

**1,329 complaints received by the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) in 2016 and 102 advertisements found to be in breach of ASAI Code**

**2016 Annual Report shows significant majority (67%) of complaints were made under the misleading provisions of the ASAI Code.**

**April 2017**

A total of 1,329 written complaints relating to 1,011 advertisements were received by the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland *(ASAI)* last year, according to the organisation’s 2016 Annual Report which was released today. This represents an 8% increase on the previous year (2015).The number of complaints resolved at 1,376 represents at 16% increase on the previous year.

The *‘Telecommunications’* sector attracted the most complaints while *‘Digital Media’* gave rise to the highest number of complaints by media. The ASAI, which is the independent self-regulatory body committed, in the public interest, to promoting the highest standards of marketing communications, found that 102 advertisements were in breach of the ASAI’s Code of Standards for Advertising and Marketing Communications.

The ASAI was established in 1981 and celebrated 35 years of self-regulation in Ireland in 2016. The objective of the ASAI Code is to ensure that all commercial marketing communications are ‘legal, decent, honest and truthful’ and members of the ASAI are required to abide by the Code and not to publish an advertisement or conduct a promotion which contravenes Code rules. The ASAI Code covers commercial marketing communications and sales promotions in all media in Ireland including digital (online banners, websites and social platforms), print, outdoor, radio, TV, leaflets/brochures, and direct marketing.

The Annual Report outlines that 67% percent of the complaints made in 2016 were on the basis that an advertisement was misleading, while 12% of complaints were made on the basis that an advertisement was offensive. There were also a wide range of other issues covered by the ASAI Code that were raised by members of the public, including concerns about alcohol advertising, children, employment and business opportunities, financial services, food and non-alcoholic beverages, health and beauty claims.

The Annual Report also highlights an increase in the number of advertisers, agencies, media and promoters who sought free, confidential copy advice from the ASAI on whether a proposed marketing communication or sales promotion conformed to the Code. In total, 165 requests from advertisers, advertising agencies and media for copy advice were received in 2016 in comparison with 63 in 2015. The ASAI copy advice service serves as an authoritative opinion, given by the Executive but does not bind the ASAI Complaints Committee.

Complaints by sector are as follows, with comparative figures for 2015 and 2014:

***Sector 2016 2015 2014***

Telecommunications 248 240 182

Leisure 159 150 275

Food & Beverages 126 72 127

Household 125 101 143

Health & Beauty 110 80 93

Motoring 99 66 72

Travel / Holidays 78 77 90

Financial 67 55 81

Alcohol 27 34 57

Miscellaneous 123 98 94

**Complaints by Media**

In 2016, digital media gave rise to the largest block of complaints, with 586 complaints registered. This represents an increase on the previous year (449). Digital media has been increasing steadily year on year. In 2010, it represented 22 per cent of all complaints, compared to 46 per cent in 2016. Complaints relating to broadcast media (TV and radio combined) totalled 354, while outdoor media attracted 118 complaints.

Complaints by Media are as follows, with comparative figures for 2016 and 2014:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Media** | **2016** |  | **2015** |  | **2014** |
| Digital Media | 586 |  | 449 |  | 606 |
| Broadcast | 354 |  | 356 |  | 450 |
| Outdoor | 118 |  | 169 |  | 126 |
| Brochures/Leaflets | 74 |  | 45 |  | 57 |
| Print | 71 |  | 87 |  | 124 |
| Cinema | 14 |  | 5 |  | 8 |
| Direct Marketing | 10 |  | 8 |  | 21 |
| Other | 57 |  | 78 |  | 79 |
|  | **1284** |  | **1197** |  | **1471** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Broadcast** | **354** |  | **356** |  | **450** |
| Radio | 127 |  | 118 |  | 150 |
| Television | 227 |  | 238 |  | 300 |

The ASAI conducts ongoing monitoring of advertising across all media and since 2007, has examined over 27,000 advertisements, with an overall compliance rate of 98 per cent. The organisation, which is financed by the advertising industry, also offers free confidential and non-binding copy advice on the compliance of proposed advertising.

The 2016 ASAI Annual Report also outlines the fact that a new edition of the ASAI Code of Standards for Advertising and Marketing Communications was launched in 2015 and came into effect on 1 March 2016. The updated Code features new sections on E-Cigarettes and Gambling and revised sections on Food (including rules for advertisements addressed to children), Health & Beauty and Environmental claims. Throughout the year, the ASAI presented to advertisers, agencies and media to educate on the updated Code and this will continue into 2017.

**Orla Twomey, CEO of the ASAI,**speaking at the launch of the 2016 ASAI Annual Report, said:

*“The ASAI is committed to promoting the highest standards of marketing communications in Ireland and our 2016 Annual Report echoes this statement, conveying the sheer breadth of advertisements adjudicated on by the ASAI’s independent Complaints Committee. The engagement with the ASAI and compliance with the adjudication of the independent Complaints Committee, demonstrates that advertisers in Ireland are completely on board with the ASAI in our bid to protect consumers and ensure the highest standards of advertising and marketing communications.*

*2016 marked 35 years of Self Regulation in Ireland with the ASAI founded in 1981. The ASAI also introduced it’s 7th Edition of the Code of Standards for Advertising and Marketing Communications in Ireland in 2016 highlighting our own commitment to ensuring ASAI is equipped to handle emerging trends and ensure that all marketing practices in Ireland are legal, decent, honest and truthful.”*

**Sean O’Meara, Chairman of the ASAI, says:**

*“In the ever-changing world of advertising and marketing communications, all which must be seen and understood against a pressurised background of the need for instant commercial gratification and success, the roles of all Self-Regulatory organisations become fundamentally and ever more important in the protection of advertisers, consumers and society in general.*

*The ASAI understands its role in working with the advertising industry to ensure that the advertising that is placed in the Irish market is prepared with a sense of responsibility to consumers and to society. The 7th Edition of our Code of Advertising Standards for Advertising and Marketing Communications has completed its first year of implementation and is proving strong, robust and effective. This is particularly gratifying given the immense amount of hard work that went into the deep consultative process, review, overhaul and publication towards the end of 2015.*

*An interesting off-shoot of this is the obvious rise in the overall awareness levels of the ASAI and what we do, evidenced by the measurable increase in applications for our free pre-publication Copy Advice Service.”*

**The ASAI accepts complaints from any person or body who considers that a marketing communication may be in breach of the ASAI Code.**

**Check out** [**www.asai**](http://www.asai) **for more details and to also access a copy of the 2016 ASAI Annual Report**

**To keep up to date on ASAI activity, follow the organisation on Twitter @ THE\_ASAI**

**For further information, please contact:**

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**Editorial Notes:**

**Advertising self-regulation**

Advertising self-regulation in Ireland has existed for 35 years since the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland was established by the advertising industry in1981.The strength of the self-regulatory system lies in the support and commitment of the advertising industry – advertisers, advertising agencies, media specialists, direct marketing companies, sales promotion consultants and the various media – print, radio, television, online, cinema and outdoor interests.

The ASAI is a founder member of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA). EASA is a non-profit organisation based in Brussels which brings together 38 national European and non-European advertising self-regulatory organisations (SROs) and 16 organisations representing the advertising industry in Europe – advertisers, agencies and various forms of media including television, radio, press, digital and outdoor poster advertising

Further information on advertising self-regulation, the ASAI and the operation of the system is available at [www.asai.ie](http://www.asai.ie)

***ENDS***