

COMPLAINT REPORT 2020

The 2020 ÖWR Annual Complaints Report presents "stop" decisions, the "top 3" reasons for complaints, advertising media, and 8-year complaint trends, as well as other information.

Vienna March 9, 2021 - A significant decrease in stop decisions is shown by the 2020 complaints report of the Austrian Advertising Council: The advertising councils decided in favor of a stop in 11 cases that were objected to, with significantly more decisions (241) than in the previous years. In comparison, in 2019, a stop decision occurred in 22 cases, for a total of 206 decisions. Sensitivity claims occurred in 8 cases (compared to 2019: 9) and "No reason to intervene" was assessed 51 times (compared to 2019: 50).

"For us, the cutting in half of the stop decisions is a positive signal for the responsible behavior of advertising companies," explains ÖWR President Michael Straberger. The pleasingly high number of advertisement withdrawals (36, compared to 21 in 2019) is also remarkable: "For the Austrian Advertising Council, this is a clear sign of acceptance within the advertising industry as well as of the increasing effectiveness of our system".

"We owe this primarily to our high-level decision-making body, but also to the cooperation with the Austrian media," Straberger is convinced.

In terms of content, the high number of complaints in "ethics and morals" is remarkable: "As before, "gender-discriminatory advertising" is in first place among the reasons for complaints, but only just ahead of "ethics and morals," adds ÖWR Managing Director Andrea Stoidl. "A trend that shows high sensitivity among consumers. Commercial communication is increasingly being perceived more consciously and viewed critically accordingly."

"The vast majority of advertising companies are also fully aware of this fact, and advertising measures are designed accordingly. The task of self-regulation is to expand this breadth and to assume responsibility with all market participants. Only by doing so we will succeed in the long run in continuing to fight the threat of advertising bans in Austria and in cooperation with all European advertising councils at EU level", Straberger continues.

Detailed analysis - Complaint Report 2020

In 2020, more complaints were filed with the Austrian Advertising Council than in the previous year. The **411** (2019: 338) **complaints** submitted led to **241** (cf. 2019: 206) **decisions**.

The biggest upsets were an advertisement by Mömax with 20 complaints, which the advertising councilors decided was "Sensitization", one by Sodastream with 13 complaints, here the panel voted for "No reason to intervene", and an advertisement by the fitness center FitInn with 11 complaints, which was also rated "No reason to intervene".

"These statistics illustrate that not all commercials deemed problematic by consumers actually violate the Code of Ethics of the Austrian Advertising Industry," explains Michael Straberger, "but we do examine every single complaint we receive."

The Austrian Advertising Council demanded the **"immediate stop of the campaign" in 11 cases** (2019:22).

According to the independent decision-making body, the Austrian Advertising Industry's Code of Ethics points "2.1 Gender-discriminatory advertising," "1.1 General advertising principles," "1.2 Ethics and morals" and "2.3 Older people" were violated in the stop decisions made in 2020.

8 times (2019: 9), the decision statements of the Austrian Advertising Council stated **"Sensitization - request to proceed more sensitively in the future when designing advertising measures"**.

In 51 (2019: 50) cases, the advertising councils considered **"No reason to intervene"**.

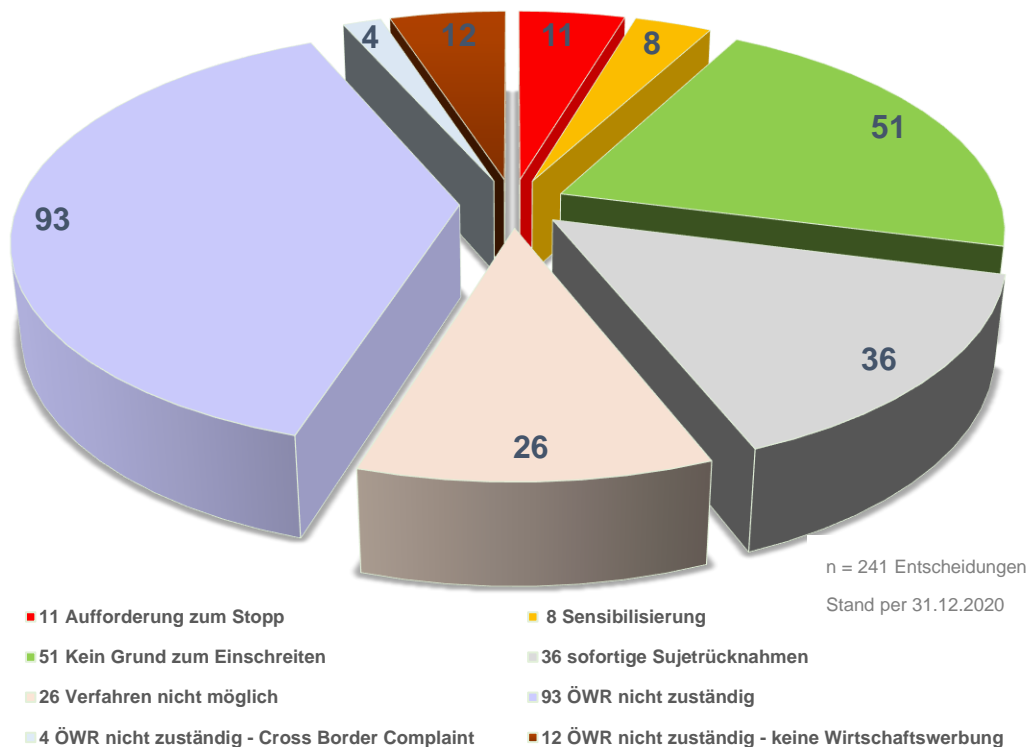
Advertising subject - retractions

As in previous years, the high number of immediate retractions of advertisements by the companies concerned in the case of complaints reflects their understanding and increasing willingness to cooperate with the Austrian Advertising Council. Thus, **36 companies** (compared to 21 in 2019) **immediately withdrew or modified their advertising measures** after first being contacted by the office of the Austrian Advertising Council.

"The transparent and dialog-oriented handling of complaints creates increasing trust," Straberger knows. Because: "We want to act with and for the industry. It's important for us to talk to the advertisers first and seek solutions. This is a task that is not always easy, but the employees at the office perform it with incredible service orientation and persuasiveness, as well as superhuman patience at times".

The Austrian Advertising Council **was declared not in charge in 93 cases**. Depending on the department to which they belonged, these complaints were forwarded to the Association for Unfair Competition, the Consumer Protection Association, the Federal Chamber of Labor or the PR Ethics Council for further processing with the complainants' consent.

ÖWR ENTSCHEIDUNGEN 2020



Since **no commercial advertising** was involved, the ÖWR was unable to act in **12 cases**. **4 cases** were forwarded to the competent institutions abroad, as these were **cross-border complaints**.

No procedure could be carried out in **26 cases** because the required documents and information were not provided by the complainants even after repeated requests.

Increase in complaints during the period of the first Corona-related lockdown (March - May 2020)

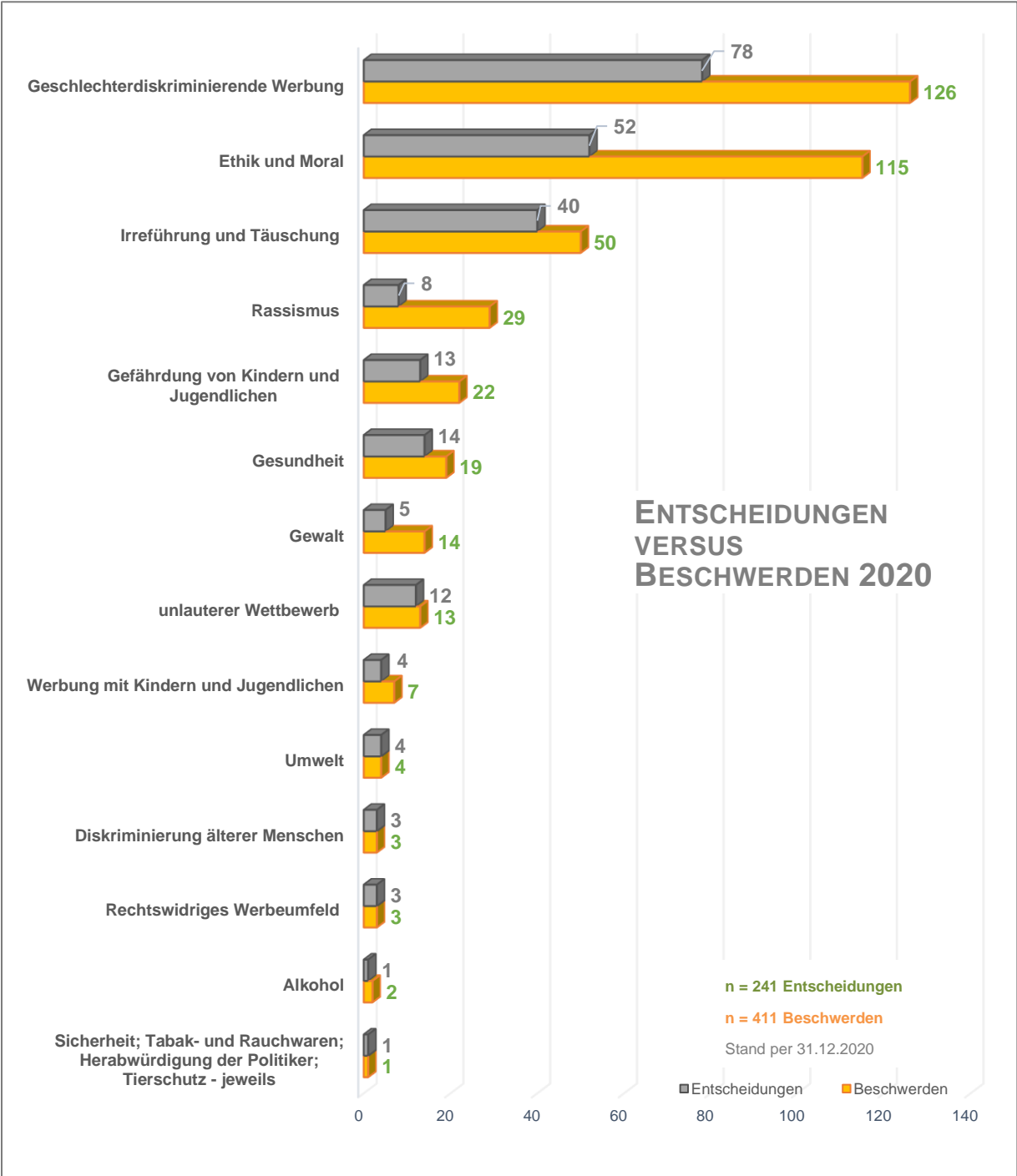
In the period March-May 2020, the Austrian Advertising Council received 102 complaints, which led to 64 decisions. In the same period of the previous year, only 65 complaints were submitted, which led to 39 decisions.

"The increase in complaints during the period of the first lockdown is probably due to an increase in consumers' use of media," explains Michael Straberger, "In addition, the Austrian Advertising Council received several complaints referring to insufficiently sensitive handling of the pandemic. This may also have contributed to an increase in complaints."

However, the significantly higher number of complaints did not result in an increased number of stop decisions. While there were two decisions for Immediate Stop from March to May 2020, there were 5 Stop decisions in the same period last year. Sensitization (1) and No Reason to Intervene (5) decisions were consistent during this period.

Top3 and other complaint reasons

As in previous years, the complaint reason "Gender-discriminatory advertising" leads the ranking with 78 decisions (2019: 76).



Once again, this year, the complaint reason "ethics and morals" ranks in second place with

52 decisions (2019: 44). As in the previous two years, the complaint reason "Misleading and deception" ranks third with 40 decisions (2019: 35).

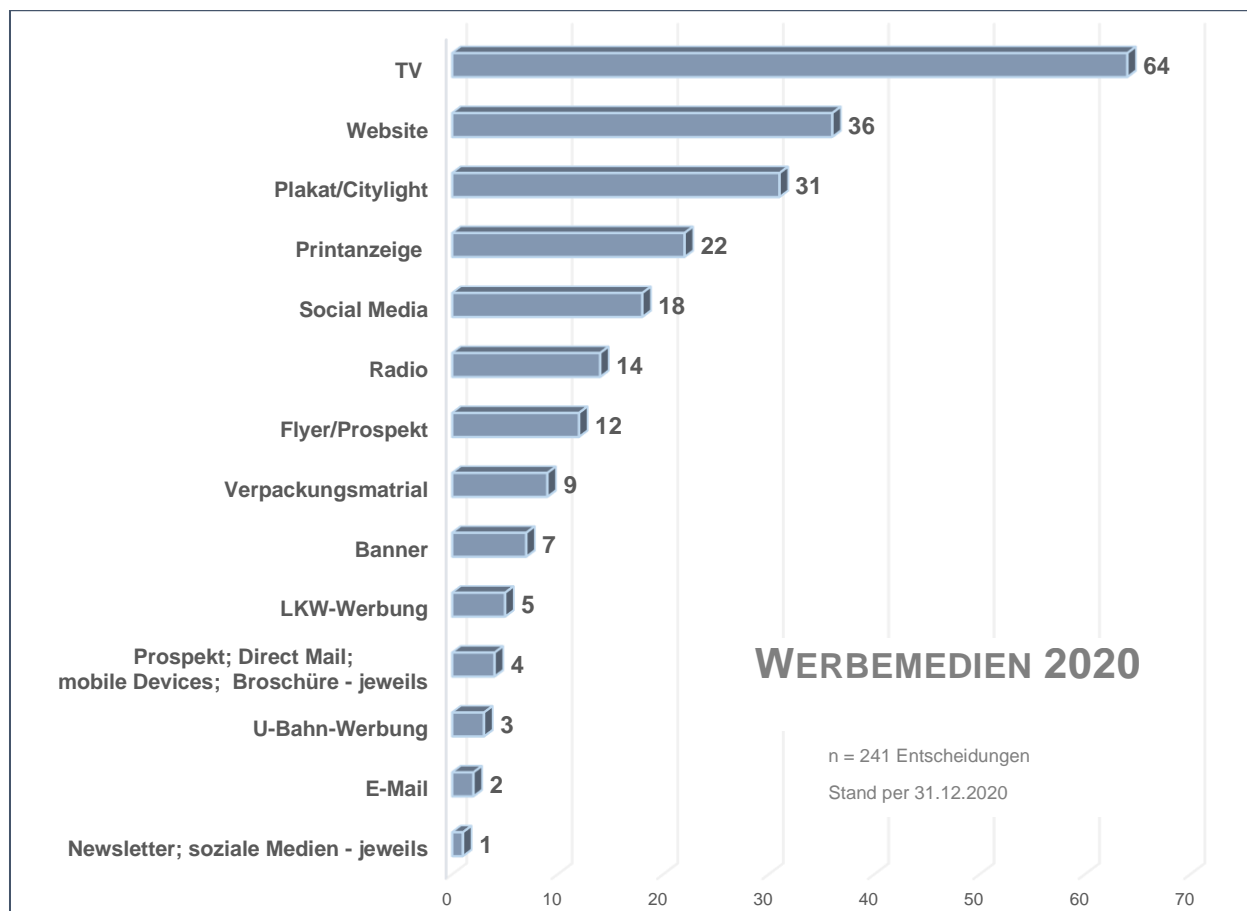
8 decisions were recorded for the reason "racism" (2019: 11), 13 decisions for the reason "endangerment of children and adolescents" (2019: 9), and 14 decisions for the reason "health" (2019: 1). The sharp increase in complaints as well as decisions in the area of "health" can be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Also, decisions regarding "violence" increased to 5 decisions (2019: 1) and those in the area of "unfair competition" increased to 12 decisions (2019: 10).

"Advertising with children and young people" (2019: 3) and "Environment" (2019: 3) each required 4 decisions in 2020. "Discrimination against the elderly" (2019: 1) and "Unlawful advertising environment" (2019: 7) each required 3 decisions. "Alcohol" (2019: 0), "Safety" (2019: 1), "Tobacco and smoking products" (2019: 1), "Disparagement of politicians" (2019: 2), and "Animal welfare" (2019: 0) each required 1 decision in 2020.

Advertising media

Since changes in category selection were made in the advertising media area this year, the respective values cannot be compared to those of the previous year.



This year, "TV spot" took over first place in the media ranking again with 64 decisions. Second place this year goes to "Website", with 36 decisions. The third place is taken by "Poster/Citylight" with 31 decisions.

The "print ad" media recorded 22 decisions, "social media" 18 decisions and "radio" 14 decisions. For "flyer/brochure" 12 decisions, for "packaging material" 9 decisions, and for "banners" 7 decisions. In 2020, there were 5 decisions in the field of "truck advertising," and in the fields of " leaflet," "direct mail," "mobile devices," and "brochure," each 4 decisions.

The last places are taken by the media "subway advertising" with 3 decisions, "e-mail" with 2 decisions and "newsletter" and "social media" with one decision each.

Complaints in 8-year comparison

The annual comparison shows that significantly more complaints were filed in 2020 compared to the previous year and thus more decisions were made. Accordingly, 73 more complaints were entered, resulting in an increased decision total (plus 35) than in the previous year.

	<i>Jahr</i> 2013	<i>Jahr</i> 2014	<i>Jahr</i> 2015	<i>Jahr</i> 2016	<i>Jahr</i> 2017	<i>Jahr</i> 2018	<i>Jahr</i> 2019	<i>Jahr</i> 2020
Eingelangte Beschwerden GESAMT	211	641	248	308	504	316	338	411
Summe der Entscheidungen	145	185	168	181	228	194	206	241

"The public's sensitivity to ethical issues is higher than ever, making a well-functioning system of self-regulation even more important. Complainants know that their concerns are understood and are willing to recognize other points of view," concludes Michael Straberger.

Über den Österreichischen Werberat

Der Österreichische Werberat (ÖWR) ist ein unabhängiges Organ des Vereines „Gesellschaft zur Selbstkontrolle der Werbewirtschaft“. Der ÖWR fördert mittels freiwilliger Selbstbeschränkung der Österreichischen Werbewirtschaft das verantwortungsbewusste Handeln der Werbewirtschaft und ihr Ansehen in der Öffentlichkeit. Die Zuständigkeit des Werberates erstreckt sich auf alle Maßnahmen im Bereich Wirtschaftswerbung. Im Detail hat der ÖWR die Aufgabe Fehlentwicklungen bzw. Missbräuche in der Werbung zu korrigieren und dient damit sowohl den Konsumentinnen und Konsumenten als auch verantwortungsbewussten Werbeunternehmen.

Pressekontakt:

Mag.^a Andrea Stoidl

M: +43 (0) 664 817 9693

E: andrea.stoidl@werberat.at

W: www.werberat.at