

Launch of the AdWiseOnline campaign

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The AdWiseOnline campaign was launched on 6 January 2025. It is the result of a partnership between the DG CONNECT and DG JUST policy frameworks, European Safer Internet Centres and European Consumer Centres, within the framework of the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) initiative.

The campaign aims to raise awareness of manipulative practices and children's consumer rights by informing parents, guardians, educators and policy makers about specific manipulative digital marketing, gaming and consumer practices targeting children and young people especially. It focuses on in-game marketing tactics, such as persuasive design, dark patterns, loot boxes, pay-to-win mechanisms, fear of missing out (FOMO) tactics and excessive microtransactions. Ultimately, the campaign aims to help build a safer and more responsible gaming and digital environment, promote behavioural changes to reduce exploitative in-game spending and encourage better online spending habits.

Lasting until mid-February 2025, the campaign relies on a combination of social media and influencer collaborations with educational resources, podcasts, webinars, and a MOOC online course, among other things.

The AdWiseOnline campaign places young people at its centre, involving them in discussions about the gaming environment and their general online consumer rights but also by developing child-friendly versions of some of their resources, like the AdWiseOnline guide, available in 29 languages.

The guide goes over the hidden costs of "free" platforms, explaining in an easy-to-understand manner how social media platforms and apps which may appear to be "free" generate income via advertising or the use or sale of personal data. Marketing traps, in gaming and with regard to influencers are also explained in simple terms. In particular, the notion that influencers may be getting paid to promote a product or service is explained in a way which may help children understand that what influencers express should not always be considered as their real thoughts or opinions. The guide also goes over the facts that advertising may be encountered in digital worlds or games, and may not always look like ads at first glance.

The guide includes tips for children to avoid marketing traps. It urges them to question whether a post they encounter is trying to sell them something, whether

the information appears reliable and – if a cost is shown in a virtual currency – how much it costs in real money. Further tips include recommending they customise privacy settings (for instance to choose not to see ads, when possible), urging them to understand their online spending (for instance by discussing it with their parents and by understanding the difference between the cost in virtual currency shown on screen and the cost in real money). Lastly, the guide also suggests that young users control their data, by being aware of the terms and conditions of the platforms they use and possibly by requesting information from companies collecting their data.

Better Internet for Kids - AdWiseOnline: Play smart, spend wisely - mind the hidden costs!

<https://better-internet-for-kids.europa.eu/en/adwiseonline>

