

UNESDA commitments for submission to the EU Code of Conduct on responsible business and marketing practices

Overview of UNESDA

UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe is the Brussels-based trade association representing the non-alcoholic beverages sector. The membership of UNESDA comprises 23 national associations across Europe, as well as 9 corporate members.

UNESDA members are involved in the production and/or distribution of a wide variety of non-alcoholic beverages including still drinks, carbonates, fruit drinks, energy drinks, iced teas and sport drinks.

Europe's soft drinks sector is rooted in the European economy and society, employing 1.7 million people throughout its €185 billion value chain, with 424 soft drinks production and bottling plants across the EU and contributing over €22 billion in taxes every year.

Brussels, 5 July 2021 - UNESDA fully supports the overall ambitions of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy to deliver sustainable production and consumption. In this context, our industry welcomes the initiative to draw up an EU Code of Conduct for responsible business and marketing practices, including actions to create a more sustainable food system and reduce the overall environmental footprint in the EU.

The EU Code of Conduct offers a unique opportunity to accelerate Europe's transition to sustainable food systems. The European soft drinks industry, under the umbrella of UNESDA, is strongly supportive of the Code of Conduct and its potential to mobilise the necessary critical mass to substantially enhance the food and drink environment of European consumers.

With a view to making the "healthier choice the easy choice" - a key pillar of the Strategy - UNESDA's principal focus will remain on continuing its long journey of promoting responsible marketing practices, of reformulating for sugar and calorie reduction and of nudging the consumer towards no- and low-calorie soft drinks.

When it comes to the European Commission's key political objective of "accelerating the transition towards a circular economy", UNESDA considers that sustainable business growth is reliant on new approaches to minimise carbon emissions. That is why our sector is taking numerous actions to achieve full circularity of its packaging, investing in recycling and innovation, and continuously increasing the energy efficiency of its operations.

UNESDA hereby wishes to express its intention to submit several commitments, on behalf of its members, that are linked to the following aspirational objectives identified by the Code of Conduct:

- Aspirational objective 1: healthy, balanced and sustainable diets for all European consumers
- Aspirational objective 4: an optimised circular and resource-efficient food chain in Europe

UNESDA will also be responsible for the accompanying monitoring and reporting (as per the requirements set out in the Code of Conduct text) of these commitments.

Our commitments cover two main areas:

Aspirational objective 1: Healthy, balanced and sustainable diets for all European consumers

Health & Nutrition – making the healthier choice the easy choice

SUGAR REDUCTION COMMITMENT	<p>Building on the pioneering efforts of the soft drinks sector in reformulating its drinks and further to its previous sugar reduction commitments, UNESDA now commits to reducing the average added sugars in its beverages by 10% from 2019-2025 across Europe¹.</p> <p>This will represent an overall industry-wide commitment to a reduction of 33% in average added sugars over the past two decades</p>	NEW COMMITMENT
ADVERTISING AND MARKETING COMMITMENT	<p>UNESDA commits not to advertise and market its beverages to children under 13 years across all media² and to lower the audience threshold to 30% so that in practice fewer young children will be directly exposed to advertising for any of its soft drinks.</p>	NEW COMMITMENT
SCHOOLS COMMITMENT	<p>UNESDA commits not to sell its beverages in primary schools and only to sell no- and low- calorie soft drinks in secondary schools (and only in non-branded vending machines). UNESDA will intensify its efforts, working with other third-party distributors, to ensure that its commitments continue to be implemented across the EU.</p>	EXISTING COMMITMENT

¹ It includes the EU27 and the UK.

² We are committed not to market or advertise on TV, radio, in print, in cinemas and online, including social media and other online platforms and sites (company-owned websites and video-sharing platforms such as YouTube). This also includes direct marketing, product placement, interactive games, outdoor marketing, mobile marketing and contracted influencers.

Aspirational objective 4: An optimised circular and resource-efficient food chain

Sustainability – fully circular beverage packaging by 2030

RECYCLE	<p>UNESDA commits to only use packaging that is circular by design and boosting the uptake of rPET.</p> <p>By 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our beverage packaging (plastic, metal, glass) will be 100% recyclable • All our PET bottles will contain a minimum average of 50% rPET <p>By 2030</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All our PET bottles will be made from 100% recycled and/or renewable material if technically and economically feasible – thereby moving away from fossil fuel sources 	NEW COMMITMENT
COLLECT	<p>UNESDA commits to achieve closed-loop collection of beverage packaging: 90% collection of PET bottles, glass bottles and aluminium cans by 2030</p>	NEW COMMITMENT
REDUCE AND REUSE	<p>UNESDA commits to reduce its packaging footprint and increasing the use of refillable packaging.</p> <p>Use more refillable packaging by 2030 compared to 2020 and study the best environmental and economic pathway to increase the use of refillable models</p>	NEW COMMITMENT

The UNESDA commitments follow the principles of “going further” and “materially relevant” to the European soft drinks sector, as requested by the European Commission.

They are a mix of commitments (1) going well beyond existing EU requirements (2) addressing areas not covered by EU legislation (3) enhancing and expanding on previous commitments made.

As such, we are confident that they will significantly contribute to the European Commission’s objective of accelerating the transition to sustainable food systems.

Co-creating an enabling framework is of key importance to ensure targets are reached

While UNESDA makes these commitments on behalf of its members on a voluntary basis, we also want to stress the importance of building an enabling framework to accompany the EU Code of Conduct. The European Commission working with industry on creating enabling, coordinated, coherent and complementary measures will be key in helping achieve the goals of our commitments.

Nicholas Hodac
Director General
UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe