[BE] Flemish Minister of Media launches online platform with information for influencers: the InfluencerFAQ

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On 27 March 2022, Benjamin Dalle, Flemish Minister for Brussels Affairs, Youth and Media, introduced the online platform "InfluencerFAQ". The influencerFAQ platform offers all kinds of tips and tricks about being an influencer and was developed in consultation with influencers and media experts and together with various organisations (including non-profit organisations and government agencies) specialising in a number of topics relevant to influencers. These topics range from information on discussing sensitive topics such as suicide, posting about gambling and dealing with hate messages as well as information on taxes and marketing. The FAQ are divided into 6 topics, each of which covers a number of questions.

The InfluencerFAQ platform does not take the form of a binding instrument, nor does it introduce a supervisory authority and neither would it have the intention to hand out fines. The main purpose of the FAQ is to make influencers aware of the influence they can have on their followers. It constitutes a clear and user-friendly overview for influencers of the legal framework that exists in Belgium, along with a number of tips, tricks and recommendations. According to the minutes of the meeting of the Culture, Youth, Sport and Media Committee of the Flemish Parliament on 4 May 2023, this format was chosen as a way of avoiding the introduction of a code that might look like a new set of rules. Indeed, the main purpose of the InfluencerFAQ is to provide clarity on the extisting regulations rather than imposing new ones. Moreover, it has a dynamic character which allows it to be updated with new topics and relevant new information.

It became clear that there was a need for further information and clarification, especially after the recent warnings from the Flemish audiovisual media regulator (*Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media* – VRM) in relation to the obligation to clearly disclose commercial communications. During the period between November 2022 and March 2023, for example, VRM issued warnings to five influencers under the Flemish Radio and Television Decree (*Decreet betreffende Radio-omroep en Televisie* or 'the Flemish Media Decree'). Moreover, a discussion on the proper payment of taxes by influencers has recently gained traction in the media.

The InfluencerFAQ platform is a first step: the necessary relevant points of interest needed to be identified. For now, the main goal is to further disseminate the FAQ. InfluencerFAQ is supported by six Flemish influencers, or so-called

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ambassadors, who are committed to bringing the FAQ to the attention of the influencer industry. In addition, a partnership has been set up with We Are Digital, a communication agency that is devising a communication strategy to introduce influencers to the FAQ and actively engage them. As Minister Dalle pointed out during the Committee meeting, possible next steps are being considered, but they are still very much in the early stages. Discussions are underway, for example, about working on a (quality) label for influencers in the future. In any case, such ideas will be further developed in consultation with the influencer landscape and experts.

De InfluencerFAQ

https://www.deinfluencerfaq.be/

The InfluencerFAQ

Verslag vergadering Commissie voor Cultuur, Jeugd, Sport en Media

https://www.vlaamsparlement.be/nl/parlementair-werk/commissies/commissievergaderingen/1728476/verslag/1733761

Report on the meeting of the Committee for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media

VRM t. SARAH PUTTEMANS Beslissing nr. 2022/554C

https://www.vlaamseregulatormedia.be/nl/beslissingen/2022/waarschuwing-voor-sarah-puttemans;

VRM t. SARAH PUTTEMANS Decision No 2022/554C

VRM t. STEFFI MERCIE, Beslissing nr. 2022/036

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VRM t. STEFFI MERCIE, Decision No 2022/036

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VRM t. MAXIMILIAN VERHEYEN, Decision No 2022/037

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VRM t. ASTRID COPPENS, Beslissing nr. 2023/010

https://www.vlaamseregulatormedia.be/nl/beslissingen/2023/waarschuwing-voor-astrid-coppens-duidelijk-herkenbaar-maken-van-commerciele

VRM v. ASTRID COPPENS, Decision No 2023/010

VRM t. ROMY SCHLIMBACH, Beslissing nr. 2023/011

https://www.vlaamseregulatormedia.be/nl/beslissingen/2023/waarschuwing-voor-romy-schlimbach-duidelijk-herkenbaar-maken-van-commerciele

VRM v. ROMY SCHLIMBACH, Decision No. 2023/011

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