



# Health & Consumer Voice

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## Conference on Global Health

The high-level conference "Global Health - Together we can make it happen" was held in Brussels on 10-11 June.

The objectives of the conference were to present the European Commission Communication on Global Health and to discuss key challenges, goals, policy instruments and partnerships with stakeholders and global partners to improve health at global level.

In the last decade, health policy has gained a prominent position internationally and health aid has quadrupled amounting to over 16 billion euros. There are good stories to tell and concrete achievements on which to build. Yet, the lack of progress on health in the poorest countries and the growing challenges of globalization call for a strong EU global health vision, voice and action.

In its recently adopted Communication on Global Health, the Commission proposed areas for action, based on EU principles of solidarity, towards equitable and universal coverage of quality health services.

In such paper as well as during the debate, the Commission highlighted the main challenges that the EU needs to address: leadership, universal coverage, coherence of EU policies and knowledge. This new policy framework aims to be a turning point in promoting the right to



health and better addressing global health challenges.

About 300 participants took part to the conference, from Ministries of Health, Development and Research in EU Member States, Candidate and Neighbourhood countries as well as partners from Africa, the Americas and Asia. In addition to WHO and other UN organisations, the private sector – academia, industry, civil society, professional groups and other NGO's - also participated.

The conference was organised as a first-day "senior officials" series of workshops feeding their conclusions into plenary discussions in a high-level event on the second day. The six working groups focused on the challenges around equity, coherence in responses to globalisation, access and innovation, health as a human right, governance, and research.

For further information, please see:

[http://onetec.be/global\\_health/index.html](http://onetec.be/global_health/index.html)



## In brief



### World Blood Donor Day

Established in 2005, World Blood Donor Day is celebrated on 14 June to raise global awareness about the need for safe blood and regular voluntary blood donation. It is jointly coordinated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT) and the International Federation of Blood Donor Organisations (IFODS).

A poll published on the occasion of the 2010 World Blood Donor Day shows that 37% of Europeans have given blood. Also, over half of Europeans are willing to donate organs according to a Eurobarometer survey on organ donation also published on 11 June.

The two surveys on blood donation and transfusion and organ donation and transplantation were conducted during October 2009 in the 27 Member States of the European Union and the three candidate countries (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia and Turkey) and the Turkish Cypriot Community.

Some key findings from the two surveys are enumerated here below:

- The majority of Europeans (57%) think that the safety of transfusions has improved over the past 10 years;
- The countries showing the highest levels of blood donation are Austria (66%), France (52%), Greece (51%) and the Republic of Cyprus (51%);
- 55% are willing to donate one of their organs after death, while 27% are against the idea;
- Highest levels of willingness to donate organs are in Sweden (83%), Malta (77%), Finland and Belgium (both 72%).

For further information, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/blood\\_tissues\\_organs/policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/blood_tissues_organs/policy/index_en.htm)



## EU-wide consumer complaints

On 12 May the European Commission adopted a recommendation introducing an EU-wide method for classifying and reporting consumer complaints to be used by complaint bodies on a voluntary basis.

The method is expected to deliver comparable complaints data that will provide crucial evidence as to which parts of the Internal Market are underperforming for EU consumers; this will allow for a quicker and better targeted policy response at both national and EU level.

Consumer complaints are a key indicator of market health. There are more than 700 organisations handling consumer complaints in Europe using different classifications. As a result, comparison and overview are not possible, even at the national level.

The Commission has therefore recommended a standardised way of collecting and reporting consumer complaints, using a common set of criteria, including product category (e.g. an airline ticket, electricity, or a bank account) and type of complaint (e.g. quality, price, safety, delivery).

The method is intended to be used by bodies collecting complaints, such as national consumer authorities, consumer organisations, ombudsmen or regulators. These organisations will opt in to the system and to sending their data to the Commission. The Commission would then make the aggregate data public through its Consumer Markets Scoreboard.

A consumer complaint is a hard fact which is a sign of a possible systematic problem in the market. Complaints are one of the five key indicators used by the Consumer Markets Scoreboard of how markets are performing for consumers, along with consumer satisfaction, prices, consumer choice (switching suppli-

ers) and safety.

Consumer complaints may sometimes be only the tip of the iceberg, suggesting that problems in the market concerned may run more deeply. The latest data show that, out of the total number of consumers who have had problems with a trader, almost one in three did not even complain to the trader. Of those who did, only half were satisfied with the way their complaints were dealt with.

A Commission's study found that there are over 700 third-party organisations collecting consumer complaints in the EU. Some have advanced and large-scale classification methods. Yet, complaint bodies around Europe use different methods. This makes it impossible to see the bigger picture even at the national level, let alone the European level. This is despite the fact that the goods and services on offer across the EU are similar and a fair number of them are traded across borders. The lack of comparable data holds back the appropriate policy response, both at national and the European level.

A recent public consultation has shown that there is clear support for the common approach among potential users. Almost 86% of those who responded to the question said that they were interested in adopting the method.

A high-level conference was held on 27 May with interested national experts and policymakers, gathered to exchange views on the best approach to implement the harmonised method in practice and the best ways to integrate insights from consumer complaints into policy making.

For further information, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/complaints\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/complaints_en.htm)

## EU Alcohol Policy Conference

The Director-General for Health and Consumers Paola Testori Coggi addressed the participants of the 4th European Alcohol Policy Conference, organized by Eurocare (European Alcohol Policy Alliance) on 21-22 June 2010 in Brussels. This conference series is a key event in the field of alcohol policy taking place every two years.

Speaking as part of the welcoming session, Ms Testori drew attention to the impact of harmful alcohol consumption on the European population, particularly on young people, and the EU actions in response to this. She set out the following headline statistics: 23 million Europeans are estimated to be dependent on alcohol every year; alcohol causes nearly 200,000 deaths annually in the EU, a figure which includes around 50,000 deaths from alcohol caused cancers; every second driver who dies in a single-vehicle traffic crash is under the influence of alcohol; alcohol is responsible for 25% of all deaths of young men in the 15-24 age group.

The Director-General made reference to a French survey on young people published in 2007, which demonstrated that in many EU countries the rates of binge drinking are rising. She stated that alcohol is a drug, and that her intention is to make the protection of young people a key priority for the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers. Ms Testori also drew attention to the impact that alcohol consumption has on the brain development of young people. "Alcohol is a drug that affects brain development, such as memory and personality. This is particularly serious until the end of the development stage of a human being – at around 20 years", she said.

While outlining the European Commission's recent actions in this field,

Ms Testori focused in particular on the EU Alcohol Strategy launched in 2006, which constitutes the basis for cooperation between the EU and the Member States. The Director-General praised the progress that has been made so far, but underlined the still uneven implementation of good practices and compliance of the commitments that Member States took in the frame of such strategy.

The Director-General highlighted the role of the European Alcohol Health Forum, set up by the Commission to implement the EU Alcohol Strategy and opened to different stakeholders, such as NGOs, industry, media actors and other partners. The Forum is an open platform for voluntary action in the field of the fight against alcohol; 150 voluntary initiatives have been undertaken today, and Eurocare figures as one of the most active members to this extent.

As regards alcohol marketing, one of the issues discussed within the Forum, she underlined the variable response of Member States and the work carried out by the members of the Alcohol Health Forum in this field. She also expressed her wish to see in the future a minimum set of requirements to protect young people from aggressive alcohol marketing put in place across the EU.

While recognizing the fundamental contribution of the Commission in developing the structures aimed at implementing the EU Alcohol Strategy, Ms Testori stated her desire to focus even more on delivering concrete results in the next future.

In conclusion, she thanked the NGOs community for actively participating so far in this process, and underlined the essential role that they play in the fight against alcohol.

For further information, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/alcohol/documents/alcohol\\_progress.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/documents/alcohol_progress.pdf)

### In brief



#### Consumer education: conference "Financial Literacy: Dolceta"

This high level event, organised by the European Commission, DG Health and Consumers and DG Internal Market and Services on 28 May in Brussels, offered the opportunity to discuss financial literacy as a lesson to draw from the financial crisis. In such frame the new Dolceta section on financial literacy for teachers was also presented.

The recent financial crisis revealed that consumers are increasingly obliged to make decisions in relation to a wide range of complex financial products and services. With a view to empower consumers, the European Commission is working on three complementary fields: pre-contractual information, advice and financial education.

Financial education is a crucial complementary principle in a way that empowers consumers to make informed choices and play their role in the integration of financial markets. Financial education should be introduced at an early age in order to be efficient and effective.

The European Commission has been developing Dolceta, an online consumer education tool with different sections on consumer issues: consumer rights, services, product safety, sustainable consumption and financial services. Dolceta is adapted to all national cultures and languages.

The Commission has recently published an additional Dolceta section on financial literacy targeted at educators. A team of pedagogues and education experts ensured that various financial subjects are adjusted to different age levels and school curricula, providing education through play and real life situations.

In this conference the chance was offered to familiarise with the new Dolceta section and listen to various speakers' views on the issue of financial literacy.

The conference was web-streamed and presentations and videos has been uploaded to this website after the conference.

For further information, please see:

<http://onetec.be/dolceta/>

and

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/empowerment/conf-financial-literacy\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/empowerment/conf-financial-literacy_en.htm)

# World No Tobacco Day 2010

Ahead of the 2010 No Tobacco Day, the European Commission unveiled the results of a Eurobarometer survey which shows that a strong majority of EU citizens support stronger tobacco control measures.

The Commission is planning to launch an open consultation shortly with a view to revising the 2001 Tobacco Products Directive and is stepping up its tobacco control efforts throughout the EU.

Tobacco is the single largest cause of avoidable death in the EU. It accounts for around 650 000 premature deaths each year in the EU.

To reduce tobacco consumption throughout the European Union, the Commission pursues a comprehensive tobacco control policy. A wide range of initiatives, including tobacco control legislation, prevention and cessation activities, serve to maintain and strengthen the tobacco control policy.

## What do citizens think?

The Eurobarometer survey shows that European citizens favour stricter tobacco control measures. There is high public support for picture health warnings on tobacco packs (75% in favor), even though only four Member States currently use them. Support is also high for banning flavors that make tobacco products more appetising (61%) and for banning advertising at the point of sale (63%).

Another Commission study shows that there is clear evidence that health warnings on tobacco packages are effective. They increase knowledge on the health consequences of tobacco use and help to change attitudes and behaviours towards tobacco consumption.

## Tobacco Products Directive

The Directive (2001/37/EC) dates



from 2001. It stipulates the maximum limits for e.g. nicotine and tar in cigarettes, obliges producers to use textual health warnings on cigarette packs and report on tobacco ingredients and bans using terms such as "light"

The Commission is currently reviewing this Directive to provide a higher level of health protection and to update it to new developments as regards ingredients and national legislations. A revised proposed Directive is foreseen in the second half of 2011.

## Smoke free environments

Following the Council Recommendation of November 2009 on smoke free environments, the European Commission strongly supports Member States' work towards "A smoke-free Europe by 2012". The adoption and implementation of laws on smoke-free environment remain a competence of the Member States. The Commission therefore encourages all Member States to protect their citizens from exposure to tobacco smoke in enclosed public spaces, workplaces and public transport, to reduce children's exposure to second-hand smoke.

## HELP Campaign: new TV spots

The Commission has sponsored the creation and dissemination of two new TV spots aimed at young people, in particular women. The spots are being aired across Europe on some 130 channels as from 31 May.

For further information, please see:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/220&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

## In brief



### Consultation on the General Product Safety legislative initiative

The framework set up under the two successive General Product Safety Directives - Directive 1992/59/EC and 2001/95/EC - has built up, in almost two decades, a system that fosters a general culture that all consumer products must be safe, and integrates the role of European standards for otherwise non-harmonised products.

However, recurrent product safety alerts, either of global or regional relevance, have made it clear that we need a system that delivers more rapidly, efficiently and consistently throughout the EU and which, at the same time, is flexible enough to adapt to the challenges of globalisation and continue to contribute to the EU internal market of safe products.

To meet these challenges, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers has launched a public consultation on the revision of the current General Product Safety Directive 2001/95/EC.

For further information, please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/prod\\_legis/GPSD\\_consultation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/prod_legis/GPSD_consultation/index_en.htm)

### EU Veterinary Week 2010 closed

The third edition of the EU Veterinary Week ran from 14 to 20 June.

During the EU Veterinary Week a large number of events have taken place in EU Member States, organised by the competent authorities, veterinary associations and EU veterinary faculties. On these occasions, information concerning identification and traceability has been distributed, together with EU veterinary diaries for the academic year 2010-2011.

For further information, please see:

<http://www.one-health.eu>



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