[GB] Regulator Announces Changes to Rules on Advertising and Teleshopping

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Ofcom, the UK communications regulator, has announced further changes to its advertising rules, as part of its continuing review of advertising regulation (for earlier changes see IRIS 2008-5: 11 and IRIS 2008-9: 12).

Ofcom has decided to maintain the number of advertising breaks permitted on public service broadcasting (PSB) channels at current levels for programmes with a scheduled duration of 90 minutes or less, but to increase the number of permitted breaks in longer programmes to the same level as permitted on non-PSB channels. This does not affect the rules applying to particular types of programme, such as films, news and children's programmes. The aim is to avoid deterring PSBs from airing longer programmes, especially during peak times. Ofcom has also decided not to change the rules on the overall amount of advertising permitted, which currently are more restrictive for PSBs than for other broadcasters. Nevertheless, it considers that there is a strong case for harmonising the rules through a further review, by removing the special restrictions applying to PSBs. Ofcom will also remove the "peak time" designation for the period from 7am to 9am on PSB channels and will regulate this period in accordance with the rules applying to non-peak periods.

Ofcom has also decided to allow PSB channels to schedule up to 6 hours of teleshopping between midnight and 6am and to remove the restrictions on the amount of teleshopping that non-PSB channels may schedule, the previous time limit being three hours per day. The aim is to allow PSBs to generate additional revenues from teleshopping, whilst limiting this to the night hours to maintain the view that teleshopping content does not contribute to the public service remit. Ofcom has also decided that all transactional gambling on television that invites viewers to pay money to take part in gaming or to place bets will be treated as teleshopping.

Ofcom, "No changes to the rules on the amount of advertising on TV", Press Release of 26 May 2009

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/media/news/2009/05/nr_20090526

Ofcom Code on Scheduling of TV Advertising, Annex 1

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/rada08/statement/costa.pdf

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