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Date: 31/01/2017

EU Parliament takes baby steps on kids' exposure to unhealthy food ads

Ads praising unhealthy foods should be more restricted from the programmes that children watch on TV or video-sharing platforms. However the industry will still have a key role to decide what is healthy enough to be advertised to children. This is what the European Parliament's Committee for health, food and environment has voted for in the context of the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive¹.

BEUC has been calling for stricter rules on the advertising of unhealthy foods to children in its [campaign](#) 'Food marketing to children: Game over?' The World Health Organization (WHO) widely considers such marketing as a serious risk factor for childhood obesity.

Monique Goyens, BEUC's Director General has commented:

"Children don't just watch the programmes designed for them; many spend time in front of family programmes or before they go to school too. That's why it is key to restrict unhealthy food marketing during children's peak viewing times, just like members of the European Parliament have voted.

"Our campaign shows that industry's voluntary efforts to market their products more responsibly are inadequate. Self-regulation is not delivering and at least MEPs have called on governments to take a greater lead if we are to protect children.

"However, it is a pity that MEPs have missed a chance to really improve children's health. With one third of children either obese or overweight in Europe, it's time to act.

"Today industry's self-developed criteria that define which foods can or cannot be marketed to kids are too lenient. It is a shame the Environment Committee has recognised those instead of the stricter [WHO criteria](#). That way ads praising sugar-loaded breakfast cereals and cakes will still be allowed to keep targeting children.

"This shouldn't be the last word. Before it votes as a whole, the Parliament needs to improve this important piece of legislation. It is essential that children are protected from undue influence of the advertising of unhealthy foods."

ENDS

1. This [Directive](#) ensures the protection of consumers watching audiovisual content on TV and online. It is currently under revision.