[GB] Regulator Publishes New Sponsorship Code

IRIS 2000-10:1/12

Tony Prosser
University of Bristol Law School

The Independent Television Commission, the UK regulator of private broadcasters, has published a new code on the regulation of television sponsorship. It hopes that the new code will provide "a streamlined and more user-friendly approach" to regulation.

The two key principles have been retained from the earlier code; the requirement of editorial independence from the influence of sponsors and the requirement that advertising and sponsor credits are clearly distinguished. These are designed to prevent programmes from being distorted for commercial purposes and sponsor credits from being used as extra advertisement time.

The code has however been relaxed in other ways. Although there must still be no sponsor credits within programmes, the sponsor's credits at the beginning or end may now contain a representation of the sponsor's products provided that this is done so as to reflect the link between the sponsor and the programme. The credits may also include contact details such as a website or telephone numbers so long as they do not form part of an explicit encouragement to purchase or to contact the sponsor. Presenters of news programmes during the last twelve months must not be used to present sponsor credits.

The prohibition on the sponsorship of news programmes, current affairs programmes and consumer advice programmes is retained to prevent any influence on editorial content. However, the sponsorship of business and finance programmes will not be prohibited in other cases, though they may be restricted in their choice of sponsor. Short specialist reports after news programmes, such as information on weather, travel or sport, may be sponsored if clearly separated from the news programme. The former prohibition in all cases on sponsorship by political parties, tobacco companies, pharmaceutical and gaming companies remains.

Independent Television Commission, Code of Programme Sponsorship, available at

http://www.itc.org.uk/

ITC Press Release 71/00, "ITC Publishes Simpler and Streamlined Sponsorship Code"

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026