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**PRESS RELEASE**

## **CAC reports TikTok videos with 30 million views for hidden advertising**

- **CAC urges the platform to take measures to clearly identify advertising, in line with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive**
- **CAC analysed videos by 8 TikTokers who have over a million followers and found that 93% of content contains hidden advertising of fast food, sugary drinks, beauty products, clothing, and video consoles and games**
- **CAC Chairperson Roger Loppacher warns that the platform's main users, children and teens, may be unwittingly watching many adverts**
- **TikTok users aged 16-24 account for 41% on the platform, although many under-16s often also use the service on their parents' or older siblings' devices**
- **The eduCAC programme provides schools with resources and training on how to detect hidden advertising**

The Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC) has filed a complaint regarding an array of videos on the video-sharing platform TikTok that include hidden advertising aimed at children and adolescents. The CAC has urged TikTok to take measures to clearly identify adverts when content creators include commercial messages in their videos, in line with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

The CAC analysed 16 videos with a total of 30.6 million views by 8 child or teen influencers (who between them have 43.4 million followers and 1.6 billion likes), and found that 93.8% of the content contains hidden adverts for products aimed at the youth demographic, such as fast food, sugary drinks, beauty products, clothing, and video consoles and games.

Known as TikTokers on this social network, the influencers who create the videos include the commercials as part of their music video, without a disclosure message.

The CAC report found that the TikTokers analysed habitually show and use products, inciting people to buy them (by giving information on how to purchase, offering gifts or discounts, or explicit calls to action) and endorse the product, service or brand promoted.



The CAC has notified TikTok that under the new European Union Audiovisual Media Services Directive, commercial messages must be easily identifiable and hidden advertising is prohibited.

The Council also told TikTok that the videos in question breach the company's own rules, which ban use of the platform for commercial purposes without its permission.

Additionally, the CAC has brought the report to the attention of the Catalan consumer protection authority (Agència Catalana del Consum).

For CAC chairperson **Roger Loppacher**, “the TikTok report is particularly preoccupying because these influencers, who have millions of followers and enjoy very high credibility among children and young people, are intentionally doing hidden advertising. It is highly unlikely that their audience - essentially children and adolescents, will be fully aware of the commercial nature of these videos, which leaves them unprotected.”

TikTok is one of the most popular social networks among the youth demographic. It has 800 million users worldwide of whom 41% are aged 16-24, according to Globalwebindex. However, Programa Desconnect@ believes that many under-16s often also use the service on their parents' or older siblings' devices.

“We call upon video creators and the companies that contract them to be responsible and transparent, and to inform users about product placement and advertising in videos. We also urge the social network to make every effort to identify content that breaches the new Directive, current legislation on the information society and consumer protection, and the company's own terms of service,” said Roger Loppacher.

The CAC chair added: “This is also unfair competition with traditional media, which do comply with advertising laws.”

The Council's media education programme for schools, EduCAC, has a teaching unit entitled “This is also advertising” in addition to resources and training on how to detect hidden advertising in audiovisual content and influencers' videos.

### **The Hashtag Challenge advertising format**

The CAC study reveals that one quarter of the examples analysed are 'Hashtag Challenges', an advertising format that entails performing a given action and challenging others to replicate it. However, these videos do not disclose the advertising content.

Try a Danet Shake and dedicate a top tune! Join the  
#DanetShakeChallenge and give your body a shake. I've done 6. How  
many can you do?

**(This video has 974,300 views)**

This type of advertising format often leads to viral content creation on the platform. For instance, a search for one of the hashtags on the app (#Trolls2Challenge) shows a whole swathe of videos totalling 170 million views. These include TikTokers who took part in the advertising campaign and anonymous users who took up the challenge.

### [Advertising in video content created by TikTokers](#)

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