European Advertising Standards Alliance

NOVEMBER 2026

EUROPEAN INFLUENCER MARKETING SWEEP 2026

Key Findings and Methodological Considerations

Ad Ethics

KEY FINDINGS

Introduction

The **European Influencer Marketing Sweep 2026** identifies a consistent association between **AdEthics training and transparency in influencer marketing** across nine European markets.

Drawing on **533,620 social media publications from 34,605 creators**, the findings present an encouraging picture of advertising transparency across the entire content creator population, with disclosure more established among creators reaching larger audiences. Results were particularly strong for AdEthics-trained creators across all four audience tiers: **75% of their high-confidence commercial publications contained a detected advertising disclosure**, rising above 80% among Macro and Mega creators.

The results highlight the positive performance associated with AdEthics and provide evidence to support the continued development of Self-Regulatory Organisations-led influencer education and transparency initiatives.

The results also flag the **increasing professionalisation of content creators overall**. Creators are improving their disclosure practices and the still stronger results among AdEthics-trained creators show that self-regulation accelerates this progress and delivers measurable outcomes.

At a Glance

SCOPE

533,620
Publications analysed

34,605
Distinct creators analysed

9
European markets, all running training programmes under the AdEthics framework

3
Platforms: Instagram, TikTok and YouTube Shorts

3 months
Monitoring period: January–March 2026

Markets: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania.

MAIN ADETHICS FINDINGS*

75%
Detected disclosure rate among AdEthics publications

1.7×
AdEthics disclosure rate compared with Non-AdEthics: higher on average

Over 80%
Disclosure among AdEthics Macro and Mega publications

1.8×
Largest relative difference, among Micro creators

Consistency across audience sizes: AdEthics publications show high disclosure rates across all four audience tiers, above Non-AdEthics publications in every tier.

*Disclosure findings refer to 59,043 publications classified as High-Confidence Commercial Evidence. Results describe observed publication-level associations.

KEY FINDINGS

What the Findings Tell Us

First, the Sweep findings point to **greater professionalisation among content creators, with advertising disclosure becoming more established as audiences grow**. Read alongside the findings published by the European Commission and the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network in early 2024, they offer an encouraging perspective on transparency practices, although methodological differences prevent a direct assessment of progress over time.

Most importantly, the findings provide **encouraging evidence of the value of AdEthics** as a Self-Regulatory Organisation-led initiative supported by the advertising sector (Brands, Agencies, Media, Platforms), to strengthen transparency in influencer marketing. While the Sweep does not measure the direct impact of training, the consistency of the results supports the view that **AdEthics plays a meaningful role in helping content creators understand and apply advertising disclosure principles**.

Main Observations

- Influencer marketing transparency appears to be **moving in a positive direction**, although direct comparisons with previous studies remain limited.
- Disclosure practices seem **more established as content creators reach larger audiences**, potentially reflecting greater professionalisation and more time working in the industry.
- The particularly strong difference among Micro content creators (between AdEthics-trained and non-trained) raises the question of whether training plays an **especially important role for creators with less access to specialised guidance.**
- The different commercial-evidence patterns among undisclosed publications between AdEthics-trained and non-trained content creators raise interesting questions about how content creators **recognise commercial content and how they communicate it**. Understanding when a publication is commercial and knowing how to disclose it may be **two distinct challenges**.
- The widespread use of disclosure wording suggests that **textual disclosures remain central** to creators' transparency practices, alongside platform-native tools.

KEY FINDINGS

How the findings can be explained

01

Training can strengthen creators' understanding of disclosure responsibilities.

One plausible explanation for the stronger transparency performance associated with AdEthics is that training **helps creators recognise commercial relationships** and understand when and how advertising should be disclosed. The findings are consistent with this objective, although the influence of training cannot be isolated from other factors.

02

The benefits of training may extend beyond individual disclosure habits.

The positive association across different disclosure methods and creator audience sizes suggests that AdEthics may contribute to broader awareness of transparency responsibilities, rather than simply encouraging creators to adopt a particular disclosure tool or practice.

03

Training may be particularly valuable as creators develop their commercial activities.

As creators develop their commercial activities, they encounter increasingly diverse relationships and disclosure responsibilities. Accessible training can be particularly valuable for those with limited access to specialised legal, agency or brand guidance (i.e. lower audience tier).

04

Undisclosed content highlights opportunities for further education.

The different commercial-evidence patterns identified among publications without detected disclosure suggest that transparency challenges may arise in a variety of situations, including less explicit commercial relationships and promotional activities. Understanding these patterns can help inform the continued development of training and guidance.

THE SWEEP IN NUMBERS

More than half a million publications analysed

533,620

social media publications

Published by 34,605 creators across nine European markets on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube Shorts, monitored from January to March 2026.

34,605
Distinct creators

9
European markets

124,898
Publications from AdEthics-trained creators

408,722
Publications from Non-AdEthics creators

Creators with at least 10,000 followers. Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania.

SECTION ONE

01 Scope and Methodology

PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

To establish the scale and methodological basis of the Sweep.

533,620 Publications analysed	**124,898** AdEthics publications	**408,722** Non-AdEthics publications
34,605 Distinct creators	**9** Countries	**Jan–Mar 2026** Monitoring period

Countries covered: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania.

Platforms monitored: Instagram, TikTok and YouTube Shorts.

The Sweep uses an AI-assisted methodology to identify observable indicators of commercial activity. These indicators are assessed through predefined classification rules that distinguish between different levels of commercial evidence.

Only publications classified as **High-Confidence Commercial Evidence** are included in the disclosure analysis. This conservative approach avoids classifying uncertain or ambiguous promotional content as established commercial advertising, while seeking to identify commercial content wherever sufficient evidence is available.

Key data and claims

- EASA analysed more than half a million publications from over 34,000 creators across nine European markets.
- The methodology enables large-scale analysis of commercial evidence and advertising disclosure practices across different markets and platforms.
- The approach distinguishes between strong commercial evidence and less conclusive promotional signals.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The unit of analysis is the publication, rather than the creator. Individual creators may contribute multiple publications, and some profiles may appear in both populations if they completed AdEthics training during the monitoring period.

The Non-AdEthics population comprises creators who have not completed AdEthics training.

IDENTIFYING COMMERCIAL CONTENT

Only strong commercial evidence enters the disclosure analysis

59,043

high-confidence commercial publications

Out of 533,620 publications analysed, 59,043 met the high-confidence threshold and form the base for measuring disclosure.

17,926
AdEthics publications (14% of their total)

41,117
Non-AdEthics publications (10% of their total)

Low, Residual and No Commercial Evidence publications are excluded from disclosure-rate calculations.

SECTION TWO

02 Identification of Commercial Content

PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

To determine the strength of commercial evidence detected across publications and establish the population used for measuring disclosure.

The Sweep aims to **identify as much commercial content as possible while maintaining a robust evidence threshold**. Its classification considers a range of indicators, including brand relationships, monetisation mechanisms and converging promotional signals, rather than relying solely on explicit advertising labels. At the same time, not every brand mention or recommendation is advertising. Only publications with sufficiently strong commercial evidence enter the disclosure analysis, balancing broad detection with reliable classification and recognising that insufficient evidence does not prove content is non-commercial.

CLASSIFICATION	ADETHICS	NON-ADETHICS
High-Confidence Commercial Evidence	**17,926 (14%)**	**41,117 (10%)**
Low Commercial Evidence	8,920 (7%)	38,572 (9%)
Residual Commercial Evidence	39,557 (32%)	129,596 (32%)
No Commercial Evidence	58,495 (47%)	199,437 (49%)
Total publications	**124,898**	**408,722**

How to interpret the classifications

High-confidence	Sufficient evidence detected to support classification as commercial content.
Low	Some indications of commercial activity were identified, but the evidence was not sufficient to classify the content as commercial.
Residual	Isolated, weak or ambiguous commercial indicators were identified.
No commercial evidence	No indicators of commercial activity were detected.

Key findings and claims

- **59,043** publications were classified as High-Confidence Commercial Evidence: 17,926 from AdEthics content creators and 41,117 from Non-AdEthics content creators.
- 14% of AdEthics trained content creators' publications and 10% of Non-AdEthics content creators' publications met the high-confidence threshold.
- The methodology differentiates commercial evidence from less conclusive promotional characteristics, rather than automatically classifying every brand mention as advertising.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The classifications reflect the strength of the evidence detected and do not independently establish the existence of a commercial agreement or a legal infringement. The proportion classified as high-confidence should not be interpreted as the actual overall share of advertising produced by either population. Differences may reflect the composition and characteristics of the publications.

Only the 59,043 high-confidence publications enter the disclosure analysis.

03 SECTION THREE Transparency and Disclosure Practices

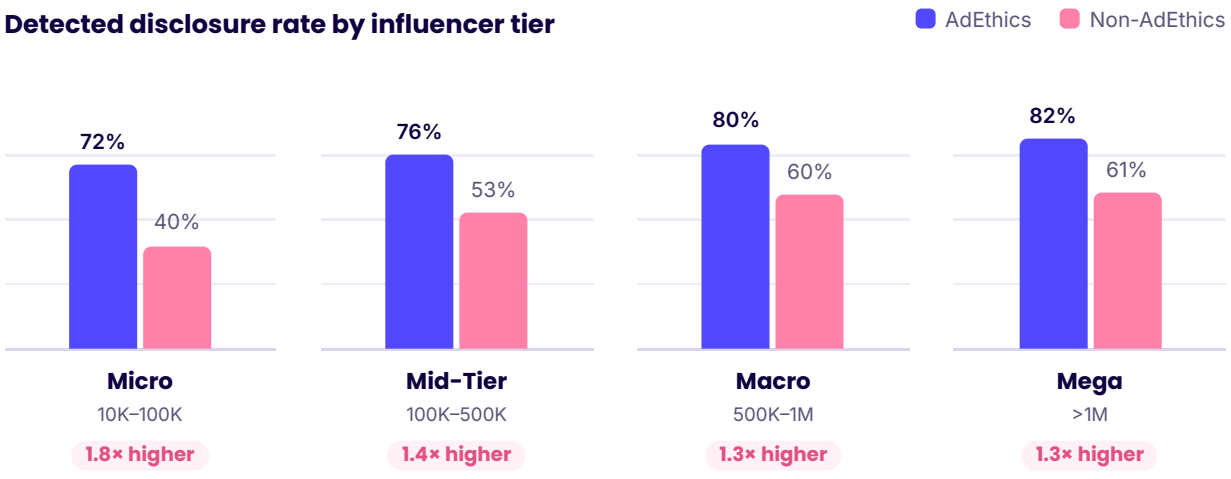
PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

To examine the frequency of detected disclosure among high-confidence commercial publications and assess how disclosure practices vary across audience sizes.

Disclosure across audience tiers*

The Sweep identifies a **consistent positive association between AdEthics training and detected advertising disclosure across all four influencer tiers**.

Detected disclosure rate by influencer tier



*Base: 17,926 AdEthics and 41,117 Non-AdEthics high-confidence commercial publications. Relative rate = AdEthics rate ÷ Non-AdEthics rate.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Disclosure becomes more established as audiences grow. Both populations showed higher detected disclosure rates in larger audience tiers, although a disclosure gap remained at every level.

TRANSPARENCY AND DISCLOSURE

AdEthics creators disclose more, in every audience tier

75%

detected disclosure among AdEthics publications

Three in four high-confidence commercial publications from AdEthics-trained creators contained a detected advertising disclosure.

1.7×
Higher disclosure rate than Non-AdEthics, on average

Over 80%
Among AdEthics Macro and Mega creators

1.8×
Largest gap, among Micro creators (72% vs 40%)

Base: 17,926 AdEthics and 41,117 Non-AdEthics high-confidence commercial publications. Results describe observed publication-level associations.

AdEthics publications record higher median views across every audience tier*

INFLUENCER TIER	ADETHICS PUBLICATIONS	NON-ADETHICS PUBLICATIONS	RELATIVE RATE
Mega (1M+)	218,686	135,389	1.6×
Macro (500K–1M)	168,017	96,728	1.7×
Mid-Tier (100K–500K)	73,595	16,523	4.5×
Micro (10K–100K)	12,421	4,407	2.8×

*Median recorded views per high-confidence commercial publication with available view data. **Permanent content only**; creators with 10K+ followers. Relative rates compare the group medians.

KEY TAKEAWAY AdEthics publications recorded higher median views across all four influencer tiers, ranging from 1.6× to 4.5× those of Non-AdEthics publications.

Combined with the higher detected disclosure rates observed among AdEthics creators, these findings highlight that **stronger advertising transparency practices are present in content achieving substantial visibility**.

While differences in creator characteristics, platform composition and data availability may contribute to the observed results, they illustrate that **stronger disclosure practices and high publication visibility can coexist**. It challenges the assumption sometimes made that transparency necessarily comes at the expense of reach.

How disclosure was detected*

Among high-confidence commercial publications with detected disclosure, the methods were distributed as follows:

DISCLOSURE METHOD	ADETHICS	NON-ADETHICS
Disclosure wording only	75%	76%
Platform Paid Partnership label only	16%	19%
Both wording and platform label	9%	5%
Total	**100%**	**100%**

*Base: 13,465 disclosed AdEthics publications and 18,599 disclosed Non-AdEthics publications.

Key findings and claims

- Higher disclosure rates were observed for AdEthics publications **across all four influencer tiers**, from Micro to Mega.
- **More than four in five** high-confidence commercial publications from AdEthics Macro and Mega creators contained a transparency disclosure.
- The largest relative difference was observed among Micro creators, where the detected disclosure rate was **1.8 times higher** for AdEthics publications.
- AdEthics content creators combined higher disclosure rates with higher median recorded views across every audience tier, pointing out that **advertising disclosure and audience reach are not at odds**.
- Among disclosed publications, the combined use of disclosure wording and a platform-native Paid Partnership label was approximately twice as frequent among AdEthics publications.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Disclosure is considered detected when the monitoring system identifies relevant disclosure wording and/or a platform-native Paid Partnership label.

Disclosure detection is not a legal compliance assessment. A detected disclosure may not satisfy every applicable national requirement. Equally, the absence of a detected disclosure does not independently establish a legal infringement.

The figures refer to publications rather than individual creators. The results establish an observational association.

TRANSPARENCY AND REACH

4 of 4

Audience tiers in which AdEthics publications combine higher disclosure rates with higher median views

Up to 4.5×

Higher median views for AdEthics publications (Mid-Tier: 73,595 vs 16,523)

Advertising disclosure and audience reach are not at odds.

SECTION FOUR

04 Understanding Commercial Content Without Detected Disclosure

PURPOSE OF THE ANALYSIS

To examine the commercial evidence identified in publications without detected disclosure and provide insights that may support further development of influencer education and guidance.

26,979
high-confidence commercial publications without detected disclosure

4,461
AdEthics publications

22,518
Non-AdEthics publications

The Sweep identified **26,979 high-confidence commercial publications without detected disclosure**, comprising 4,461 AdEthics publications and 22,518 Non-AdEthics publications.

What commercial evidence was identified?*

COMMERCIAL EVIDENCE	ADETHICS	NON-ADETHICS
Corroborated commercial relationship	**2,836 (64%)**	7,911 (35%)
Monetisation / promotional mechanisms	1,450 (33%)	6,736 (30%)
Converging strong promotional signals	1,785 (40%)	**15,383 (68%)**

Highlighted: the main category in each population.

*Percentages refer to high-confidence commercial publications without detected disclosure in each population. Categories can overlap and therefore do not sum to 100%.

What commercial evidence was identified? – Breakdown by combination*

COMMERCIAL EVIDENCE COMBINATION	ADETHICS	NON-ADETHICS
Commercial relationship only	**1,756 (39%)**	3,714 (16%)
Monetisation only	473 (11%)	2,293 (10%)
Strong promotional signals only	963 (22%)	**10,429 (46%)**
Commercial relationship + monetisation	447 (10%)	1,128 (5%)
Commercial relationship + strong promotional signals	292 (7%)	1,639 (7%)
Monetisation + strong promotional signals	189 (4%)	1,885 (8%)
All three evidence categories	341 (8%)	1,430 (6%)

*Categories are mutually exclusive: each publication appears in exactly one row. The breakdown uses the independent classification-rule results and their intersections, rather than the hierarchical route ultimately assigned to each publication.

What do these categories mean?*

EVIDENCE CATEGORY	EXPLANATION	ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE
Commercial relationship	Evidence suggesting a brand relationship, corroborated by additional commercial indicators	*A creator mentions working with a cosmetic brand and encourages followers to purchase its products*
Monetisation / promotional mechanisms	Explicit monetisation evidence or corroborated promotional-code and affiliate-related signals	*A creator promotes a product using a personalised discount code and a purchase link*
Strong promotional signals	Multiple commercial promotional indicators supported by an AI commercial assessment	*A creator prominently features a product, highlights its selling points and directs followers to purchase it*

*Examples are hypothetical and simplified. The full classification methodology requires additional evidence and conditions before a publication is classified as high-confidence commercial content.

Key findings and insights

- **AdEthics creators appear more likely to openly acknowledge their relationships with brands, even when no advertising disclosure is detected.** Their publications more frequently include identifiable references to commercial relationships, such as ongoing brand partnerships. While these references are not necessarily sufficient advertising disclosures, the pattern is consistent with greater openness about brand relationships.
- **Not all commercial content makes the underlying brand relationship equally apparent.** Among Non-AdEthics publications without detected disclosure, commercial evidence more frequently comes from combinations of promotional signals rather than openness about brand relationships. This raises questions about how creators recognise and communicate the commercial nature of their content.
- **These findings highlight the importance of practical guidance that builds on existing transparency practices.** Education can help creators move from acknowledging a brand relationship to clearly identifying content as advertising when required, while also addressing situations where the commercial nature of a publication may be less apparent.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The evidence categories are derived from EASA's high-confidence commercial classification rules. They describe observable and AI-assisted commercial evidence, not independently verified contractual arrangements.

Individual publications may satisfy several rules. The first table counts each rule independently, while the second presents mutually exclusive combinations, ensuring each publication is counted only once.

These percentages describe the composition of publications without detected disclosure, not disclosure rates for each type of commercial activity. Differences between AdEthics and Non-AdEthics should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that one population is more or less compliant.

The absence of detected disclosure does not independently establish a legal infringement. Determining why individual creators did not disclose would require additional case-level assessment.

CONCLUSION

Overall conclusion

Taken together, the findings reinforce the relevance of **Self-Regulatory Organisations-led education as a practical tool for promoting transparency in influencer marketing**. AdEthics is strongly associated with better observed disclosure practices, making training a credible contributing explanation, although the observational nature of the study does not allow its independent impact to be established.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT

The findings also point to opportunities to build on the existing AdEthics programme through practical, continuously updated education.

Commercial relationships can take many forms, and content creators benefit from clear guidance that helps them recognise when disclosure is appropriate. Practical examples involving gifted products, free services, event invitations, affiliate arrangements and other non-cash benefits, alongside refresher modules and sector-specific guidance, could help creators navigate different commercial situations more confidently and consistently.

Content creators are increasingly professionalising their disclosure practices. This progress reflects a broader collective effort: guidance and codes developed by Self-Regulatory Organisations, industry best practices, and the commitment of brands, agencies and platforms. Within this ecosystem, advertising self-regulation adds further value through initiatives such as AdEthics, which, by combining accessible training with ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement, help accelerate progress towards a more transparent and responsible influencer marketing ecosystem.

ANNEX

A Overall Methodological Considerations

The following considerations apply across the report:

Publication-level analysis

Results describe the proportion of publications with particular characteristics, not the proportion of individual creators who consistently disclose commercial content.

Defined monitoring population

The report covers creators with at least 10,000 followers across nine participating European markets. The analysed publications should not be treated as a representative census of all influencer advertising across Europe.

Evidence-based commercial classification

AI-assisted evidence extraction is combined with predefined classification rules. Only publications meeting the high-confidence threshold are included in the disclosure analysis.

Detection versus legal compliance

The presence or absence of detected disclosure should not be interpreted as a comprehensive legal assessment under applicable national rules.

Observational comparison

Differences between AdEthics and Non-AdEthics publications may reflect training status as well as other differences in the creator populations, including audience size, market, platform and content characteristics.

Commercial evidence versus verified arrangements

The methodology identifies observable and AI-assisted commercial evidence but does not independently verify every contractual or financial relationship between creators and brands.

European Advertising Standards Alliance

The European Advertising Standards Alliance, EASA, is a network of 45 organisations representing 28 advertising self-regulatory organisations from Europe, 14 european and global organisations representing the advertising ecosystem (advertisers, agencies, media) and 3 digital pure-play companies. EASA coordinates the AdEthics framework programme.

AdEthics

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