



Consumer Voice

Newsletter on food safety, health and consumer policy
from the European Commission's Health and Consumer Protection DG

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David Byrne,
Commissioner for
Health and
Consumer Protection

Anti-smoking campaign scores its first goal

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to all of those who joined with the Commission to make the launch of our smoking prevention campaign such a success: UEFA and many football players have enthusiastically given their support to the campaign. Media companies are promoting the message during the World Cup, free of charge. We have the support of national health authorities and many non-government organisations.

Their generosity has made it a strong team effort and given immense impetus to the drive to protect our young people from addiction. Recruiting young people as smokers has become the tobacco industry's primary aim in recent years. By playing on the insecurities of 12 to 18 year olds, smoking can be made to appear "cool". This false imagery helps to lure many of our young people into life-long dependency on tobacco products, putting their health and indeed their lives at risk.

I am personally and politically committed to the prevention of tobacco consumption and to a different message for our young people – they can say no. And we will help them to say no. That is what the Commission's smoking prevention campaign is about. Our advertising campaign will show how successful non-smokers are and that life is more fun without addiction. We want them to think twice and leave the cigarette in the pack.

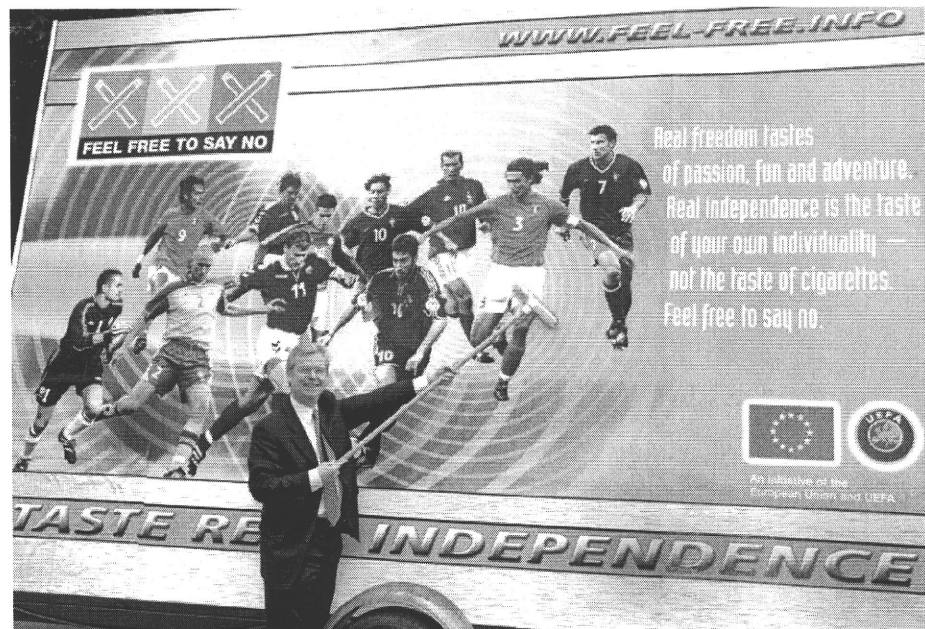
David Byrne

Commission gives the red card to tobacco

Commissioner David Byrne started the ball rolling on the eve of World Cup 2002 with the launch of a Commission campaign to encourage young people to opt for health and say no to smoking. The European football association (UEFA) has joined forces with the Commission in the fight against tobacco and star football players have pledged their support by taking part in a television advertisement that will be broadcast throughout the EU during the World Cup.

As he unveiled details of the campaign at the launch in Brussels, Commissioner Byrne spoke of the need to combat the "pernicious" advertising of the tobacco industry and to create a contrary image that would appeal to young people. "We are giving the red card to tobacco," he said. The campaign targets the young very specifically because eight out of ten smokers start when they are between 12 and 18 years old. Statistics offer a depressing outlook for the many smokers in this age group predicting that every second adolescent smoker will eventually die as a result of the negative effects of the habit.

"It's [the campaign] not about waving a paternal finger at young people but about asking them to think twice before they start," the Commissioner said. "It's saying it is more cool not to smoke. Let's face it, a young boy or girl who starts smoking and gets hooked by the nicotine, no longer has a real choice."



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▲ Signing the cooperation agreement between UEFA and the Commission

■ A three year advertising campaign

The EU wide, three year campaign to help prevent young people from smoking has a budget of around EUR 6 million per year. The strategy uses integrated communications to get the message across to young people.

Teaming up with the Commission and UEFA to say no to cigarettes, International football players feature in a short video spot that will be shown on TV and in cinemas throughout the EU, and that will also be broadcast on radio during the World Cup. The campaign targets 36.2 million young people in the EU and is part of the European Commission's broader tobacco control strategy.

The EU has strong backers for this campaign. A co-operation agreement was signed between UEFA and the Commission on 17 May to signal a united front. In addition, UEFA plans to call on national football associations to support the EU anti-smoking campaign. World Cup football stars who have spoken out in support of the campaign have allowed their names and faces to be used free of charge.

To access the special website for the campaign for the prevention of smoking among adolescents in the EU, go to: <http://www.feel-free.info>

Goethe challenge trophy for David Byrne

On 31 May – World No Tobacco Day – the German-based Goethe Endowment for Non-smoking awarded Commissioner David Byrne with the international Goethe Challenge Trophy for his fight against smoking. Byrne is the 10th winner of the annual award. The massive silver trophy is currently with the International Olympic Committee who received it last year for the smoke-free Olympic Village in Sydney.

Former award winners include the American Medical Association and the Beijing Medical School. The 18th century German poet and statesman Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was an early opponent of smoking. The German Medical Association is the patron of the Goethe Endowment for non-smoking. The founder of the trophy, Professor Friedrich Portheine, stressed the fact that the Boards of Trustees and Advisors have chosen Commissioner Byrne for "his outstanding achievements in the field of smoking prevention.

Conciliation achieves breakthrough on public health programme

The conciliation committee of the European Parliament and the Council achieved breakthrough on the stalled public health programme in Brussels on 8 May. At stake was the future of an ambitious new EU programme to replace the existing eight public health programmes with a single integrated scheme. At issue was primarily how the programme would be financed. The agreement, reached in conciliation on a budget of EUR 312 million for the new public health programme, needs to be formally endorsed by the Health Council in June and the European Parliament in July.

Commissioner David Byrne welcomed the decision, describing it as "a good day for public health in Europe". He said the new programme would streamline and reinforce EU action in the field of public health. "It moves away from the fragmented, disease-oriented approach of the past and provides a solid foundation for EU health measures to be carried out over the next six years."

The current eight relatively small existing EU public health programmes will soon come to an end. The new integrated programme proposed by the Commission in

2000 does far more than simply bring them all together into one programme. It takes a completely new approach to the question of the health of EU citizens. Future EU actions on public health will focus on three coherent strands: improving health information to citizens, professionals and policymakers; strengthening the rapid response capacity for co-ordinated reactions to major public health threats and targeting actions to promote health and prevent disease. The six year programme is due to start on 1 January 2003.

For the full text of the proposal, go to: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/dat/2000/en_500PC0285.html

New strategy for better consumer protection

A high common level of consumer protection, effective enforcement of consumer protection rules and the involvement of consumer organisations in EU policies – these are the three objectives of the new consumer policy strategy adopted by the Commission on 7 May. The objectives will be implemented through a series of actions that will take place over the next five years from 2002-2006 and will be subject to periodic review. These objectives are designed to help achieve the integration of consumer concerns into all other EU policies, to maximise the benefits of the single market for consumers and to prepare for enlargement.

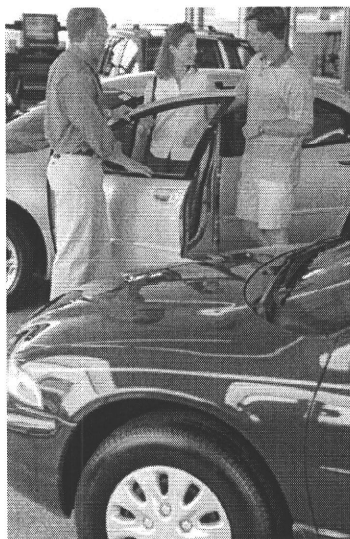
At the launch of the strategy in Brussels, Commissioner David Byrne described how consumers are affected by other EU policies, such as environment, transport, trade and many more. The Commissioner wants to ensure that other EU measures in the pipeline systematically address consumer concerns. He also emphasised the importance of rules and practices that promote consumer confidence in cross-border transactions. “This implies simpler and more harmonised rules, a similar level of enforcement across the EU, more accessible consumer information and education and effective redress mechanisms,” he said.

Fleshing out the details of the short-term rolling programme of actions designed to meet the three objectives, the Commissioner said the measures proposed are wide ranging. The key measures will encompass issues of safety, economic and legal issues relevant to consumers in the marketplace, consumer information and education, the development of consumer organisations and their contribution with other stakeholders to consumer policy development.

“This strategy will provide us with a consistent approach as well as setting out clear guidelines for consumer policy over the next five years,” he said. “My objective is to enable consumers, as well as businesses, to carry out transactions without having to think about real or virtual borders between buyer and seller. I want to see consumers reap tangible benefits from the Internal Market and the euro. I want them to see concrete results from the integration of consumer interests into all EU policies.” The Commissioner also stressed that in an enlarged EU of 470 million citizens, all consumers should benefit from the same high level of protection.

Achieving the objectives

Meeting objective one – achieving a high common level of consumer protection – does not mean regulating all consumer protection in detail at EU level. On the contrary, the aim will be to harmonise legislation only to the extent necessary to



▲ Consumer protection across borders

■ Training for consumer professionals

An ambitious training programme for consumer professionals has been launched and will be further developed over the coming years. This should help the consumer organisation professionals to make an effective input into the elaboration of EU policies in the main areas of consumer interest. This action under the strategy will be combined with measures that already exist to provide support to consumer organisations.

enable consumers as well as businesses to carry out transactions without thinking whether or not there are borders between them. Chief actions planned to meet this objective are initiatives looking at commercial practice issues and at the safety of services.

Initiatives towards safety of services and law enforcement

Actions on the safety of services come high on the list of measures planned in the strategy. Currently, there are few EU rules that protect consumer safety in the service sector. But safety risks in this fast growth sector are a real cause for concern. Accidents can and do happen in beauty and sports centres, in fun-parks and at rock-festivals. Fires and floods occur on camping sites. Such incidents illustrate how important it is to provide a high level of safety wherever a service is provided to consumers. The Commission will analyse the needs, possibilities and options for EU action on service safety. Options range from information exchange systems and promotion of best practices to amending legislation on specific service sectors or introducing horizontal safety requirements for services.

There is no good law if it is not properly enforced. Consumers should be able to access the same level of protection throughout the existing Member States and in an enlarged EU. Business also has a keen interest in a more uniform application of rules. Public authorities need practical and effective means of co-operating to that end. In working towards the second objective – ensuring effective enforcement of consumer protection rules – one key action the Commission intends to put forward is to introduce a new proposal, before the end of 2002, to strengthen the co-operation between Member States in enforcing consumer legislation.

Initiatives to promote consumer involvement in consumer policy

Although consumers and their representatives are already involved in EU policy making, the strategy plans a number of actions to strengthen and promote a far greater involvement on a more direct level. The document states that consumers and their representatives must be directly involved “in the definition and implementation of consumer policy”. To meet the aims of the third objective – the involvement of consumer organisations in EU policies – mechanisms will be set up to ensure that consumers and their representatives have the capacity and resources to promote their interests on an equal level with other stakeholders contributing to the process.

The Commission will develop on-line interactive education tools that can be used by consumer associations for further training of their staff. This, for example, could cover areas covering some specific aspects of cross-border transactions such as financial services or EU consumer rights in the Internal Market. In preparing these educational packages, the Commission will make full use of best practices developed by the Member States and consumer organisations.

Full text of the Communication on the Consumer Policy Strategy 2002-2006 at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/policy/intro/intro_en.html