



FINNISH NATIONAL BOARD  
OF EDUCATION



**Cooperation between schools  
and businesses including  
marketing and sponsorship**

**Memo August 30, 2004**

## Contents

1	Why is cooperation needed between schools and businesses?	3
2	Children's and young people's special position in the Consumer Protection Act	5
3	Consumer protection in schools	7
3.1	Commercial materials	7
3.2	Commercial sports services	7
3.3	Use of media	7
3.4	Sales to pupils and students	8
3.5	Drink and candy machines	8
3.6	School photos	8
3.7	Distributing ads and product samples to pupils and students	8
3.8	Contests and event marketing	9
3.9	Collecting funds	9
4	Sponsorship	10
5	Cooperation with guardians	12
6	Additional information	13
Appendix		
Terms		14

## 1 Why is cooperation needed between schools and businesses?

**T**HE NATIONAL core curriculum encourages schools to engage in cooperation with businesses as part of normal school work and studies. Forms of cooperation can include visits to businesses, visits by representatives of businesses or entrepreneurs to schools, joint projects, events, final projects and adopted class activities. Businesses serve as learning environments for pupils and students during workplace orientation, on-the-job learning and demonstrations of professional skills, for example.

Education in business skills and entrepreneurship is a focus in the core curriculum for all forms of education. This means broad attitude and skill education for internal entrepreneurship, which is expressed in many ways through general and vocational education. The goal is to help pupils develop into independent citizens who know how to take the initiative and cooperate and who have a realistic picture of their own options and possibilities to influence matters. In addition to internal entrepreneurship skills the goal is to create a basis for enterprising ways of acting and in later stages of education for entrepreneurship as a career. One of the goals of vocational basic education is the ability to operate as an independent tradesperson.

Consumer education and consumer expertise consist of six elements:

- private economy
- consumers' rights and responsibilities
- consumption, the environment and ethics
- commercial influence
- food
- safety.

The contents of consumer education and consumer expertise are dealt with in many subjects and studies and are connected to the following, among other things:

- entrepreneurship education
- media education
- health education
- economics education
- environmental education
- citizenship through education.

In dealing with commercial influence the goal is for pupils and students to be aware of the objectives and principles of advertising and to be able to analyse and interpret commercial messages critically. It is important for them to learn about the role of advertising and the media in society and to understand the difference between information and advertising. It is also important for pupils and students to know that advertising is subject to laws and other regulations and to be able to find information concerning these.

The information and skills that are taught in consumer education are important for managing personal finances, adopting a sustainable lifestyle and acting as a citizen. Consumer information is needed by consumers as well as businesses and their employees. This is the best way to ensure effective consumer protection.

For vocational institutions cooperation with businesses is an essential part of the development of education. The curricula of the providers of education are prepared with input from the working world and businesses so that education will meet the demands of working life as well as possible. On-the-job learning is planned by a representative of the business together with the student and the teacher. The representative helps the student follow the rules of working life and established procedures. The teacher is responsible for seeing that activities conform with educational objectives. School rules apply to students during on-the-job learning as well.

The same principles also apply to workplace orientation in the institutions of basic education and general upper secondary school.

In cooperation with businesses the individual teacher is often the person who lays down rules as the representative of the school. School heads and teachers should be aware of regulations concerning marketing and sponsorship, among other things.

## 2 Children's and young people's special position in the Consumer Protection Act

**T**HIS SECTION presents principles in the Consumer Protection Act concerning the position of persons under the age of 18. These must be taken into consideration in all work involving children and young people. The following section deals with their application to practical work in schools.

Minors, or children and young people under the age of 18, are accorded a special position in the Consumer Protection Act. Advertising aimed at minors is subject to stricter evaluation than other advertising because minors can be considered more impressionable as a result of their limited knowledge and life experience.

Parents have the right to decide what kind of marketing their children are exposed to. Parents have the right to decide on family purchases without having to worry that advertisers will appeal directly to children or young people in an attempt to bypass them. Advertising may not question parents' decision-making authority or mislead children or young people concerning what they are authorized to do. Advertising may not contain direct appeals to children or young people to buy products or to persuade their parents to buy product supplied by a sponsor or other advertiser.

Schools are responsible for ensuring children and young people an encouraging learning environment and an opportunity for balanced development. In any cooperation with businesses they should not act as a marketing channel but as educators and distributors of impartial information. It is hard for minors to understand the commercial nature of advertising, and marketing materials distributed by teachers or other authority figures can easily receive special weight in pupils' or students' eyes. Parents have the right to decide what kind of marketing their children are exposed to. Consequently marketing materials such as advertisements, product samples or promotional gifts may not be distributed in schools without parents' consent. Marketing materials include free publications that are financed mainly with advertising revenues or include advertising.

A children's magazine was marketed by getting teachers working in institutions of basic education to distribute a sample issue and an order form to pupils. Teachers send guardians different types of notes regarding school and pupils return these to the teacher with their parent's signature. If the same procedure is used in commercial marketing there is a danger that the guardian will not understand the commercial nature of the procedure. The Market Court ruled that this procedure was not in compliance with good practice. (MC 1981:9)

An advertising agency and a registered association distributed a magazine with a commercial purpose to schools and asked teachers to hand out copies

or make them freely available to pupils. The magazine contained articles about events and products of interest to children and young people. The Market Court ruled that this was not in compliance with good practice and prohibited the distribution of advertising materials directly to minors through schools without making sure that parents have given their consent. (MC 2000:12)

The commercial purpose of marketing must always be clear and advertising must be easily identifiable as such. Surreptitious advertising is not permissible. Teachers should make sure that advertising is kept separate from teaching and other materials that are distributed to children and young people. Advertising is not as easy to recognize if it is dressed in the form of an assignment, contest, story or comic strip.

A magazine aimed at children and young people consisted entirely of advertising dressed in the form of articles. The Market Court ruled that this type of marketing was not permissible since the magazine was aimed primarily at children and young people and the danger that the target group would not recognize its commercial nature was greater than usual. (MC 2000:12)

Children's colouring books depicting local firms and specific products in pictures and containing advertising slogans and corporate logos were distributed directly to children at day-care centres. The Consumer Ombudsman intervened on the grounds that marketing materials were being distributed through day-care centres without obtaining parents' consent. The Consumer Ombudsman also objected to the use of surreptitious advertising in the colouring books. (CO 2001/40/0602)

### 3 Consumer protection in schools

**T**EACHERS OFTEN need to use current materials. These can be commercial materials supplied by businesses or materials produced by different organizations. This section deals with principles concerning the use of commercial materials mainly in the light of the Consumer Protection Act. The same principles apply to materials produced by other organizations. The text also deals with the use of commercial services. Schools should always evaluate the suitability of materials and services from the viewpoint of educational goals.

#### 3.1 Commercial materials

**I**f commercial materials are used in instruction, teachers should inform pupils and students that materials have a commercial purpose and explain who produced them, how marketing is visible in them and what objectives marketing is meant to achieve. Distinguishing advertising materials from other materials may be difficult for pupils and students. Teachers should guide pupils and students to use different types of materials in a critical and open way. Evaluating materials is part of media, consumer and entrepreneurship education

#### 3.2 Commercial sports services

**S**ports are a personal thing. It is important for physical education to give pupils and students a broad picture of sporting activities. This can include finding out about commercial sports services and also using them. Teachers should make sure that they give a broad picture of services and that pupils and students have equal opportunities to participate in activities.

If a school uses commercial sports services in instruction and guardians are expected to participate in covering costs (for instance on trips to sports or ski centres), the school must offer alternatives that are free or financed by the school to those who need them.

#### 3.3 Use of media

**T**he media are important sources of information. Media materials can create ostensible needs and unrealistic images. Schools should teach the difference between information, advertising and entertainment. The goal is for pupils and students to be able to evaluate claims in the media critically and consider their ethical and esthetic values in communications. Instruction should also deal with the relation between the world portrayed

in the media and the real world, the critical evaluation of sources and ethical issues regarding online information.

### 3.4 Sales to pupils and students

**M**inors cannot make purchases on credit and need their parents' written consent before ordering class rings, T-shirts or other products.

### 3.5 Drink and candy machines

**D**rink and candy machines can act as advertising in themselves. According to the Consumer Protection Act, parents have the right to decide what kind of marketing their children are exposed to, up to the age of 18. When schools consider allowing drink and candy machines, it is important to hold a discussion on the matter and give parents a chance to express their views. Schools should also pay attention to the products sold in machines from the viewpoint of health and economic education, for example.

### 3.6 School photos

**T**he Consumer Ombudsman has issued separate guidelines concerning school photos and these are available on the Consumer Agency's website. Parents should be informed in advance of the date on which school photos will be taken, the photo assortment, prices and the right to return photos. Parents are not required to purchase photos but can return them on the basis of the provisions in the Consumer Protection Act concerning distance selling.

### 3.7 Distributing ads and product samples to pupils and students

**D**irect advertising may not be sent to children under the age of 15 without their parents' consent. Direct marketing aimed at people between the ages of 15 and 17 should also be treated very cautiously. Parents' consent is required to distribute all types of marketing materials such as advertising, magazines containing advertising, product samples and business gifts.

It should be noted that distributing materials to pupils and students is not the same as using materials in instruction. The use of materials in instruction does not require parents' consent and teachers are responsible for how they use materials (see 3.1).

### 3.8 Contests and event marketing

If pupils and students participate in promotional contests or occasions where event marketing takes place, this must be clearly explained to them. Minors must obtain their parents' consent to participate.

### 3.9 Collecting funds

Pupils and students (and also parents) may collect funds for a class camp or trip. Minors under the age of 15 must have their parents' consent to sell business products. If minors sell products supplied by a single company, discussion concerning the company's products should follow the same principles that apply to the use of commercial materials.

## 4 Sponsorship

**S**CHOOL SPONSORSHIP is a form of marketing that is based on an agreement between the sponsor and the school. If a company finances, aids or guarantees a school project, this constitutes sponsorship. A sponsor is entitled to have his logo displayed in connection with the project. The sponsor should not influence the objectives or content of the project.

All the sponsor receives in return is visibility for his logo. The sponsor may also be mentioned in external marketing in a way that supports the school project. Any other form of activity is marketing and must be evaluated accordingly. A sponsor is not allowed to display pictures of products or ads or encouragements to buy the sponsor's products, for example.

Displaying the sponsor's logo is important for recognizability. This tells pupils and students that the project is sponsored and who is behind it. It is also important to provide information on a sponsor's role and significance in a project and why the sponsor wants to support the project.

Schools should tell parents in advance about sponsored projects and the content of commercial cooperation. Parents also need to know about a sponsor's role and significance in a project. Parents should preferably be given an opportunity to express their views before a school decides to undertake a sponsored project.

Sponsored projects and projects that contain other forms of marketing are more likely to succeed if schools, companies or other organizations and homes work together to plan them, in which case parents' opinions are also taken into consideration. Discussion with homes is also important in entrepreneurship education, adopted class activities and projects connected to working life.

Sponsorship and other commercial cooperation should not obscure the financial basis of education, which is public funding, and should not lead to overdependence on other sources of support.

The terms and forms of sponsorship and other commercial cooperation should not be in conflict with schools' educational tasks. In planning activities teachers should give special thought to health, consumer, environmental, legality and communications education as well as pupils' welfare.

In evaluating the suitability of sponsors, schools should pay attention to sponsors' public image as well as their field of activities and entire product range. Some companies (for example suppliers of tobacco and alcohol) and organizations (for example political parties) are not suitable sponsors for

schools. Exceptions may be made in vocational education, for example in the food or hotel and restaurant fields, if these are directly related to such activities.

All companies and organizations that are interested in becoming sponsors and are suitable as sponsors should be given equal opportunities. The fact that a member of the school board or parents' association works for a particular company or represents a particular organization, for instance, should not result in special treatment.

Attention should be paid to maintaining a school's good public image in sponsorship cooperation. Cooperation should be arranged so that if necessary, for example if problems arise, it can easily be discontinued. Sponsorship should always be subject to a written agreement.

Sponsorship should be kept clearly separate from other financial arrangements between schools and companies or organizations (for example procurements).

## 5 Cooperation with guardians

**L**EGISLATION CONCERNING basic education, general upper secondary education and vocational education requires schools to cooperate with homes. A key goal of cooperation is to support pupils' and students' learning and growth. The core curriculum also emphasizes the importance of cooperation with homes, other organizations and businesses in planning and providing instruction. The significance of cooperation with homes is underlined in entrepreneurship and consumer education as well as cooperation with businesses. These areas include matters in which parents definitely have a right to influence how things are done.

It is important for schools to tell homes in good time and in a clear way about cooperation with businesses, including objectives and practical arrangements. If necessary discussions can also be conducted regarding rules and guardians' consent should be obtained before commercial materials are distributed to pupils and students, for example.

Schools should preferably plan cooperation with businesses in cooperation with homes.

## 6 Additional information

**M**ARKETING RULES are based on the Consumer Protection Act (38/1978). The Consumer Ombudsman has issued supplementary guidelines on the following:

- Minors, marketing and purchases (17.6.2004)
- Sponsorship and other marketing at schools
- Taking photos at schools and day-care centres.

The Consumer Agency's task is to support consumer education in schools. The Consumer Agency's website ([www.kuluttajavirasto.fi](http://www.kuluttajavirasto.fi)) includes special pages for teachers. The Consumer Agency also produces teaching materials and these are available online. The Consumer Ombudsman's guidelines and other materials are also on the website. Printed versions can be ordered by e-mailing

[posti@kuluttajavirasto.fi](mailto:posti@kuluttajavirasto.fi) or  
from the Consumer Agency, Box 5, FI-00531 Helsinki,  
tel. +358 9 7726 7571,  
fax +358 9 7726 7557.

If there is any question about the quality of available or offered materials or the nature of an occasion, it is advisable for a school to contact the Consumer Agency in advance.

The National Board of Education's website at [www.edu.fi](http://www.edu.fi) contains special pages on entrepreneurship. The materials on these pages are designed to help teachers and other people who arrange education in planning and practical work. Materials are grouped according to school level and type of studies. Users are invited to participate in developing the pages by describing good practices and contributing ideas.

Contact persons at the Finnish National Board of Education:

Counsellor Ulla Vanttaja, legal advice,

tel. +358 9 7747 7315, [ulla.vanttaja@oph.fi](mailto:ulla.vanttaja@oph.fi).

Senior Inspector Marjaana Manninen, consumer education,

tel. +358 9 7747 7265, [marjaana.manninen@oph.fi](mailto:marjaana.manninen@oph.fi)

Senior Inspector Hannele Louekoski, entrepreneurship education,

tel. +358 9 7747 7150, [hannele.louekoski@oph.fi](mailto:hannele.louekoski@oph.fi)

Counsellor Krisse Hannén, Swedish-language instruction,

tel. +358 9 7747 7313, [krisse.hannen@oph.fi](mailto:krisse.hannen@oph.fi)

Senior Inspector Meri Kaila-Sayeed, vocational education,

tel. +358 9 7747 7813, [meri.kaila-sayeed@oph.fi](mailto:meri.kaila-sayeed@oph.fi).

## Appendix

### Terms

**Marketing** is a broad term that includes all commercial communications aimed at promoting the sale of goods or services.

**Advertising** is a marketing tool. Its purpose is to publicize a company and its products and services, improve the company's image and sell products and services. Channels include the mass media, direct contacts, direct advertising, customer letters and information networks.

**Direct marketing** involves aiming advertising at a specific group for example with personally addressed mailings.

**Marketing materials** include all materials intended to promote sales of goods or services, such as ads, publications, product samples, business gifts and free papers, which are financed mainly with advertising or contain advertising.

A **marketing occasion** is a commercial occasion intended to publicize a company and promote the sale of goods or services supplied by the company.

**Marketing communications** involves measures designed to attract attention, stimulate interest and encourage people to make purchasing decisions.

**Surreptitious advertising** is advertising whose commercial nature is not clearly identifiable as such. A cartoon may fit this definition, for instance. Requirements are stricter if advertising is aimed at children and young people.

**School sponsorship** is a form of marketing in which a company finances, aids or guarantees a school project. The company's goal is to build a positive public image.

A **sponsorship agreement** is an agreement between a sponsor and a school concerning the content and terms of cooperation.