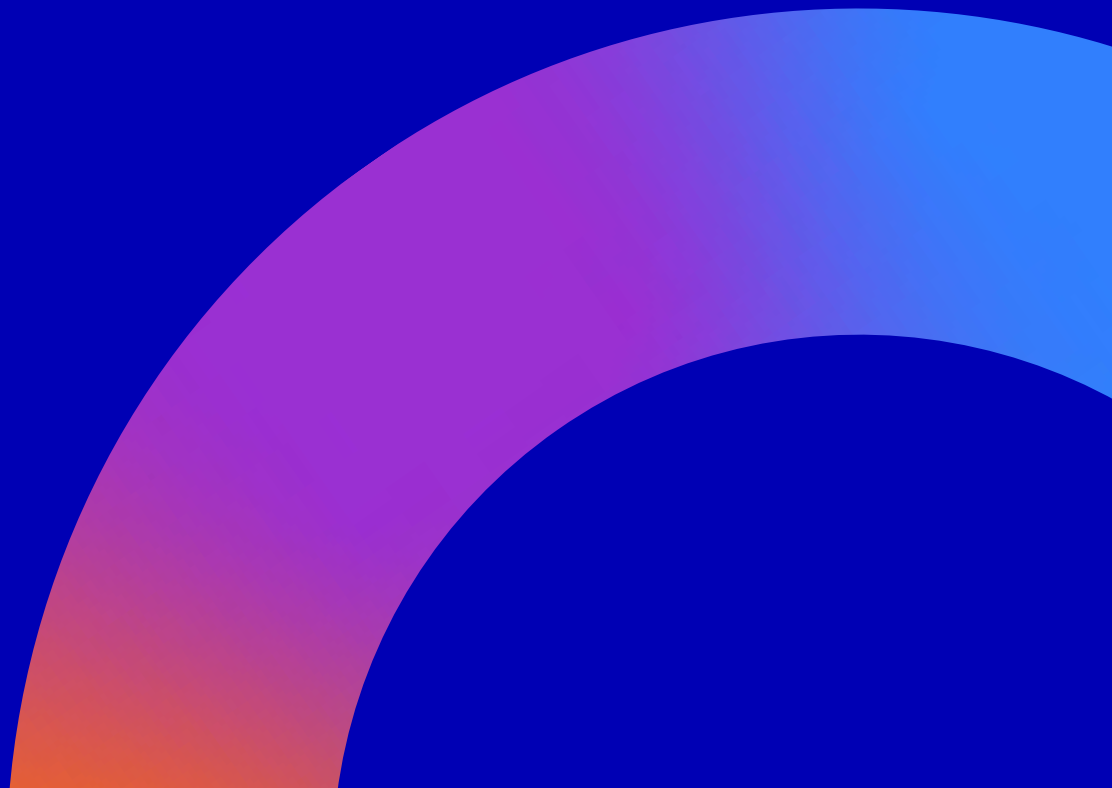


EMPOWERING CONSUMERS FOR THE GREEN TRANSITION

**Practitioner's Guide for
EACA Members**

September 2026



THE EACA MEMBERS EMPOWERING CONSUMERS FOR THE GREEN TRANSITION

Disclaimer

This EACA Practitioner Guide is intended as a practical compliance aid and provides general guidance based on the regulatory framework and information available at the time of publication. It does not constitute, and should not be relied upon as, legal advice.

Regulatory requirements and their interpretation may vary between jurisdictions and change over time. Users should therefore always check the latest applicable rules and, where appropriate, seek independent legal advice.

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Note: This is a living document.

Please always consult the latest version available on the EACA website.

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DIRECTIVE (EU) 2024/825 ON EMPOWERING CONSUMERS FOR THE GREEN TRANSITION

This guide provides a practical overview of the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (“ECGT”) and its implications for **advertisers, agencies, brands** and **marketing teams**. It explains the new rules on environmental claims, sustainability labels, and greenwashing, and outlines practical steps to reduce compliance risk across all consumer-facing communications.

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Introduction

The **Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (ECGT)** – Directive (EU) 2024/825 strengthens EU consumer protection rules to ensure that consumers receive **clear, reliable** and **verifiable information** when making more sustainable choices. Rather than creating a standalone green advertising law, **ECGT updates two existing consumer protection frameworks**:

1. Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD)

- strengthens rules against **misleading environmental claims, unclear sustainability information** and **unreliable labels** (additions in particular in Article 6 and 7).

2. Consumer Rights Directive (CRD)

- introduces improved consumer information requirements around **durability, reparability** and **guarantees**.



Why does it matter?

From **27 September 2026**, sustainability-related consumer communication will face **higher expectations** around clarity, evidence, transparency, substantiation, and credibility. The Directive affects sustainability messages **across consumer touchpoints**, including:

Advertising
Campaigns

Websites &
Landing Pages

Social Media

Product Packaging

Product Pages &
e-commerce

Point-of-Sale
Communication

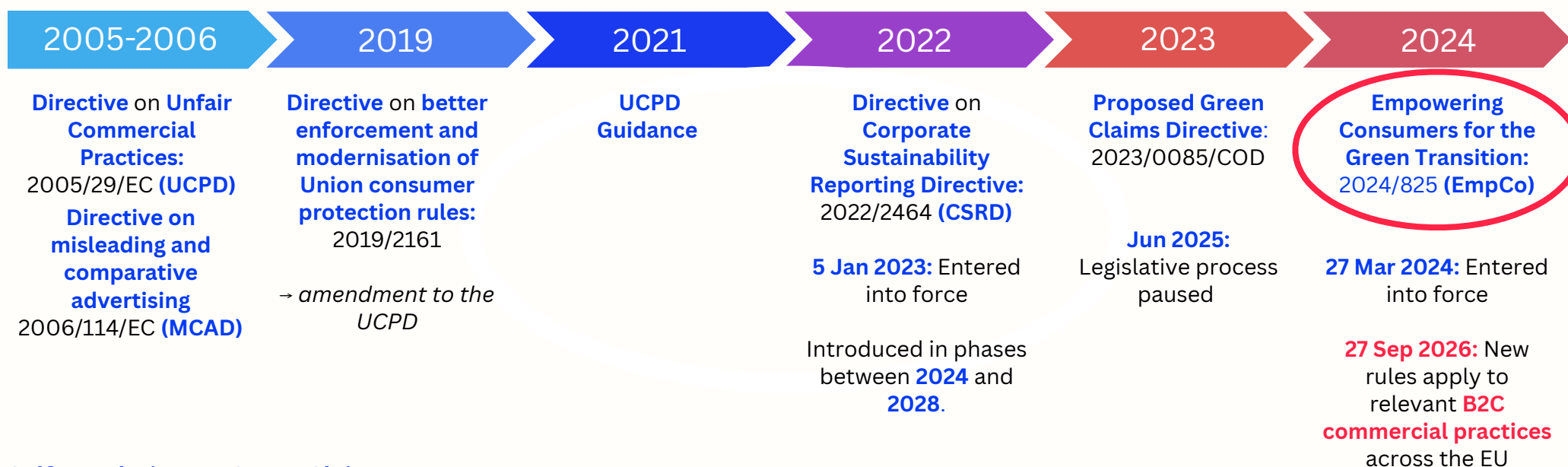
What to keep in mind

Corporate **sustainability reports** (e.g. CSRD or ESG reporting) are generally outside the scope of the Directive **when intended for investors** or **regulatory reporting**.

However, where sustainability information from those reports is **reused** in **consumer-facing marketing** or **advertising**, it may fall within the ECGT rules.

The Evolving EU Sustainability Rulebook

Launch of the
*European
Green Deal*



Self Regulation on Green Claims

- ICC's **Advertising and Marketing Communications Code** (Chapter D) includes provisions on environmental claims.
- **Global Guidance:** EASA and ICAS, commissioned by WFA, developed **global principles** to ensure that environmental claims are credible, backed by evidence, and can withstand challenges.

Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive/ EACA Practitioner's Guide

What counts as an “Environmental Claim”?

The definition of an **environmental claim** covers both **explicit** and **implicit** messages.

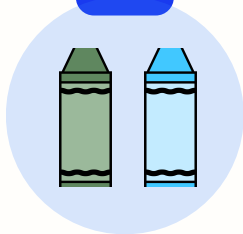
A claim may be conveyed **not only through words**, but also through the **overall presentation** of a product or advertisement, including:

1



Images & Symbols

2



Colors (e.g. green or blue)

3



Labels, Brands or
Product Names

4



Design & Layout

What to keep in mind

Whether an **implicit claim** is **misleading** is assessed **case-by-case**, based on the **overall commercial context** and the likely **perception** of the **average consumer**.

High Risk Areas: #1 Generic Environmental Claims

Generic environmental claims can create the impression of broad environmental benefits without explaining **what is actually better**.

Examples of high-risk claims:

- ✗ “eco-friendly”
- ✗ “green”
- ✗ “nature’s friend”
- ✗ “climate friendly”
- ✗ “energy efficient”

✗ **DON'T:** “Our product is *environmentally friendly*”

✓ **DO:** “The packaging contains **80% recycled cardboard**.”

- specific environmental benefit
- measurable
- easier to substantiate

Under ECGT, generic environmental claims are prohibited unless they are based on **recognised excellent environmental performance** relevant to the claim. Where the environmental benefit is clearly and prominently specified on the same communication medium, the claim is not considered generic.

Recognised excellent **environmental performance** can be shown by:

- **EU Ecolabel**
- Compliance with Regulation **(EC) No 66/2010**, or **top performance** by other **applicable EU laws**
- Compliance with **EN ISO 14024 ecolabelling schemes**

Additional prohibitions to keep in mind

1. Whole-product / Whole-business claims:

Don't imply that an entire product is made from recycled material if only its packaging is.

2. Presenting a legal requirement as a special environmental benefit

For example, “Free from X” cannot be promoted as a distinctive environmental benefit if X is already legally prohibited for every product in that category.

High Risk Areas: #2 Climate Neutrality & Carbon Claims

The Directive prohibits claims that a product has a **reduced**, **neutral**, or **positive climate impact** when based on **CO₂ offsetting outside the product's value chain**.

Examples of high-risk claims:

- ✗ “climate neutral”
- ✗ “carbon positive”
- ✗ “limited CO₂ footprint”
- ✗ “climate compensated”
- ✗ “climate net zero”

*When based on carbon offsetting.

✗ **DON'T:** “This product is climate neutral thanks to certified carbon offsets.”

✓ **DO:** “We support certified climate projects alongside measures to reduce our own emissions.”



Recommendation – Focus on actions, not neutrality.

- Communicate **specific, substantiated emission reductions** and **concrete climate actions**.
- Describe **climate projects separately** from the product's own climate impact.
- Avoid suggesting that carbon offsets **neutralise or reduce the product's emissions**

High Risk Areas: #3 Future Sustainability Claims

Future environmental claims require more than a long-term ambition. They must be supported by **clear**, **objective** and **verifiable commitments** showing how the company will achieve its goals.

Examples of high-risk claims:

- ✗ “We will be climate neutral by 2035”
- ✗ “The sustainable future starts today”
- ✗ “We are becoming a fully circular company”

(unless supported by the required evidence and plan)

Future claims require:

- publicly available commitments and targets
- measurable and time-bound goals
- a detailed and realistic implementation plan
- allocated resources to deliver the plan
- regular monitoring of progress

Independent third-party verification

The implementation plan and progress must be verified by an **independent expert** who:

- has relevant environmental expertise
- is independent from the company
- has no conflicts of interest
- can regularly assess progress against milestones



Note: The findings of this verification must be accessible to consumers.

High Risk Areas: #4 Sustainability Labels & Certification

Consumers increasingly rely on sustainability labels. ECGT restricts labels that are **not transparent**, **credible** or **independently verified**.

Avoid:

- ✗ Internal labels without independent assessment
- ✗ Labels without transparent criteria



A **sustainability label** must be:

- Established by a **public authority**, or
- Based on a qualifying **certification scheme**

A **credible certification scheme** requires:

- **Publicly available** requirements
- **Transparent, fair** and **non-discriminatory access**
- Requirements developed **in consultation** with relevant **experts** and **stakeholders**
- **Independent third-party monitoring** of compliance

→ The verifier's competence and independence must be based on recognised international, EU or national standards and procedures (e.g. **ISO 17065**)



Note: Before using a label – Check the scheme's publicly available terms and confirm that it meets the required certification criteria.

Enforcement & Penalties

EmpCo **does not create a separate sanctions regime** – infringements are enforced through the existing **UCPD and Consumer Rights Directive (CRD)** frameworks and national law.

Member States must provide penalties that are **effective, proportionate** and **dissuasive**.

For certain **widespread cross-border / EU-wide infringements** subject to coordinated enforcement under the **CPC Regulation**:

- **EU law requires the national maximum fine available to be no lower than 4% of the trader's annual turnover** in the Member State(s) concerned.
- Where annual turnover information is unavailable, the maximum fine must be **at least €2 million**.



Note: The 4% is not an automatic fine – the actual penalty may be lower and is determined according to the circumstances of the infringement. For **ordinary domestic infringements**, the penalties available depend on the **relevant national enforcement regime**.

What to keep in mind

For agencies: responsibility may arise where they qualify as traders and/or **actively contribute to the creation or presentation of a claim**.

“PROXIMITY TO THE CLAIM” MATTERS – Responsibility is assessed **case by case** based on each actor's role. Advertisers cannot avoid responsibility simply by outsourcing a claim. Agencies and other actors may also be responsible where they **actively contribute to creating or presenting it**, while merely carrying or technically disseminating third-party advertising does not automatically entail responsibility.

ECGT Compliance Checklist for Agencies

Before 27 September 2026

- 1 | CONFIRM IT IS B2C COMMUNICATION**
Consumer-facing advertising or marketing that could influence a purchase; assess **content**, **purpose** and **intended audience**.
- 2 | REVIEW CAMPAIGNS THAT REMAIN LIVE ON OR AFTER 27 SEPTEMBER**
Including digital, social, influencer content, packaging and POS.
- 3 | MAKE ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS SPECIFIC AND ACCURATE**
Avoid unsupported generic “green” claims and **don't overstate the actual benefit**.
- 4 | SUBSTANTIATE BEFORE YOU COMMUNICATE**
Evidence must support the **exact claim**; scrutinise labels, carbon claims, future targets and comparisons.
- 5 | CLARIFY RESPONSIBILITY AND KEEP RECORDS**
Document client evidence, agency input and approvals, particularly given the Commission's “**proximity to the claim**” approach.
- 6 | BUILD ECGT INTO CAMPAIGN SIGN-OFF**
Identify and escalate **higher-risk environmental claims before launch**.



Key message

If it will still be **live** on 27 September, review it now.

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Any questions?
Please don't hesitate to contact



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