



**BEUC**

The European  
Consumer  
Organisation

The Consumer Voice in Europe

# Limitations of self-regulation: the case of the EU Pledge

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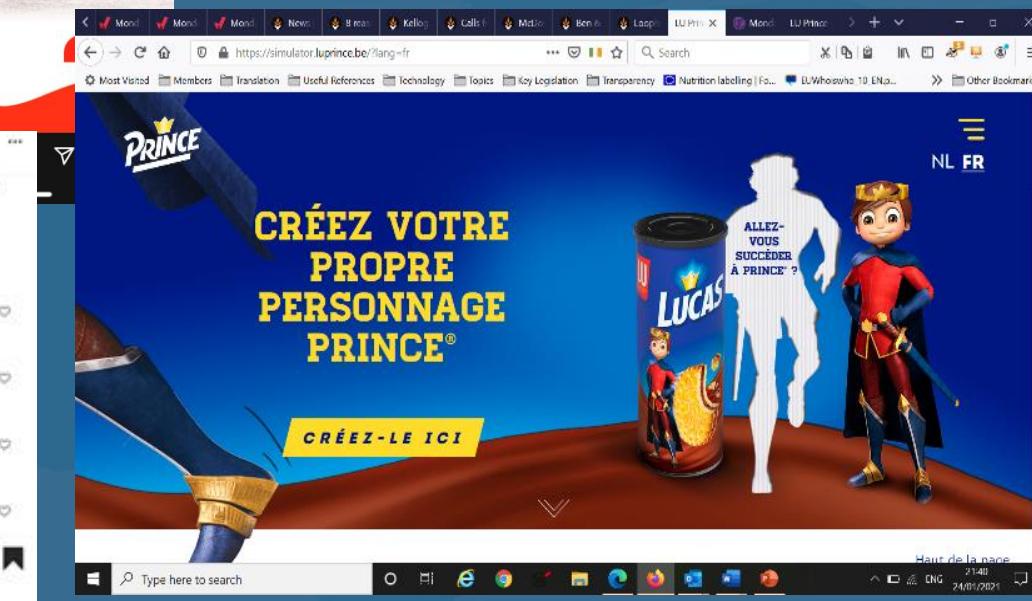
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Towards a childhood free from unhealthy food marketing - exploring the next frontier for European action

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A KID



# OUR SNAPSHOT



# SELF REGULATION AT EU LEVEL

- The EU Pledge
- Since 2007
- Accountability mechanism since 2018

The EU Pledge graphic features the European Union flag with five blue stars in the top right corner. Below the stars, the words "EU PLEDGE" are written in a bold, sans-serif font. The central graphic is a circular map of Europe, where each country is represented by a cluster of bubbles in shades of blue and grey. Surrounding this map are logos of 23 leading food and beverage companies, including Unilever, Amica Chips, Arla, bel, Burger King, Danone, The Coca-Cola Company, Ferrero, General Mills, Intersnack, Kellogg's, Kims, Lorenz, Lindt & Sprüngli, McDonald's, Mars, Nestlé, mom group, Mondelēz International, PepsiCo, San Carlo, and Unilever. At the bottom, a text box states: "Companies representing over 80% of food ad spend in the EU".

# OUR ACTION

**81 complaints submitted to the EU Pledge Accountability Mechanism**

- 7 withdrawn by companies
- 8 upheld (3 only after appeal)
- 66 unaffected

# THE FLAWS OF THE EU PLEDGE

- Nutritional criteria are too weak
- Commitments only affect children's TV programmes
- Commitments too weak to address the ecosystem of digital marketing
- No commitments for food packaging
- 13-18 years old not protected
- Loophole for 'brand marketing'

# INADEQUATE ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM

- Complaint process is **too slow**
- **Minimal consequences** for the infringing companies
- Lack of transparency
- Panel decisions favour companies on **very weak** grounds
- **Inconsistent** panel decisions

# CONCLUSIONS

- **Self-regulation fails** to prevent the marketing of unhealthy foods to children
- **Binding EU rules** are necessary to adequately protect children from the exposure to nutritionally poor food marketing
- Full report accessible via <https://bit.ly/BeucFoodAds>

