[GB] New Advertising and Sponsorship Code for Radio

IRIS 1997-5:1/20

Stefaan Verhulst
PCMLP University of Oxford

The Radio Authority ("The Authority") licences and regulates the independent radio industry in the UK in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Broadcasting Act 1990 and 1996. The Broadcasting Act 1990 makes it the statutory duty of the Authority to draw up, and periodically review a code which sets standards and practice in advertising and programme sponsorship on independent radios. The Authority has now - a month after the revised ITC Code (see IRIS 1997-4: 11) - published a new version of its Advertising and Sponsorship Code, which takes immediate effect. The changes to the Code mean that: News-readers will now be able to `voice' commercials (Section A, Rule 4) - The Authority decided that the previous ban on this was unduly restrictive. However, particular care must still be taken to ensure that a product promoted by the voice of a news-reader does not compromise the impartiality of their programming role. Clearer rules for alcoholic drinks' advertisements which publicise competitions or sales promotions (Section B, Rule 27 and Appendix 2) - The new rule now prevents only those competitions or promotions that appear to encourage excessive consumption.

Bans on the advertising of firearms and weaponry tightened (Section A, Rule 3 (g))- The rule now also prohibits the advertising of combat knives and replica guns.

Clearer rules for distinction between programming and advertising (Section C)- The Authority appreciates the commercial worth of radio stations' using the medium to advertise their own activities, and their value to listeners, but believes that they should be sufficiently distinct from impartial editorial and therefore regulated as advertisements.

Clearer rules for sponsor credit content (Section C, Rule 7) - The new rules make it clear that the credits should not include telephone numbers, full addresses, prices or details of special offers. The credits should be brief precise acknowledgements, not advertisements. Presenters are also not allowed to endorse products. New rule on use of religious music (Section B, Rule 32 and Appendix 7) - To avoid offences, this rule requires sensible caution in the use of religious music such as hymns.

Radio Authority, Advertising and Sponsorship Code, March 1997

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026