



Brussels, 04 July 2012

EWL Statement on Self-Regulation of Advertising by the Cosmetics Industry

The European Women's Lobby, the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), welcomes the adoption of a Charter and Guiding Principles on Responsible Advertising and Marketing Communication by the European cosmetics industry. While favouring binding measures at EU and national level to ensure respect for and promotion of women's rights and gender equality in media output, the EWL is supportive of this initiative, and calls for strict implementation and enforcement in all cosmetics advertising across the EU.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) has long been concerned with the impact of stereotypical, denigrating and/or unrealistic portrayals of women in advertising – as well as an increasing 'pornification' of public space – on women's health and rights. The EWL calls for EU legislative measures accompanied by effective sanctions for the enforcement of the wide range of international and national legislative commitments of States to uphold women's rights and promote equality between women and men, including in media content, which has a strong impact on public perceptions and social mores.

In this perspective, the EWL is pleased to see the cosmetics industry in Europe commit to implement and enforce self-regulating principles in advertising, including many of the recommendations made by the EWL in May 2011. The EWL recognises the inclusion of broad anti-discrimination provisions including regarding the portrayal of women and men. In addition, the EWL welcomes the following specific commitments:

- 'Digital techniques should not alter images of models such that their body shapes or features become unrealistic and misleading regarding the performance achievable by the product.'
- 'Cosmetics advertising and marketing communication "should not appear to condone or incite violent, unlawful or anti-social behaviour".'
- 'Models used in advertisements and post production techniques should not appear to promote a preferred body image of extreme thinness.'
- 'Do not focus on bodies and parts of bodies as objects when not relevant to the advertised product.'
- 'Do not stage nude models in a way that is demeaning, alienating or sexually offensive.'
- 'Advertising of decorative cosmetics and perfumes should not incite children to overuse of such products.'
- 'Advertising of cosmetic products, including images, should not promote early sexualisation of young people.'

The EWL trusts that the cosmetics industry will now do its utmost to ensure the full enforcement of the Charter and Guiding Principles throughout Europe. The document calls for national cosmetics associations to cooperate with their respective Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) 'with a view to having these principles adopted at national level.' In cases of non-compliance, SROs will then have the mandate to adjudicate on complaints.

The EWL calls for the due adoption of the principles at national level, but is aware that the prominence and power of SROs varies greatly across the EU and that effective action by these bodies to uphold women's rights is rare. The EWL calls on the cosmetics industry to advocate strong and publicly visible SROs, with effective sanctioning powers, to ensure the credibility of self-regulation. In addition, the EWL calls on the individual members of Cosmetics Europe to promote their commitment to this Charter and Guiding Principles on their advertising and marketing materials, and put in place easy-to-use public complaints and follow-up procedures.



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STATEMENT

The EWL and its members across Europe will monitor the process of implementation of this initiative, as well as the agreed reporting and review procedures.