IAB EUROPE
NAVIGATOR:
**QUALITY IN DIGITAL
ADVERTISING**

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key objectives of IAB Europe and any National IAB is to build a sustainable future for digital advertising and marketing. This can be achieved by creating standards and frameworks to provide a set of principles and rules to encourage responsibility and quality in digital advertising. Over the last few years there has been a surge of industry challenges from ad fraud to unsafe brand environments which has threatened the quality of digital advertising campaigns.

The objective of this Navigator is to highlight the great work being undertaken by National IABs in Europe to enable digital advertising to be delivered responsibly and to the highest quality. The paper provides a summary of the national level quality certification schemes plus any other guidelines or best practice guides that exist.

Suzanne McElligott, CEO, IAB Ireland and Board Member of IAB Europe previously commented: *"Great work has been achieved across national IABs in some of the larger markets to develop local quality certification schemes. As a consequence, there is now a great opportunity for IAB Europe to develop a framework based on these schemes and so assist all (of the other) European markets to learn from the programmes in place and to develop their own national IAB quality scheme."*

For this paper, we have focused on the initiatives, guidelines and best practice guides that have been created in Europe. It is also important to bear in mind the work done in the US by bodies such as the MRC, TAG and IAB.

2. NATIONAL LEVEL CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

	IAB UK Gold Standard	IAB Italy Quality Index	Digital Ad Trust (France)	IAB Sweden Gold Standard	BVDW (repr. the IAB Germany): Digital Trust Initiative (DTI)	IAB Poland QUALID	IAB Ireland Gold Standard
Overview	IAB UK is committed to building a sustainable future for digital advertising. A key element to this vision is the Gold Standard.

The IAB UK Gold Standard has four fundamental aims:

• To reduce ad fraud in the case of selling of spoof domains and faked inventory

• Increase brand safety by reducing the risk of ad misplacement

• Stop adoption of ad blockers by improving user experience.

• Help compliance with the GDPR and ePrivacy law. | The IQI (IAB Quality Index) is the Italian program for the quality certification of Italian inventories across 5 KPI's: viewability, brand safety, ad fraud, ad-cluttering and LEAN Principles.

Three vendors partner with the initiative, by measuring 4 of the 5 KPIs: comScore, Integral Ad Science, Meetrics.

They measure on a quarterly basis, for a period of two weeks, all pages belonging to the Channels submitted by the Publisher, on two environments: desktop & mobile web. The base unit of the measurement is the ad-unit. | Digital Ad Trust was launched in July 2016, bringing together the 6 major French associations - SRI, UDECAM, UDM, GESTE, ARPP, IAB France - around a common project:
A label built for sites / publishers to highlight their best practices in responsible advertising, through 12 criteria divided into 6 key objectives:

1. Brand safety by design : ensuring that brands are safe in the environments in which they appear
2. Visibility : Optimising the viewability of online advertising
3. Ad fraud : Fight against GIVT/SIVT
4. UX : Improve the user experience
5. Advertising clutter : limit the amount of ads on a website
6. Data protection : Better inform internet users about personal data protection. | Like the IAB UK Gold Standard, the IAB Sweden Gold Standard has three simple but fundamental aims:
to reduce ad fraud; to improve the digital advertising experience and to increase brand safety.

The initiative is designed on the basis of IAB UK's model launched in 2017. | The BVDW Digital Trust Initiative is the Quality Framework for the most important quality assurance and confidence-building procedures in the digital media business in Germany.

It creates a framework for all existing and new certifications and Codes of Conduct that set national and international quality standards.

The DTI will cover 3 priority areas:

User Experience
- CBA Programs

Verification
- Viewability Certificate
- Invalid Traffic Certificate
- Brand Safety Code of Conduct/Certificate
- Audience Verification Certificate

Transparency
- Code of Conduct/Certificate Programmatic Advertising
- participation in Media Studies | QUALID is an industry initiative with the goal of improving the quality of an online advertising ecosystem through promoting best verified solutions, best practices and education.

The program has been crafted for all sides of the digital advertising industry.

QUALID is tackling 4 priority areas:
• brand safety
• viewability
• ad fraud
• programmatic | IAB Ireland adopted the Gold Standard in January 2021.

The Gold Standard as developed by IAB UK is recognised as a powerful initiative which has evolved to keep pace with a fast changing industry and continues to adapt to help drive a healthy sustainable digital ecosystem.

The Gold Standard has four key pillars that address:
- Ad Fraud
- Brand Safety
- User Experience
- Privacy |

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Overview continued	To become Gold Standard certified, companies have to demonstrate they are working towards tackling these issues by working with: • ads.txt/app-ads.txt, sellers.json and OpenRTB Supply Chain Object – Ad fraud • TAG Brand Safety Certificate – Brand safety • Coalition for Better Ads – User Experience. • Transparency Consent Framework (TCF v2.0) – Data & Privacy	Once the data collection is completed, the qualified vendors send a .csv file to IAB Italy containing the measurements related to each ad-unit. The values registered for each KPI are turned into a 0->100 range and all data is processed by the IAB Italy proprietary algorithm, aggregating them by channel and publishing the certified domains-channels list.	Criteria which serve as benchmarks for quality, measured by a third party company and certified by CESP / ACPM The first wave of labelled sites - March 2018 A label that is very attractive for publishers: this represents significant budgetary impacts (loss of revenue related to deleted formats, not yet compensated + costs related to installation, recurrence and the extent of the requested measures)	IAB Sweden has taken its Advertising Friendly initiative to the next level and developed it into the Gold Standard. A committee is responsible for the framework and a third-party auditor, Kantar Media Audit (ABC in Sweden), will ensure the rules are followed. The only thing that differs from IAB UK's Gold Standard is that JICWEBs is not present in Sweden, therefore a third-party auditor will be used to define the rules.	The Digital Trust Initiative documents, evaluates, adapts and bundles these programs through an administrative framework. It thereby ensures that certifications can be evaluated according to their relevance and used meaningfully in the German market.	Each IAB Poland member is eligible to apply to be QUALID certified in one, two, three or all categories. To become certified in any area, companies have to confirm that they have implemented certain solutions or that they're act according to certain practices. In addition they need to train (QUALID Training) at least 50% of their employees who has direct impact on the quality of digital advertising on daily basis.	To become Gold Standard certified, companies must provide evidence that they are complying with the criteria across all 4 pillars. Implementation of: 1. ads.txt, sellers.json, Supplychain Object 2. TAG certified for Brand Safety 3. Compliance with COFBA standards 4. Transparency & Consent Framework

2. NATIONAL LEVEL CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

	IAB UK Gold Standard	IAB Italy Quality Index	Digital Ad Trust (France)	IAB Sweden Gold Standard	BVDW (repr. the IAB Germany): Digital Trust Initiative (DTI)	IAB Poland QUALID	IAB Ireland Gold Standard
Key objectives	The IAB UK Gold Standard was announced in 2017 and has four fundamental aims: • To reduce ad fraud in the case of selling of spoof domains and faked inventory • Increase brand safety by reducing the risk of ad misplacement • Stop adoption of ad blockers by improving user experience • Address privacy concerns	Support the market and enhance the most qualitative components of Italian online inventory. Encourage the demand-side to plan premium inventories, which guarantee higher quality and compliance with the criteria set out in the Quality Index.	The Digital Ad Trust initiative was created to highlight actors who ensure transparency and quality to meet the legitimate demand for reassurance of advertisers in the digital advertising supply chain by: • Indicating benchmarks of quality and providing transparency • Re-defining the specificities related to quality and providing an alternative offer of sites that all refer to the same standards. • Creating a compliance process based on the installation of a third-party tag and validation by third parties: CESP and ACPM Ultimately, the initiative gives a new market equilibrium around the responsibility, transparency and investments of agencies / advertisers that promote the biodiversity of the media and a fair compensation for quality environments.	The key objectives of the IAB Sweden Gold standard are to reduce ad fraud; to improve the digital advertising experience and to increase brand safety.	The key objectives of the Digital Trust Initiative of the BVDW Germany are: To make the quality of advertising delivery measurable with standardised key figures and establish an evaluation procedure for the German market by: • Creation of quality standards and uniform rules for all relevant procedures for ad and audience verification • Improving the comparability of measurement service providers through uniform definitions, measurement points and thresholds • Improving the (Internet) user experience in the context of the changing user expectations in viewability, the reduction of of Invalid Traffic and designation of Brand Safety criteria & KPIs • Improving trust in the digital advertising environment through clarity and transparency	The program focuses on four areas that are key to ensuring the quality of advertising: • Brand Safety - improving the quality of advertisements and increasing the protection of the image and safety of the brand, • Anti-Fraud - reducing advertising fraud and developing market standards for reporting suspicious traffic, • Programmatic - increasing the security and transparency of the automated online advertising purchase system, • Viewability - the growing importance of a comprehensive, qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of Internet advertising. In each area the program contains more specific objectives that companies are required to meet.	4 Key aims: • To reduce ad fraud • To increase Brand Safety • To improve User Experience/reduce ad blocking • To help compliance with GDPR and ePrivacy

2. NATIONAL LEVEL CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

	IAB UK Gold Standard	IAB Italy Quality Index	Digital Ad Trust (France)	IAB Sweden Gold Standard	BVDW (repr. the IAB Germany): Digital Trust Initiative (DTI)	IAB Poland QUALID	IAB Ireland Gold Standard
Certification process	Evidence based - checked and reviewed before receiving Gold Standard certificate. The criteria a company has to comply with and the evidence they need to provide will depend where a company sits within the supply chain.	Third-party measurement company (comScore, IAS or Meetrics) monitors the publisher site and sends results to IAB Italy for analysis.	Signed statements and reports from third party measurement companies.	Third-party auditor checks the rules are followed.	Evidence based checking. The underlying certifications are carried out by an external independent auditor.	Evidence based checking plus completing QUALID training.	Evidence based- checked and reviewed by IAB. Compliance criteria varies according to a company's role in the digital advertising supply chain, Third Party auditor required for TAG Brand Safety certificate.
Key target groups	The Gold Standard is currently available to IAB UK members within the programmatic, display area: • Publishers • SSPs/Exchanges • DSPs • Managed Services and Trading Desks • Agencies • Other (e.g. data, quality and creative)	Publishers	Publishers	The Gold Standard is open to all IAB Sweden members involved in the purchase and sale of digital display advertising. All players in the digital ecosystem are affected, which includes publishers, site owners, ad tech companies, platforms, media agencies and advertises. Publishers, site owners, ad tech companies and platforms register for the Gold Standard program while media agencies and advertisers register for the Gold Standard Pro.	• Publishers/Sales Houses • (Media)Agencies • SSPs/Exchanges • DSPs • Manages Services and Trading Desks • Ad Verification Provider	All	Certification is available to IAB Ireland members including: publishers, platforms, ad tech companies, media agencies and companies involved in the buying and selling of digital advertising IAB Ireland Brand Members may become Gold Standard Supporters https://iabireland.ie/gold-standard-brand-supporters/

2. NATIONAL LEVEL CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

Quality elements covered

	IAB UK Gold Standard	IAB Italy Quality Index	Digital Ad Trust (France)	IAB Sweden Gold Standard	BVDW (repr. the IAB Germany): Digital Trust Initiative (DTI)	IAB Poland QUALID	IAB Ireland Gold Standard
Brand safety	Y - TAG Brand Safety Certificate	Y	Y - Brand safety by design, either by complying with GARM (WFA) guidelines, or by having a specific status delivered by public authorities to publishers (SPEL/SMAD)	Y - IAB Sweden framework based on JICWEBS (certification required)	ZVL Certificate (agof/BVDW) for Brand Safety + Code of Conduct Brand Safety (in progress)	Y	Y TAG certificate
Ad fraud	Y - ads.txt, app-ads.txt sellers.json and supplychain object	Y - invalid traffic	Y - MRC IVT Guidelines and Ads.txt	Y - Ads.txt	ZVL Certificate (agof/BVDW) for Invalid Traffic (in progress)	Y	Y ads.txt Sellers.json Supplychain.Object
Viewability	N	Y	Y - MRC / EVSG	N - planned for version 2.0	ZVL Certificate (agof/BVDW) for Viewability (Version 1 released in July 21 based on the IAB European Framework)	Y	N
User experience	Y - CBA Standards	Y - LEAN	Y - CBA Standards	Y - CBA Standards (certification required)	Y - CBA Standards	N	Y COFBA
Data and Privacy	Y - IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework V2.0	N	Y - Certification by a third party		N		Y - IAB Europe Transparency and Consent Framework V2.0

2. NATIONAL LEVEL CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

	IAB UK Gold Standard	IAB Italy Quality Index	Digital Ad Trust (France)	IAB Sweden Gold Standard	BVDW (repr. the IAB Germany): Digital Trust Initiative (DTI)	IAB Poland QUALID	IAB Ireland Gold Standard
Certified companies	https://www.iabuk.com/news-article/gold-standard-certified-and-registered	https://iqi.iab.it/list	http://www.digitaladtrust.fr/labellises/	https://iabsverige.se/goldstandard/	Companies who signed the Code of Conduct Programmatic Advertising of the IAB Germany as part of the DTI framework: https://www.bvdw.org/zertifizierungen/unterzeichner-code-of-conduct/programmatic-advertising-unterzeichner/	Registered and certified companies: https://www.iab.org.pl/qualid/sygnatariusze/ QUALID Ambassadors: https://www.iab.org.pl/qualid/ambasadorzy/	Launched in Jan 2021 Registered companies have 6 months to certify https://iabireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/GS-List-of-companies-registered.pdf
Key contact	Tim Elkington, Chief Digital Officer, IAB UK - tim@iabuk.com	Sergio Amati, GM, IAB Italy sergio.amati@iab.it	Arthur Millet, Managing Director, IAB France - arthur@iabfrance.com	Charlotte Thur, Managing Director, IAB Sweden - charlotte.thur@iabsverige.se	Jana Hamalides, Project Manager, Quality - hamalides@bvdw.org	Katarzyna Lukasik, Communication & PR Manager, k.lukasik@iab.org.pl	Maeve O'Meara, Marketing Manager, IAB Ireland maeve@iabireland.ie

3. NATIONAL LEVEL QUALITY GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICE GUIDES

National IAB Viewability Guidelines

Various national IABs have published a national viewability guideline including:

- **IAB Finland Viewability Guideline updated in Q1 2019**
- **IAB Poland Viewability Guideline**
- **IAB Sweden Viewability Guideline**
- **IAB Germany Viewability Guideline** (so far only in German available)

Other National IAB quality guidelines and initiatives

IAB Spain Transparency, Ad Fraud and Brand Safety Best Practice Guide

The best practice guide is a follow up of the previous guides (Guide of Viewability, Guide of Adfraud & Brand Safety and Guide of User Experience) developed by the CIP (Advertising Industry Committee). The CIP is made up of the following industry bodies in spain; IAB Spain; the Association of Media Agencies (AM); the Spanish Association of Advertisers (aea), the Spanish Association of Advertising Communication Agencies (AEACP), the Association for Media Research (AIMC); the Association for the Self-regulation of Commercial Communication (Self-control); the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA), the Federation of Advertising and Communication Companies (FEDE) and the Office of Justification for Broadcasting (OJD).

Find out more about the CIP and download the guides here.

The focus now is in the evangelisation of the advertisers, media agencies and publishers to gain share of investment budgets, thus positioning digital advertising in the core of the advertisers budget decision.

GÜR - The Turkish platform for Trustworthy Digital Advertising
IAB Turkey, Turkish Advertising Agencies Association and Advertisers Association established GÜR - The Platform of Trustworthy Ad on Digital in 2017, in order to protect brands and digital ad investment. Currently, GÜR collaborates with Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) to tackle criminal activity in the Turkish digital advertising market.

BVDW Programmatic Code of Conduct
The Programmatic Code of Conduct is a commitment/code of conduct with precise rules for all market participants. The objective is to ensure quality in programmatic advertising as well as to achieve the highest possible transparency and sustainable professionalism in view of modes of operation and methods of the market participants. The signing parties obligate themselves at the very least to comply with the defined criteria and conditions and to make sure that their contractual partners are also in compliance. Complaints are handled in a standardized process that is binding for all parties, and the board of complaint will process all matters as well as review processes and violations against the commitment. Find out more here.

The success of this initiative has seen it replicated across the DACH region to cover Austria and Switzerland. IAB Poland has also launched a Programmatic Code of Conduct for the Polish market using the BVDW Code as the basis.

4. IAB EUROPE RESOURCES

The following section details relevant IAB Europe initiatives and resources designed to ensure a sustainable future for digital advertising and marketing in Europe.

Viewability Principles
These European Viewability Principles created by the European Viewability Steering Group aim to help our industry to achieve the following macro goals:
1. To raise minimum quality standards in digital advertising measurement for all stakeholders across Europe.
2. To measure digital ad exposure which is deemed a key step to increasing confidence in digital ad trading.
3. To enhance the (internet) user experience in the context of changing user expectations.
4. To improve confidence in the digital ad environment.

Find out more here.

Supply Chain Transparency Guide
The aim of the IAB Europe Supply Chain Transparency Guide is to improve transparency in the digital advertising supply chain in the areas of data, cost and inventory source. The guide provides questions for each stakeholder category to be asked at different stages of the supply chain. First launched in 2018, the Guide is updated on a regular basis by IAB Europe's Programmatic Trading Committee.

Access the fourth version (March 2021) of the interactive version of the guide here or download the PDF version here. Read more about the release of the latest version in our blog post here.

Quality blog series

In this blog series, IAB Europe's Brand Advertising Committee and its members explore key perspectives and the latest developments in the drive for a viewable, quality digital advertising environment. The blogs are:

- [What does viewability mean for a mobile world?](#) - Alex North, Facebook
- [What is quality media and why is it important?](#) - Stevan Randjelovic, GroupM
- [How Open Measurement Unlocks Scale](#) – Nick Morley, Integral Ad Science

IAB Europe Guide to Brand Safety & Brand Suitability

- In July 2020, IAB Europe launched this Guide to share background context on brand safety in Europe, pan-European definitions for brand safety and brand suitability with accompanying key considerations, best practices and case studies to help educate all stakeholders on ensuring brand safe environments.
- With the introduction of brand suitability in the last couple of years, the guide also provides an overview of how this can complement and enhance brand safety tools to ensure a more relevant content environment for brands.

Access the guide [here](#)

IAB Europe's Guide to Ad Fraud

- In December 2020, IAB Europe released its 'Guide to Ad Fraud', to help drive media quality and effectiveness in the digital advertising industry.
- It defines specific types of fraud in digital advertising and outlines how verification companies work to combat new and emerging types of ad fraud across all channels.
- It also provides top tips for buyers and planners to prevent Ad Fraud in their next campaigns and serves as a call for action to the industry to follow best practices to tackle ad fraud.

Access the guide [here](#)

IAB Europe's Guide to Quality
- In September 2021, IAB Europe released a Guide to Quality to help and support all stakeholders in the supply chain on being accountable and responsible for the reputation of digital advertising.
- The guide looks at what makes a quality campaign from both a brand's and consumer's perspective by detailing best practices and practical examples for viewability, brand safety and suitability, ad fraud, campaign creativity and privacy and consent.
- The guide is a call for action that Quality is something that all stakeholders have to strive for. The guide starts by defining what quality is and details how it can be achieved.

Access the guide [here](#).

GDPR Guidance: Legitimate Interests Assessments (LIA) for Digital Advertising
- IAB Europe works to produce relevant guidance on the implementation of EU privacy and data protection rules applicable in the digital advertising sector.
- In March 2021, our Legal Committee developed this practical GDPR Guide on legitimate interests assessments (LIAs) in collaboration with IAB UK.

Access the guide [here](#)

5. OTHER RESOURCES AND HELPFUL LINKS

The following section details other organisations which have initiatives to enable responsibility and quality in digital advertising.

Media Rating Council (MRC)
The Media Rating Council objectives are:
- To secure for the media industry and related users audience measurement services that are valid, reliable and effective.
- To evolve and determine minimum disclosure and ethical criteria for media audience measurement services.
- To provide and administer an audit system designed to inform users as to whether such audience measurements are conducted in conformance with the criteria and procedures developed.

Most relevant to the quality of digital advertising, are its audits in the areas of viewability and ad fraud.
Find out more here.

Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG)
Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) is a US based cross-industry accountability program to create transparency in the business relationships and transactions that undergird the digital ad industry, while continuing to enable innovation. A joint marketing-media industry program, TAG was created with a focus on four core areas: eliminating fraudulent digital advertising traffic, combating malware, fighting ad-supported Internet piracy to promote brand integrity, and promoting brand safety through greater transparency. TAG was created by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's), Association of National Advertisers (ANA), and Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and works collaboratively with companies throughout the digital ad supply chain.
4 core areas of work are:
- Eliminate Fraudulent Traffic
- Combat Malware
- Fight Internet Piracy
- Promote Transparency

Find out more here.

WIPO Alert
[The WIPO Alert Database](#) is a secure online platform on which national authorities can upload and update their lists of copyright-infringing websites. Advertisers and advertising agencies can download these lists via an API as an aggregated feed. The service enables a global view of infringing sites, including sites in foreign languages which might otherwise be overlooked.

Access to the database will be controlled by WIPO and open to any genuine advertiser or agency which is willing to undertake to use the information solely for preventing the appearance of advertising on pirate websites. There is no charge for the service.

Find out more [here](#).

Memorandum of Understanding on online advertising and IPR
[The MoU on online advertising and IPR](#) is a voluntary agreement facilitated by the European Commission to limit advertising on websites and mobile applications that infringe copyright or disseminate counterfeit goods.

The MoU is a part of the Commission's 'follow the money' approach to IPR enforcement (see below). The signatories of this MoU commit to minimise the placement of advertising on websites and mobile applications that infringe copyright or disseminate counterfeit goods. This will help to curtail the revenues of these websites and apps. The signatories will work with the Commission to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the MoU on the online advertising market. The MoU, which complements similar national initiatives, will be assessed after a year, during which the signatories will meet quarterly to analyse the progress achieved.

Find out more [here](#).

Code of Practice on Disinformation
The self-regulatory Code of Practice on Disinformation is to address the spread of online disinformation and fake news.

This is the first time worldwide that industry agrees, on a voluntary basis, to self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation. The Code aims at achieving the objectives set out by the Commission's Communication presented in April 2018 by setting a wide range of commitments, from transparency in political advertising to the closure of fake accounts and demonetization of purveyors of disinformation.

The Code includes an annex identifying best practices that signatories will apply to implement the Code's commitments.

Find out more here.

Coalition for Better Ads (CBA)
The Coalition for Better Ads leverages consumer insights and cross-industry expertise to develop and implement new global standards, the Better Ad Standards, for online advertising that address consumer expectations. Currently, the Standards are applicable in the Desktop and Mobile Web environments.

Find out more here.

6. SUMMARY

This paper demonstrates the vast amount of work being undertaken in Europe and beyond to build and ensure a sustainable future for digital advertising and marketing. There are both similarities and differences across all of these initiatives. As a next step, IAB Europe has formed a Working Group to establish whether European Baselines can be established.
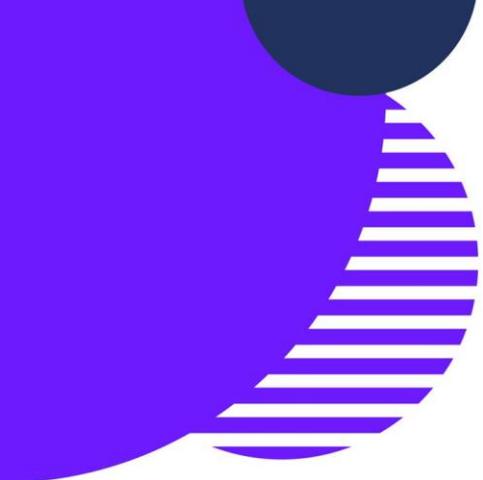
CONTACTS

Helen Mussard
CMO
mussard@iabeurope.eu

Marie-Clare Puffett
Marketing & Industry Programmes Manager
Puffett@iabeurope.eu