

TACD

TRANS ATLANTIC
CONSUMER DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE TRANSATLANTIQUE
DES CONSOMMATEURS

DOC No. ECOM-13-00

DATE ISSUED: FEBRUARY, 2000

ELECTRONIC COMMERCE AND CHILDREN

(see Document Ecom-2-99)

The TACD has already adopted a resolution on children and electronic commerce (e-commerce). Marketing to children on the Internet (and other digital media) is advancing at a very fast pace, with new and more sophisticated practices emerging almost daily. Many of these developments are taking place in the US, but are likely to have far reaching impacts on online media in Europe and elsewhere. One of the recent and potentially troubling developments is the proliferation of children's websites (and other forms of digital media) which are designed to facilitate direct sales to children.

In many of these websites, "content," interactive advertising and direct selling opportunities are integrated. This is an unprecedented form of children's media marketing, which raises serious concerns about the possibility of deception and manipulation. A long tradition of research has documented that children - especially young children - can be particularly vulnerable to advertising, often unable to distinguish between the content of a television program and a commercial. Recent research on children's responses to online advertising suggests that the blurring of advertising and content that characterizes many commercial websites confuses children aged 9 or older.

Resolved:

The United States and the European Union should develop appropriate and effective policies to govern online marketing and sales transactions targeted at children. Given the rapid development of these practices, the TACD urges governments to adopt such policies as quickly as possible.