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**The Daily Telegraph, London**

**Push for EU Ban on TV Adverts That Target Children**

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A PUSH for a European Union-wide ban on television advertising aimed at children has been launched by Sweden, the current holder of the Presidency.

The Swedes, who have had a ban in place for 10 years, are inviting government and industry representatives from all member states to Stockholm next month to discuss plans to make it illegal for advertisers to target children under 12.

The proposals would bring an end to children's favorite television characters being used to promote products, and all commercials for toys and sweets would be banned during children's programming. Sweden intends to put a formal proposal to the Council of Ministers when European legislation governing television advertising is reviewed next year.

Lars Maren, an adviser in the culture ministry, said Sweden believed it was immoral for advertisers to target children. He said: "The basic rule of advertising is that it should be easy to recognize it as advertising.

"Children cannot understand fully what advertising is about so it is impossible for there to be a state fair play. Television advertising to children is banned in Sweden and we think that is a good idea." Mr Maren added that Denmark and Greece already had some limits on advertising to children, and Italy was debating the introduction of tougher controls.

The European Commission is opposed to a ban. A spokesman said: "This is clearly the top priority for the Swedish Presidency in the area of culture but we do not think it is necessary to change the directive."

However, the Commission is researching the effect of television advertising on children, and Sweden hopes that it will change its mind if other member states swing behind the proposal for a ban. The British Government was not persuaded that a ban was

necessary or practical, said a spokesman for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

But before Christmas, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, expressed concern about the pressure on parents to buy expensive toys as a result of intensive advertising campaigns. For the BBC, a ban would boost the prospects of its planned children's channel succeeding against commercial rivals.

Damian Tambini, a Government adviser on media policy and a research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research, a Left-leaning think-tank, said: "There might well be broad public support for a ban.

"Just after Christmas parents are very aware of the costs of advertising aimed at children - both financial and in terms of the nag factor. But the Government is aware that there could be legal problems to do with freedom of expression and the Human Rights Act."