NATCP National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection

PRESS RELEASE

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Consumer protection authorities around the world have investigated the activities of influencers—action taken by the NATCP and HCA in Hungary

The National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection (NATCP) and the Hungarian Competition Authority (HCA) participated in an international enforcement action. The investigations focused on the extent to which influencers, as well as creators of virtual and artificial intelligence-based content, comply with transparency and consumer protection requirements, particularly regarding the labeling of commercial communications and artificially generated content.

As part of an online "sweep" coordinated by the International Consumer Protection Enforcement Network (ICPEN)—an organization comprising consumer protection authorities—the NATCP and the HCA, representing Hungary, reviewed the activities of ten influencers each in the spring of 2026. In order to obtain a comprehensive, unbiased picture of the market, consumer protection authorities selected content creators with varying follower counts and covering different topics. The activities of the influencers examined spanned a wide range, from lifestyle advice to cosmetic products and video games.

In general, it can be concluded that the majority of the influencers examined used some form of advertising disclosure (such as #ad, "paid partnership" labels, or tags provided by the platforms) or a text description. In most cases, the advertising disclosure was immediately visible, did not require a separate click or scroll, and appeared throughout the entire duration of the content.

At the same time, transparency was not always complete. In some cases, the advertising disclosure was missing or not sufficiently prominent—for example, it did not appear at the beginning of the content, was visible only for a limited time, or, in some instances, became visible only after scrolling. Typically, influencers did not clearly indicate the commercial nature of the content when promoting their own products. Regulatory experts also encountered cases where certain influencers shared content about themselves that was likely generated using artificial intelligence, but failed to disclose this fact.

Incidentally, 20 consumer protection authorities worldwide participated in the enforcement action, examining the online activities of a total of 228 influencers. The authorities identified 34 virtual influencers and 35 content creators who used AI-generated content.

One of the sweep's most important findings regarding the labeling of commercial communications is that a significant proportion of influencers still fail to provide adequate disclosure. Only about one-fifth of the content examined included consistent and clearly visible advertising labels. Although 52% of influencers used some form of labeling, in many cases these labels were not sufficiently conspicuous or blended into their surroundings. The most common problem was that the labels were too small, visible for only a short time, or difficult to notice.

A positive finding regarding virtual influencers is that 65% of them clearly indicated their non-human nature. At the same time, 53% of the virtual influencers examined posted commercial or promotional content that could give the impression that they had actually used or tried the advertised product or service, even though they are, by their very nature, incapable of doing so.

In many cases, content generated by artificial intelligence was not properly labeled. Sixty-nine percent of the influencers in question used AI tools but failed to inform consumers of this fact, or did so inadequately. It is particularly problematic that a significant portion of the synthetic content included realistic images or videos, in which case it may be difficult for consumers to recognize their artificial origin. Artificially created elements—such as voices, faces, or entire characters—appeared in 12% of the advertisements examined.

The investigation of influencers' advertising activities, under the professional guidance of the NATCP, is becoming an increasingly prominent element of consumer protection enforcement. In 2025, as part of a nationwide investigation into advertising regulations affecting children and minors, government agencies also reviewed advertising content published by influencers that was specifically targeted at children. Out of the 25 inspections conducted, the authority identified violations in 3 cases. Children are particularly susceptible to online recommendations and advertisements; therefore, the authority focused on determining whether commercial content was sufficiently identifiable. In evaluating this, the consumer protection authority follows the principles developed by the HCA.

The NATCP's inspection program for this year already includes the monitoring of influencers' activities from a consumer protection perspective as a separate, targeted nationwide investigation. In addition to regulatory enforcement, the NATCP continues to place great emphasis on educating stakeholders and providing them with ongoing information to ensure that consumer rights are properly enforced.

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