic beverages should not be in contrast with the obligation to depict styles of drinking behaviour that project moderation, wholesomeness and responsibility. This principle aims to safeguard the primary interest of the population in general, and of children and young people in particular, in a family, social and working environment safeguarded from the negative consequences of alcohol abuse.

In particular, marketing communications must not:

- encourage excessive, uncontrolled, and hence harmful consumption of alcoholic beverages;
- depict an unhealthy attachment or addiction to alcohol, or generally lead people to believe that resorting to alcohol can solve personal problems;
- target or refer to minors, even only indirectly, or depict minors or people who clearly appear to be minors, consuming alcohol;
- make direct use signs, symbols, drawings, fictitious characters or real people of primary appeal to minors, that may arouse the direct interest of minors;
- associate the consumption of alcoholic beverages with the driving of motorised vehicles;
- induce the public to believe that the consumption of alcoholic beverages promotes clear thinking and enhances physical and sexual performance, or that the failure to consume alcohol implies physical, mental or social inferiority;
- depict sobriety and abstemiousness as negative values;
- induce the public to disregard different drinking styles associated with the specific features of individual beverages and the personal conditions of consumers;
- stress high alcoholic strength as being the principal feature of a beverage.

#### **Art. 23 – Cosmetics and Personal Hygiene Products**

Marketing communication relating to cosmetics and personal hygiene products should not encourage the belief that such products have characteristics, properties or functions other than to be applied to the external parts of the human body, mouth or teeth for the exclusive or primary purpose of cleaning, freshening, changing their appearance or protecting them, in order to keep them in good condition or correcting body odours.

Such marketing communication, therefore, may present these products as having additional features preventing particular pathological conditions, provided they actually contain specific ingredients or formulations with such effects; under no circumstances, however, should consumers be led to consider cosmetic or personal hygiene products as substitutes for medication, medical aids, medical devices or therapeutic treatments.

#### **Art. 23 *b/s* – Food supplements and health foods**

Marketing communication relating to food supplements and health foods should not claim to have properties that do

not correspond to the actual characteristics of the products, or that the products do not actually possess.

Furthermore, such marketing communication should not encourage consumers to make nutritional errors and should avoid referring recommendations or statements of a medical nature.

These rules also apply to infant formula and baby foods, products designed to wholly or partially substitute mother's milk, products used for weaning and food supplements for children.

In particular, as regards marketing communication relating to food supplements for weight loss or control and other specific supplements, the provisions contained in the relevant Regulations, which form an integral part of this code, shall apply.

#### **Art. 24 – Physical and Aesthetic Treatments**

Marketing communication relating to physical and aesthetic treatment should not encourage the belief that such treatments have therapeutic or restorative functions, or can achieve radical results; reference to recommendations or statements of a medical nature must be avoided.

#### **Art. 25 – Medicinal Products and Curative Treatments**

Marketing communication relating to medicinal products and curative treatments should consider the sensitivity of the matter and display the utmost sense of responsibility; it must also accurately reflect the details contained in the fact sheet summarising the product specifications.

Such marketing communication should draw the consumer's attention to the need for caution in using the product, explicitly and clearly encouraging consumers to read the package warnings and advising against the improper use of the product.

In particular, marketing communication relating to over-the-counter products should include the name of the medicinal product as well as the common name of the active ingredient; this latter information is not compulsory if the medicinal product contains more than one active ingredient or the communication is intended solely as a generic reminder of the product's name.

Moreover, marketing communication relating to over-the-counter medicinal products and curative treatments should not:

- suggest that the efficacy of the medicine is devoid of side effects or that its safety or efficacy profiles are due to the fact that it is a natural substance;
- claim that the efficacy of the medicine or treatment is equal to or better than others;
- suggest that a medical consultation or surgical procedure is unnecessary or lead consumers to make an incorrect self-diagnosis;
- exclusively or principally address children or lead minors to use the product without appropriate adult supervision;
- make use of recommendations by scientists, health professionals or persons well-known to the public, or refer to the fact that the medicinal product has been approved for sale, or improperly or misleadingly report certificates of recovery;

- compare the medicinal product with a foodstuff, cosmetic or other consumer product;
- suggest that the medicinal or the curative treatment can improve normal good health, or that avoiding a certain product or treatment can be harmful, unless the message refers to vaccination campaigns;
- use improper, misleading or frightening depictions of changes in the human body caused by disease or injury, or due to the effects of the medicinal product.

As regards marketing communication relating, in particular, to veterinary medicines, the rules contained in the relevant Regulations shall apply, and form an integral part of this Code.

#### **Art. 26 – Instruction Courses and Study or Teaching Methods**

Marketing communication relating to instruction courses and study or teaching methods should not contain any promise of work or exaggerate employment or salary opportunities for those persons who follow such courses or adopt the proposed methods, nor should it offer degrees or qualifications which are not recognised or not obtainable by such methods.

#### **Art. 27 – Financial and real estate transactions**

Marketing communication aimed at soliciting or promoting financial transactions and in particular transactions for savings and investments in securities or real estate property should supply clear and comprehensive information to avoid misleading consumers regarding the promoter, the nature of the proposal, the quantity and characteristics of the goods or services being offered, the terms of the transaction, and the relevant risks, to ensure that the recipients of the message, even if inexperienced in this field, can make informed choices about the use of their resources.

In particular, such communication should:

- a. avoid, when referring to yearly interest rates, using terms such as "income" and "return", to indicate the sum total of unearned income plus increases in property values;
- b. refrain from suggesting that consumers make commitments and pay deposits without appropriate guarantees;
- c. not project future performance on the basis of past performance, or communicate returns based on calculations over periods that are not sufficiently representative with reference to the particular nature of the investment and to the fluctuations in results.

Marketing communication relating to real estate transactions should be set out in such a way as to avoid deception by passing financial investments off for real estate investments or by focussing on the financials of a real estate property without making it clear that the investment actually involves securities.

The provisions of this article apply also to marketing communication relating to banking services always, and to insurance services when it is necessary to emphasise the investment aspect.

#### **Art. 28 – Package Tours**

Marketing communication of any kind relating to package tours should provide comprehensive and accurate information, particularly regarding the services included in

the minimum price for participation. The communication should strongly suggest that consumers carefully consider the terms and conditions of participation, payment and cancellation as indicated in the brochure or registration form.

#### **Art. 28 *bis* – Games, Toys and Educational Products for Children**

Marketing communication relating to games, toys and educational products for children should not be misleading as to:

- the nature, performance and dimensions of the promoted product;
- the degree of skill required to use the product;
- the total expenditure, especially when the operation of the product requires the purchase of accessory products.

In any case, this type of marketing communication should not play down price of the product or imply that its purchase is generally compatible with all family budgets.

#### **Art. 28 *ter* – Gaming and gambling**

Marketing communications relating to authorised gaming and gambling in Italy shall not contrast with the need to favour the consolidation of behavioural models inspired by balance, fairness and responsibility. This is to protect the primary interest of individuals, especially minors, to a family, social and working life environment safeguarded from the consequences of irresponsible gaming and gambling behaviours determined by excess or addiction.

Marketing communications relating to gaming and gambling should not:

- 1) encourage excessive or uncontrolled gaming and gambling;
- 2) deny that gaming and gambling may lead to risks;
- 3) fail to clearly state the procedures and conditions applicable to receiving incentives and bonuses;
- 4) state or suggest that gaming and gambling may be a way to solve financial or personal issues, or represent it as an alternative source of income or sustenance to working, rather than a simple form of entertainment and fun;
- 5) lead to the belief that the player's experience, competence or skill may reduce or eliminate the odds of winning, or may allow players to win systematically;
- 6) target or refer to minors, even only indirectly, or depict minors or people who clearly appear to be minors, involved in gaming situations;
- 7) make direct use of signs, symbols, drawings, fictitious characters or real people of primary appeal to minors, or that may generate a direct appeal on minors;
- 8) lead to the belief that gaming and gambling may help to enhance an individual's self-esteem, social consideration and interpersonal success;
- 9) present the abstaining from gambling or gaming as a negative value;
- 10) induce to confuse the ease of playing with the ease of winning;
- 11) make reference to instantly available consumer credit services.

All marketing communications concerning gaming and gambling shall include clear and specific warnings that

minors (under of 18) are banned from participating in such activities.

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### **Title III**

## **Governing bodies and competence**

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#### **Art. 29 – Composition of the Jury**

The Jury is composed of members appointed by the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria, and chosen from among experts in law, consumer affairs and communication.

The members of the Jury remain in office for a two-year term and can be reconfirmed.

The Institute chooses the President and Vice-Presidents, who stand in for the President in his absence, from among the members of the Jury.

The members of the Jury cannot be chosen from among experts who practice their professional activities in the area of marketing communication self-regulation.

#### **Art. 30 – Composition of the Review Board**

The Review Board, aimed to protect the general interests of consumers, is composed of members appointed by the Institute, and chosen from among experts in legal affairs, advertising, consumer affairs and media.

The members of the Review Board remain in office for a two-year term and can be reconfirmed.

The Institute chooses the President and Vice Presidents from among the members of the Review Board.

The Board can be divided into smaller groups of at least three members, and such sub-groups are chaired by the President or a Vice President.

The members of the Review Board cannot be chosen from among experts who practice their professional activities in the area of marketing communication self-regulation.

#### **Art. 31 – Principles of Judgment**

The members of the Jury and the Review Board perform their duties according to their convictions and not in the interests of classes of subscribers to the Code. In the execution of their task the members of the Jury and the Board are expected to observe the utmost discretion.

#### **Art. 32 – Function of the Jury and of the Review Board**

The Jury examines the marketing communication submitted to it and judges it according to the provisions of this Code.

The Review Board:

- autonomously submits to the Jury any marketing communications that have been reported to it or that it believes to be non-compliant with the provisions of the Code safeguarding consumer interests or marketing communication in general;
- provides non binding opinion on request of the President of the Jury;

- may request amendments to any planned marketing communication that appears to breach the provisions of the Code;
- can issue desist orders, pursuant to art. 39;
- can provide a copy advice, on the request of interested parties, under the provisions contained in the relevant Regulation, as to whether the final but not yet publicised marketing communication submitted to it actually complies with the provisions of the Code safeguarding consumer interests. The Board's opinion is expressed subject to the validity and completeness of the data and information supplied by the applicant. Under such conditions, the Board undertakes to refrain from intervening ex-officio against approved marketing communications. Parties to whom a copy advice has been issued shall not exploit the said opinion for commercial purposes.

The Jury and Review Board can, at any time, ask the marketer to supply documentation in support of the truthfulness of the data, descriptions, statements, illustrations or testimonials used. The Jury and Review Board may avail themselves of experts to evaluate the documentation thus produced.

Except for the provisions set out in this Code, the Jury and Review Board perform their duties without formalities.

#### **Art. 32 *bis* – Expert witnesses**

A list of expert witnesses shall be chosen from among acknowledged authorities on specific matters and appointed by the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria to support the Jury.

#### **Art. 33 – Secretariat**

The Secretariat of the Institute also carries out secretarial duties for the Jury and Review Board.

The Secretariat certifies the existence of cases pending before the Jury and, on request of interested parties, issues written statements to this effect.

#### **Art. 34 – Location and meetings**

The Jury, the Review Board and the Secretariat are all located in the offices of the Institute.

The Jury and the Review Board and its sub-groups meet whenever required. The meetings are convened by their respective Presidents with at least three days' advance notice.

Such notice may be shortened in the event of emergency situations.

The meetings of the Jury and the Review Board are not open to the public.

The Jury is validly constituted with the presence of at least three members; the Review Board, in plenary session, with at least five members.

In the absence of the President and the Vice-Presidents, the meeting is chaired by the most senior member. The Jury and the Review Board, the latter when a plenary session is sitting, make their decisions based on the majority vote of the members present. In the event of a tied vote, the President of the meeting casts the deciding vote.

Decisions by sub-groups of the Review Board must be taken unanimously; if unanimity is not possible, decisions are delegated to a plenary session of the Board.

Sub-groups of the Review Board are validly constituted with the presence of at least three members.

The meetings of the Jury and the Review Board are supported by a member of the Secretariat who is sworn to secrecy and must leave the meeting while the Jury is deliberating.

#### **Art. 35 – Administration**

The administrative procedures to be adopted concerning petitions to the Jury and services provided by the Institute are decided by the Board of Directors.

## **Title IV Procedural rules and sanctions**

#### **Art. 36 – Petitions to the Jury and complaints to the Review Board**

Anyone who believes he or she has suffered prejudice from marketing communication activities contrary to the Code may request the intervention of the Jury against those who, having accepted the Code in one of the forms set out in the preliminary and general rules, have undertaken activities alleged to have caused damage to the petitioner.

Petitioners should submit a written request containing a description of the marketing communication which is being submitted to the Jury, the reasons for the petition, supporting documentation and the relevant administrative charges.

Individual consumers and consumer rights associations may submit complaints free of charge to the Review Board regarding marketing communication allegedly breaching the rules of the Code that safeguard the general interests of the public.

#### **Art. 37 – Proceedings Before the Jury**

Upon receipt of a petition, the President of the Jury appoints a referee from among the members of the Jury, and if the case demands it, an expert witness pursuant to section 32/*bis* with specific expertise on the matter at hand. The President arranges for copies of the petition to be sent to the parties, assigning them a deadline of between eight and twelve clear working days for filing their comments and possible documents, and convenes the parties before the Jury at the earliest for a verbal discussion of the dispute.

Where the disputed marketing communication consists in a direct comparison or concerns a promotion lasting thirty days or less, the petitioner may ask for the resisting party to be required to file comments and documents within eight clear working days, and for the hearing before the Jury to take place, barring special circumstances, within no more than ten clear working days of filing the petition.

A member of the Review Board participates in the discussion, along with the expert witness, if appointed.

The expert witness may enter into discussions with the parties, as well as if the parties so desire, in order to define the technical aspects of the dispute.

In proceedings originated by a requesting party the President of the Jury may request a written opinion from the Review Board, in which case a deadline is set for its response.

Once discussions have ended, the Jury:

- a. issues its decision, if it considers the case sufficiently debated;
- b. If it decides additional evidence is required, refers all available material to the referee who, immediately and without procedural formalities, arranges for further evidence and documentation to be supplied; the referee then returns all materials to the Jury for the resumption of the case;
- c. in the event that new evidence emerges during the proceedings that may constitute a violation of the Code not covered by the petition, the Jury acknowledges, notifies and rules *ex-officio* on said facts unless further investigation is ordered.

At any time during the proceedings the Jury may ask, without procedural formalities, for the opinion of the Review Board on any matter.

Both parties may be assisted or represented by their lawyers or consultants before the Jury.

#### **Art. 38 – Decision of the Jury**

Once the discussion has ended, the Jury withdraws to the Board room and, under exceptional circumstances, in order to clarify any remaining doubts, may invite the expert witness, if appointed, to participate without voting rights.

If the Jury deems that the technical material it has acquired is insufficient to make a ruling, it calls in an officially appointed expert witness (*Consulenza Tecnica d'Ufficio*), asks the question and sets a deadline for filing the report. During the deliberations of the officially appointed expert witness, the adversary principle of hearing both sides is imposed and the right to defence is ensured.

The Jury announces its decision and immediately communicates its findings to the parties involved. If the decision establishes that the marketing communication does not comply with the provisions of the self-regulatory code, the Jury orders the offending parties to refrain from using it within the term set forth in the relevant Regulations.

In the summary of the decision, information on the censured aspects of the communication can be provided, if necessary.

At the earliest possible opportunity the Jury files its verdict with the Secretariat which then sends copies to the parties and to any other interested organisations.

The Jury's decisions are final.

#### **Art. 39 – Desist Order**

Should any marketing communication submitted for examination appear to clearly violate one or more articles of the self-regulatory code, the President of the Review Board may order the marketer to desist from publishing it.

The desist order, with a summary of the grounds justifying the ruling, is communicated to the parties by the

Secretariat, with advice that each party has up to 10 days to challenge the decision with the Review Board.

If the President of the Review Board verifies that no challenge has been filed, the deadline has passed and no grounds for challenging have been offered up, the order becomes final. The Secretariat certifies the enforceability of the ruling which is then communicated to the parties concerned for compliance within the terms set forth in the relevant Regulations.

Should the ruling be opposed with grounds and within the deadline, the desist order is regarded as pending. The President of the Review Board, having considered the facts and reasons put forward by the challenging parties, may decide, after listening to the Board's opinion, that the desist order should be withdrawn and the case dismissed, with the parties being advised accordingly.

Conversely, should the Review Board consider the reasons for opposition to be unconvincing, the case is handed over to the President of the Jury together with the relevant grounds. Should the President of the Jury also deem the reasons for opposition to be unconvincing, the case is sent back to the President of the Review Board who takes the steps described in para. 3 above. On the other hand, if the President of the Jury believes that the Jury should decide, the parties are called to appear before the Jury for discussions at the earliest possible opportunity but no later than the time frame envisaged for standard procedures; in such cases the desist order is revoked.

#### **Art. 40 – Publication of the Decisions**

Decisions are published by the Secretariat, posted on the website and filed in the database of the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria with the names of the parties concerned.

The Jury may order excerpts of decisions to be disclosed to the public by the Institute, including the name of the parties under the terms and in the media deemed to be appropriate.

The excerpt is drafted by the referee and signed by the President.

The parties cannot use the decision for marketing purposes.

#### **Art. 41 – Binding nature of Jury decisions**

The media through which marketing communication is disseminated which directly or through their trade associations accept the self-regulatory code, even if not involved in the proceedings before the Jury, are obliged to observe its decisions.

#### **Art. 42 – Non-Observance of Decisions**

Should the party bound to comply with the decisions of the Jury or the Review Board fail to do so within the time frame set out in the Regulations, the Jury or its President reiterate the order to discontinue the offending marketing communication and order notice of such non-compliance to be made public by the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria, through the media channels specified by the Jury.

To this end, interested parties may present a petition to the President of the Jury. If the non-compliance is not obvious, the President may decide that the situation should be dealt with by standard procedure. Alternatively, the President issues a ruling and brief explanation confirming the non-compliance and, as per the first paragraph above,

advising the parties of their right to file a substantiated objection within a maximum of five working days, pending which the measure is suspended.

In the event of failure to file a challenge within the official deadline, or of presentation of a manifestly ungrounded objection, the ruling becomes enforceable and is communicated to all parties.

Alternatively, the President of the Jury may revoke the ruling and call the parties to appear before the Jury to discuss the dispute at the earliest possible opportunity but no later than the time frame envisaged for standard procedures. If the Jury confirms the non-compliance, it takes the steps described in the first paragraph above.

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## **Title V**

### **Protection of creativity**

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#### **Art. 43 – Creatives projects**

Marketers planning to hire an advertising agency or professional consultant to join them on one or more creative projects to participate in a tender, or in a joint or individual consultancy, should refrain from using or imitating any creative or inventive aspects of the project(s) that are rejected or not selected, for three years as of the filing date of such material with the Secretariat of the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria, such material being filed in a sealed envelope by the advertising agency or professional consultant concerned, complying with the Regulation.

#### **Art. 44 – Protection Notices**

In order to protect the creative elements of a marketing communication, isolated messages released in anticipation of and to safeguard a future communication campaign must be filed and published in compliance with the rules and regulations of the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria. The filings in force are published on IAP website.

The protection is valid for eighteen months starting as of the date of filing.

#### **Art. 45 – Marketing communication carried out abroad**

Marketers wishing to protect marketing communication carried out abroad from the threat of imitation in Italy, may file copies of such communication with the Secretariat of the Istituto dell'Autodisciplina Pubblicitaria, as per the Institute's regulations.

The filing confers priority rights valid for a period of five years as of the date of filing.

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## **Title VI**

### **Social marketing communication**

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#### **Art. 46 – Appeals to the public**

The rules of this Code apply to any message aimed at raising the awareness of the public as to issues of social

relevance, whether specific or general, or which directly or indirectly solicits donations of any kind for the purpose of achieving objectives of a social nature.

Such messages should clearly identify both the author and the beneficiary of the appeal, and specify the social objective being sought.

The promoters of such messages may freely express their opinions on the issue at hand, but there must be a clear indication that the opinions being expressed are those of the promoters, and are not based on fact.

In any case such messages should not:

- a. unduly exploit human suffering by offending human dignity, or use shock tactics that might generate unwarranted panic, fear, or distress;
- b. generate feelings of guilt or responsibility upon persons who decide not to support the appeal;
- c. exaggerate the degree or nature of the social issue which the appeal is targeting;
- d. overestimate the specific or potential value of contributions to the initiative;
- e. solicit donations from minors.

The above provisions also apply to marketing communication featuring references to social causes.

### **REGULATIONS CONCERNING MARKETING COMMUNICATION RELATING TO FOOD SUPPLEMENTS FOR WEIGHT LOSS OR WEIGHT CONTROL AND OTHER TYPES OF SUPPLEMENTS**

1) Such supplements should not be presented as "slimming" products. The role of food supplements intended for weight control reduction is that of an "aid to low-calorie diets". Moreover, the concept of slimmness being synonymous with good health should not be emphasised.

2) Messages promoting such products should not use fanciful names designed to suggest or guarantee properties that the products do not possess, or which the marketer cannot prove.

3) Messages promoting supplements intended for weight control or weight loss should not refer to scientific endorsements or approval.

Messages should not refer to "industry professionals" (doctors, pharmacists, dieticians, etc.) who, on the basis of their authority and standing in the eyes of the public by virtue of their professional role, could endorse the general effectiveness of the products and decrease the consumer's objectivity in choosing products to meet individual needs which vary from individual to individual.

For similar reasons, endorsements by scientific societies or associations cannot be cited.

4) Messages should specify that the products in question must be used in conjunction with a suitably low-calorie diet

and an increased level of exercise, and avoiding an overly sedentary lifestyle.

5) Marketing communication relating to weight control or weight loss supplements should not present generic weight loss plans prepared by experts as universally valid.

*This rule is based on the conviction, long supported by the scientific community, that it is illogical and irrational to offer consumers generic weight loss plans without taking the background and characteristics of every individual into due account. Therefore, standardised diets must not be claim to be universally valid. Should marketing communication propose a standard diet, consumers must also be told to consult a doctor or dietician to ensure that the diet is appropriate for the consumer's needs.*

6) Marketing communication relating to supplements intended for weight control or weight loss should not use pictures or testimonials aiming to compare the situation before using the product with the results achieved after using it.

7) Marketing communication relating to supplements intended for weight control or weight loss should avoid quantifying results achievable over a specific time frame (in terms of weight loss, smaller circumferences, fat mass, fatty tissue, etc.).

8) Marketing communication relating to supplements intended for weight control or weight loss should not suggest that significant results can be achieved quickly and without sacrifice.

*The use of food supplements intended for weight control or weight loss can be effective and produce the desired affects only as part of a diet programme which, to be low-calorie, necessarily requires sacrifices (restricted energy intake). The promise of results without sacrifice is in contrast with the principle of truthfulness.*

*Moreover, excessively rapid weight loss is dangerous to human health. Consequently, the promise of rapid weight loss could not only generate unrealistic expectations but also encourage unhealthy behaviours.*

9) Special precautions must be taken in marketing communication for food supplements intended for weight control or weight loss that cite clinical and scientific trials, in view of the vulnerability of target consumers. Therefore:

- messages should not use terms such as "clinically tested", or "clinical trials prove that..." that may mislead recipients as to the scope and size of the studies conducted, or the nature of the promoted product, presenting it in such a way as to suggest that it has therapeutic or pharmacological properties;
- messages should not quote scientific data taken from bibliographic research conducted on any of the product's ingredients that fails to reflect the effective action of the ingredients in respect of the amounts used in the product and any possible interactions with other ingredients;
- it is possible to support statements contained in the message with detailed and truthful citations of specific tolerance or efficacy testing results conducted on the promoted products, provided the testing is carried out in

compliance with criteria and methodologies approved by the scientific community.

10) Marketing communication relating to supplements intended for weight control or weight loss should avoid explicitly mentioning such concepts as the "ideal" weight, "ideal" figure, etc.

*Messages must reflect the sensitive nature of the topic, in terms of communications, with respect to eating disorders.*

*The concept of the "ideal" weight is now obsolete, having given rise to treatment errors and serious mental illnesses.*

11) Marketing communication relating to such products should not associate the build-up of fat with water retention.

12) Marketing communication relating to such products should not associate body weight with flatulence.

13) Marketing communication relating to such products should not cast discredit on the complex carbohydrate-rich Mediterranean diet.

14) Messages promoting food supplements for weight control or weight loss may only claim generic effectiveness as an aid, but cannot claim untrue or unproven effects benefiting particular sub-groups of consumers affected by specific problems (e.g. emotional eating, slow metabolism, etc.).

## **OTHER TYPES OF SUPPLEMENTS**

15) Messages relating to products that claim anti-ageing properties should not lead consumers to underestimate the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle and eliminate risk factors; such products should therefore avoid suggesting that such products can prevent or delay the ageing process.

16) Marketing communication should not encourage the belief that a food supplement or non-medicinal product can cure male impotence.

*This rule is often breached by communications claiming to enhance physical and sexual performance, especially in men. Some messages go so far as to claim effects on male impotence for products therefore presented as an alternative to therapeutic treatments.*

*It must be stressed that in most cases, experimental evidence on the efficacy of such products on animals and humans is extremely inadequate and insufficient for supporting such claims.*

*Messages should reflect the fact that these products may have adjuvant toning effects, without leading consumers to underestimate the need for medical advice on their condition and, if necessary, appropriate medical treatment.*

17) Marketing communication relating to food supplements aimed at controlling plasma lipids should specify that these products serve to promote normal lipid metabolism as part of a suitable diet programme. These products should never be presented as appropriate for treating pathological disorders requiring professional medical attention.

18) Marketing communication relating to food supplements should not encourage the belief that such products are intended for athletes or people engaging in intense physical activity, due to their positive effects on muscle mass or physical performance.

Products formulated especially for athletes, and indicating such effects specifically on the label, represent a particular category of dietary products.

## **REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE COPY ADVICE OF THE REVIEW BOARD**

These Regulations outline the process and procedures adopted by the Review Board to issue copy advice pursuant to article 32, paragraph 2, point 5 of the Code of Marketing Communication.

**1)** The Review Board has established a special sub-group devoted to issuing copy advice, called the "Copy Advice Section".

The Section is presided over by the President of the Review Board, one of the Deputy Chairmen, or a member of the Committee empowered to do so by the President, and includes at least two other members chosen in turn by the President of the Review Board among Board members with specific expertise in the matters at hand.

Once applicants have filed a request for a preliminary opinion, they are entitled to know the members of the Section.

**2)** The Section is generally responsible for issuing copy advice in compliance with article 32, paragraph 2, point 5 of the Code, with the effects envisaged therein. In particularly sensitive or complex cases, the President of the Section may refer the issuance of opinions to the full Review Board after notifying the applicant to this effect.

The Section and the Review Board may in any case avail themselves of experts.

**3)** Parties intending to apply for a copy advice should forward a written request to this effect to the Secretariat of the Istituto di Autodisciplina, attaching the marketing communication for which an opinion is being sought both in paper and electronic form, in the closest possible version to the final form (e.g. story-boards for television commercials, complete scripts for print ads, etc.), or at least a detailed description such as to enable the Board to acquire the fullest possible understanding of all the features of the marketing communication. The application may also include any documentation evidencing compliance of the communication with the relevant rules of the Code. Such documentation is compulsory for claims of product performance, in order to check the truthfulness of statements contained in the message.

A separate request for a copy advice should be filed for each marketing communication, and in the event of any changes made to the communication following findings issued by the Board. The relevant administrative charges as set by the IAP Board of Directors should be paid upon filing requests for copy advice.

**4)** The Section, as a whole or through a member specifically appointed by the President of the Review Board should acquire any and all information and clarifications

that may be needed or helpful for issuing opinions, without formalities and employing the fastest and most fitting communication channels. Parties who have requested preliminary opinions may contact the Section either personally or via the aforesaid communication channels, with a view to better illustrating aspects of particular relevance to the issuance of preliminary opinions.

**5)** Copy advice are issued in writing; opinions that are negative or favourable with reservations will be adequately explained. Copy advice are issued as promptly as possible, and no later than 5 working days as of receipt of the request by the Secretariat of the Istituto di Autodisciplina. Particularly complex cases may require up to 8 working days.

## **REGULATIONS ON THE TIME REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF SELF-REGULATION DECISIONS**

With reference to paragraphs c) and d) of the Preliminary and General Rules of the Code of Marketing Communication Self-Regulation and considering that articles 38 and 39 are aimed at achieving the speediest discontinuance of marketing communication found to breach the Code, the Board of Directors of the Institute has established that condemned marketing communications should cease within seven working days, or within five working days in cases as provided under art. 37.2, with regard to the following media: television, radio, b/w newspapers, posters.

This is the deadline which shall start elapsing from the first working day following the hearing handing down the Jury's decision.

On the day of the ruling the Secretariat of the Institute communicates the decision to all the parties and media involved, who will take it upon themselves to advise any other interested parties of the decision.

The order to cease and desist pertains to the product and packaging (including every aspect of the presentation packaging) shall normally be executed within 120 days of the Jury's decision, on the understanding that the advertiser shall take steps to comply with the order as promptly as possible. Products placed on the market by the advertiser prior to this deadline may be sold while stocks last.

As to the decisions of the Review Board enforcement must begin from the deadline to file opposition.

Considering the particular features of media other than those mentioned above, enforcement of the desist order shall be as timely as technically possible.

The Jury may allow more time for enforcement in the event of particular technical requirements.

Marketers are responsible for the timely and effective enforcement of decisions concerning their marketing communication and shall advise the Secretariat of the Institute in writing (faxes are also permitted) by the end of the first working day following the date of the final Self-Regulation ruling, that they have taken steps to withdraw the message in question as per the deadlines indicated

above, on all the media included in the planned marketing campaign.

## **REGULATIONS FOR SAFEGUARDING FUTURE MARKETING AND ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS (see Art. 44 of the Self-Regulatory Code)**

With reference to articles 13 and 44 of the Code of Marketing Communication Self-Regulation, future communication campaigns can be protected through the prior disclosure of an isolated message. This requires that the essential creative elements of the idea be briefly but accurately described, if necessary with pictures, then filed and published as set out below:

1) The applicant shall:

- a) fill in the on-line "Pre-emption form", indicating the creative elements for which protection is sought;
- b) at the same time, also fill in the "Request to file" form and forward it by email to the IAP, enclosing evidence of payment of the relevant fees.

Both documents can be downloaded from the IAP website at [www.iap.it](http://www.iap.it): click on "Procedure for safeguarding future campaigns".

2) The creative elements to be protected must be contained in a single advertisement for products or services whose names need not be specified; naming the company is also optional. However, if such information is not provided, the name of the advertising agency or consultant must be indicated.

3) Pre-emption rights become effective as soon as the IAP has received the complete and correct application form as per point 1) above; the rights are registered by the IAP Secretariat and are valid for 18 months against parties subject to compliance with the Code who are deemed to have imitated the advertisement covered by protection in any medium.

4) All filings are published as quickly as possible on the IAP website – "Advertisements filed for the protection of future campaigns" (in Italian: *Elenco depositi a tutela di future campagne*).

## **REGULATION GUARANTEEING THE IMPARTIALITY OF SELF-REGULATORY JUDGEMENTS**

Pursuant to Art. 31 of the Code, members of the Jury and Review Board, or consultants (expert witnesses) shall not participate in deliberations in the following cases: a) those falling under the scope of Art. 51.1 c.p.c.; b) cases in which they are currently involved, or have been involved in the last 12 months, in respect of providing their professional services to the advertiser or applicant; c) cases in which there is a serious conflict of interest (incompatibility). Participation in deliberations shall not be allowed in such cases, or in cases directly involving competitors of the party with respect to whom the member or consultant is in a situation of conflict of interest (incompatibility).

Members of the Jury and Review Board, and expert witnesses (technical consultants) as defined by article 32 *bis* of the Code should refrain from appearing in advertisements and marketing communications.

Members of the Jury and Review Board and expert witnesses are obliged to consider whether a conflict of interest (incompatible) situation exists upon receiving the documents relative to the dispute or the case submitted for examination, and, if such a situation does exist, should without delay notify the Chairman of the panel or relevant section of the Review Board, that they will not participate in deliberations. Should the Chairman agree that the member or advisor is in a conflict of interest situation, the Chairman of the Jury or the Chairman of the Review Board should be duly informed. In turn, if both Chairmen agree that there is a conflict of interest situation, they should notify the Chairman of the Istituto di Autodisciplina of the member's inability to participate in the deliberations.

Members of the "Copy Advice" section of the Review Board should notify any conflict of interest situations as soon as they discover the identity of the party presenting the application and the matter to which it refers.

The Board of Directors is responsible for evaluating breaches of conflict of interest rules, and may at its own discretion adopt measures including the decision to terminate the offender's appointment as a member of the Jury or Review Board, or as an expert advisor (consultant), taking into due account the concrete influence of the individual's behaviour on the outcome of the self-regulatory process. In any case, such measures as may be adopted do not constitute grounds for challenging the decision of the Jury or the deliberation of the Review Board in which the member deemed to be in a conflict of interest situation has participated.

The Board of Directors issues its decisions in response to applications from any interested parties, after hearing the member of the Jury or Review Board or expert witness (consultant) involved.