



Health & Consumer Voice

April 2009

Headline News

Pesticides review programme completed _____ 1

Top Stories

Online shopping increasingly popular in Europe _____ 2

New rules on the introduction of animal products into the EU _____ 3

European Rare Diseases Day _____ 4

In brief

European Consumer Summit _____ 1

International Colloquium on Women's Leadership in Liberia _____ 2

New funding opportunities in health: call 2009 _____ 3

Running for a tobacco free Europe: Brussels 20 KM, 31/05/2009 _____ 4

Health-EU portal now available in Bulgarian and Romanian _____ 4

European Consumer Summit

The first ever EU Consumer Summit will take place in Brussels on 1 and 2 April 2009. This special event will bring together over 250 stakeholders from all over Europe, to look at the challenges and opportunities facing today's consumer, with a special focus on the digital world.

The website of the European Consumer Summit is now published. On this website you will find the latest information on the Consumer Summit and will have the possibility to register. The URL is:

<http://www.european-consumer-summit.eu/>

Pesticides review programme completed

On 12 March the European Commission made an important step forward in its efforts to ensure improved protection of human health and the environment, as it completed the review of existing pesticides that were on the market before 1993. This important achievement is the result of a considerable joint effort by the Commission, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Member States, and represents an important step to ensure the protection of health and environment.

As laid down in Directive 91/414/EEC, in 1993 the European Commission launched the work programme on the Community-wide review for all active substances used in plant protection products within the European Union. In this review process, each substance had to be evaluated as to whether it could be used safely with respect to human health and the environment, in particular groundwater and non-target organisms, such as birds, mammals, earthworms, bees.

There were about 1,000 active substances (and tens of thousands of products containing them) on the market at the time the Directive was adopted. Of those, 26%, corresponding to about 250 substances, have passed the harmonised EU safety assessment. The majority of substances (67%) have been eliminated because dossiers were either not submitted, or were incomplete or were withdrawn by the industry.



About 70 substances failed the review and have been removed from the market, because the evaluation carried out did not show safe use with respect to human health and the environment.

The European Commission has created an EU list of approved active substances and Member States may authorise only plant protection products containing such substances. As from 16 March 2009 a database is available on the website of the European Commission. This newly developed tool is freely and easily accessible by every citizen.

To access the database, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/sanco_pesticides/public/index.cfm

For further information, please view:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/protection/evaluation/index_en.htm



In brief



International Colloquium on Women's Leadership in Liberia

Commissioner for Health, Androulla Vassiliou, and Margot Wallström, European Commission Vice-President for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy, attended the "International Colloquium on Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Peace and Security" held in Monrovia, Liberia, on 7-8 March.

Coinciding with International Women's Day on 8 March, this event provided an important platform for promoting women's empowerment at a global level.

The Colloquium brought together 800 international and Liberian participants, including women leaders, heads of state and government, ministers, CEOs, presidents, executive directors, NGOs and community leaders. Co-chaired by the President of Liberia, Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and by the President of Finland, Mrs Tarja Halonen, it sought to empower women to be more effective leaders and to contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 3 on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

The event demonstrated the clear gender dimensions of climate change, environment protection and sustainable development. It also supported the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security to ensure that women are protected from the worst abuses in times of conflict and to empower them to play their rightful and vital role in helping their countries prevent, end and recover from conflict.

At the Colloquium, Commissioner Vassiliou spoke during the session dedicated to Millennium Development Goals and she gave a further speech at the launch of the Angie Brooks International Centre on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security. The Angie Brooks Centre will support the implementation of actions emerging from the event and include activities such as training and research to empower women.

The European Commission supported and contributed financially to this event. The principle of equality between men and women is a core value of the European Union, both in its internal and external policies.

For further information, please view:

<http://womenscolloquium.org/col.html>

Online shopping increasingly popular in Europe

A new report on "Barriers to E-commerce", presented on 5 March by EU Consumer Commissioner Meglena Kuneva, shows that online shopping is increasingly popular in the EU, but warns that barriers to cross border trade are holding back its development.

This report presents a detailed analysis of current trends in e-commerce across the EU – including most purchased items and obstacles for consumers and business online per country. Between 2006 and 2008 the proportion of EU consumers buying at least one item over the internet increased from 27% to 33%.

These average figures mask the huge popularity of online shopping in countries like UK, France and Germany where more than 50% of internet users have made online purchases in the last year. In the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland) the proportion of internet users who bought products and services online was 91% in 2008. Countries like Italy and Spain are also fast growing markets.

Against this pattern of fast growing national markets, the extent of online purchasing cross border remains small, at only 7% in 2008 (compared to 6% in 2006). The report warns that numerous obstacles - linguistic, practical and regulatory as well as important trust issues – are holding back the development of online shopping in the EU.



The main findings

- Consumers are generally satisfied with online shopping. For particularly frequently bought groups of products such as IT product as well as entertainment and leisure goods, consumer satisfaction with internet shopping is on average higher than for retailing in general. Consumers are particularly satisfied when it comes to comparing prices, the wider range of offers, the affordability of products and the choice of suppliers; they are less enthusiastic about issues such as clear product information, advertising, the protection of privacy, issues of trust and the possibility of returning goods.

- There is a strong potential for cross border trade in online commerce: one third of EU citizens would consider buying a product or a service from another Member State via the internet because it is cheaper or better; one third say they are willing to purchase goods and services in another language. In a multicultural Europe, there is a demand for more choice and a wider variety of offers than local stores or global brands can supply.

- The potential of cross border trade is failing to materialise: from 2006 to 2008 the share of online shoppers in the EU has increased from 27% to 33% of consumers, while cross-border e-commerce remained stable. Only 7% of consumers currently buy cross-border online.

Commissioner Kuneva launched last autumn a Commission wide process to screen for barriers to e-commerce, the Commission's final report on the retail sector is due in autumn 2009.

For further information, please view:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/docs/com_staff_wp2009_en.pdf

New rules on the introduction of animal products into the EU

On 5 March the European Commission adopted a Regulation on the introduction into the EU of animal products by travellers. The Regulation will enter into force on 1 May 2009 and replace the rules that are currently in place.

Animal products brought into the EU by travellers or sent through the post could pose a risk to the health of EU livestock, by carrying with them certain animal diseases such as foot and mouth disease or other diseases that may also affect humans. The general public therefore plays an important role in keeping such diseases out of the EU. The new legislation intends to clearly explain to the general public the rules concerning the introduction of animal products into the European Union.

In accordance with the new Regulation, travellers are not allowed to bring with their luggage meat, milk or their products from third countries into the EU, unless they are carrying less than 10 kilograms of these products from Croatia, the Faeroe Islands, Greenland or Iceland.

There will also be an exemption for powdered infant milk, infant food and special foods or special pet feed required for medical reasons, if weighing less than 2 kilograms and provided that such products do not require refrigeration before opening, that they are packaged proprietary brand products for direct sale to the final consumer, and that the packaging is unbroken unless in current use.

For fishery products (including fish and certain shellfish such as prawns, lobsters, dead mussels and dead oysters), travellers may bring in or send to the EU up to 20 kilograms or the weight of one fish if this is higher. However, there will be no



such weight restriction for travellers coming from the Faeroe Islands or Iceland. For other animal products, such as honey, live oysters, live mussels and snails for example, travellers may bring in or send to the EU up to 2 kilograms.

These rules will not apply to animal products transported between the 27 Member States of the EU or for animal products coming from Andorra, Liechtenstein, Norway, San Marino and Switzerland.

To ensure that these rules are clearly understood, an awareness campaign was launched during the EU Veterinary Week of 2008 (10-16 November 2008) to bring the message across to travellers entering the EU.

Posters are now available in 35 languages to be displayed in ports, airports, and other points of entry into the EU, to ensure that passengers are aware of the rules and the reasons behind them, before they travel as well as during their journey. In addition, a video in 35 languages has also been developed. It is intended to be screened at EU points of entry and in particular in airports, as well as during flights coming from outside the EU.

Posters and video can be found at this page:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/animalproducts/personal_imports/index_en.htm

In brief



New funding opportunities in health: call 2009

The European Commission has published on 26 February the Work Plan for 2009 for the implementation of second programme of Community action in the field of health.

An Information Day presenting the work plan for 2009 and funding mechanisms has been held in Luxembourg on 18 March 2009 and in several Member States in other different dates.

The publication of the Work Plan was followed by the calls for proposals. The Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC) published calls for proposals for projects, operating grants, conferences and joint actions.

The calls present new funding opportunities for the European organisations active in the area of public health. The total budget available for the execution of the 2009 Work Plan is about 48.2 million euro.

All proposals should address important problems in the European public health and be in line with the Commission's priorities expressed in the Work Plan.

The successful proposals should concentrate on aspects of public health that cannot be achieved on a national level. They should ensure a significant impact across the EU.

The deadline for submission of proposals is 20 May 2009.

For further information, please visit:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/index.html>



European Rare Diseases Day

To mark the European Rare Disease Day 2009 on 3 March, the Commissioner for Health Androulla Vassiliou hosted in Brussels the launch of the book "The Voice of 12,000 Patients". The book highlights that action is needed to improve and accelerate the time it takes for the diagnosis of rare diseases. It also illustrates the expectations and experiences of rare disease patients in access to care, with 26% of patients reporting difficulty in access to services.

This book, produced by the European Organisation for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS) and co-funded by the European Commission, provides a unique insight into patients' perspectives in rare disease diagnosis, treatment and care.

Rare diseases are conditions that affect fewer than 5 in every 10,000 people. There are between 5,000 and 8,000 in such situation. These conditions are predominantly genetic in origin, but also include rare cancers, auto-immune diseases and congenital malformations. The limited number of patients affected and the fragmentation of knowledge about them across the European Union makes rare diseases a prime example of where working at European level is necessary and beneficial.

A few key conclusions of the book are:

- A general lack of awareness and a specific lack of knowledge of rare diseases are leading to delayed diagnosis, and often misdiagnosis.
- More than a quarter of rare disease patients experience difficulties in accessing services, often resulting

from the lack of referral.

- Patients recognised the benefits of establishing Centres of Expertise, and such centres would be an appropriate restructuring of the classic healthcare systems to allow them to better treat patients with rare diseases.
- When considering the care of a rare disease patient, there is a need for integration of the healthcare and social services to provide complete support.

The Community Strategy on rare diseases

The Community strategy for action in rare diseases, part of the 'Europe for Patients' campaign, was adopted in November 2008. It sets out an overall Community strategy to support Member States in diagnosing, treating and caring for the 36 million EU citizens with rare diseases.

It calls for action in three main areas:

- Improving recognition and visibility of rare diseases;
- Supporting national plans for rare diseases in the Member States;
- Strengthening cooperation and coordination for rare diseases at European level.

European reference networks (ERNs) for rare diseases play an important role in tackling rare diseases and other conditions requiring specialised care. ERNs also serve as research and knowledge reference points, updating and contributing to the latest scientific findings.

The EC supports projects in rare diseases under the Public Health Programme and research programmes.

For further information, please view:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/non_con/rare_diseases_en.htm



In brief



Running for a tobacco free Europe: Brussels 20 KM, 31/05/2009

The 30th edition of the annual Brussels 20km and Marathon will take place on Sunday, 31 May 2009.

This year the event will be particularly special for EC Directorate-General for Health and Consumers, as it coincides with the "World No Tobacco Day" and as the Commission's initiative "Help - for a life without tobacco" campaign is sponsoring the event. The "Running for Europe" team is taking part under the running club of the European Commission (CACE) and will also run for the theme "Tobacco Free Europe", under the patronage of President Barroso.

For further information on Help campaign, please view:

<http://www.help-eu.com>



Health-EU portal now available in Bulgarian and Romanian

Health-EU portal is now available in Bulgarian and in Romanian.

The two brand new versions of the website have been launched by Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou respectively in Sofia on 19 March and in Bucharest on 20 March.

The URLs are:

http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/index_bg.htm

and

http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/index_ro.htm



The views expressed in Health & Consumer Voice do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the European Commission.

© European Communities, 2009. Reproduction of articles (excluding photographs) is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided that the source is mentioned.

Chief Editor: Eric Thévenard.

Editors: Rosita Scanferla, in cooperation with the EC Health and Consumers DG.

Layout: Rosita Scanferla.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm

Email: sanco-newsletter@ec.europa.eu