



Health & Consumer Voice

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Cheaper, faster, easier: Dalli proposes new rules for disputes with traders



Commissioner Dalli announces new proposals for Alternative Dispute Resolution on 29 November

EU Commissioner for Health & Consumers, John Dalli, announced new rules for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) on 29 November. They will make it cheaper, faster and easier for consumers to resolve disputes over products and services purchased in the EU without going to court.

Over 750 ADR entities already exist in the EU but availability is limited in certain sectors and regions. The new rules will change this by giving all EU citizens access to high quality, straightforward ADR solutions wherever they are, whatever the product and however the purchase was made.

Traders will have to inform consumers of

the ADR entity dealing with possible problems and any dispute has to be resolved in 90 days.

The proposals also include the creation of a new EU website for Online Dispute Resolution ("ODR platform"). The website will provide a single contact-point for resolving disputes over online purchases from abroad. It will be free to use, available in all EU languages and will link automatically to national ADR entities. Solutions to ODR must be found in 30 days.

Commissioner Dalli underlined the benefits of putting stronger ADR mechanisms in place. "Consumers and traders need a transparent, effective and fair system of dispute resolution," he said. "These proposals will generate better results and save EU consumers an estimated €22.5 billion every year. By boosting consumer confidence we boost the single market."

Next steps

The European Parliament and the European Council have committed to adopting the package by the end of 2012. EU Member States will then have 18 months to implement the new ADR Directive.

Benefits of the new ADR rules:

- **Faster:** disputes can be settled within 90 days (30 days in ODR)
- **Cheaper:** procedures cost less (often under €50)
- **Easier:** ADR is less complicated than going to court

<http://ec.europa.eu/consumer-adr>



In brief

More needed on animal transport

A report on the welfare of animals in transit published by the EU Commission on 10 November concluded that more must be done despite the progress which has been made since new rules were introduced in 2005. In particular, it showed:

- Poor enforcement of EU rules;
- Poor use of navigation systems;
- Different interpretation of the rules in each EU country.

The EU Commission is now considering how to address these issues and optimise the checks carried out by national authorities.

Antibiotics Awareness Day

Cold? Flu? Take care, not antibiotics. This was the key message of the EU's annual Antibiotics Awareness Day, launched on 18 November by the EU Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention & Control. It underlined the importance of using antibiotics responsibly and the risks of inappropriate use, such as prolonged illnesses and hospital stays.

This year's campaign was aimed at health practitioners and the general public across the EU.

Vet Week roadshow in Scotland & Bulgaria

The EU Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumers joined chefs, celebrities, producers and consumers at the Good Food Show in Scotland & the International Food and Drink Show in Bulgaria to promote World Veterinary Year 2011 & educate EU citizens about the importance of animal health, welfare and food safety.

EU Budget 2014-2020

Commission unveils ambitious new Health & Consumer Programmes

EU Commissioner John Dalli unveiled new "Health for Growth" and "Consumer" Programmes for 2014-2020 on November 9. They will ensure funding for actions to foster healthy, active and empowered EU citizens, consumer information as well as contributing to economic growth.

More specifically, in the six year period, €446 million has been earmarked for "Health and Growth" actions and €197 million for "Consumers". "These programmes are about people; they are about fostering the conditions for people to live to their full potential," said Dalli.

Priorities for 2014-2020

Health for Growth:

- Innovative & sustainable health systems
- Access to better & safer healthcare
- Preventing disease & promoting health
- Protection from cross-border health threats

Consumers:

- Product safety
- Market surveillance
- Information & education
- Consumer rights & redress
- Better cross-border protection

http://europa.eu/press_room/press_packs/multiannual_financial_framework_2014_2020/index_en.htm

Animal welfare

Dalli urges EU governments to implement ban on illegal hen cages



ped up in recent years and the Commission has repeatedly reminded EU Member States of their responsibility to implement the legislation. Despite this, recent data shows that some will not meet the deadline.

What next?

Speaking at the October & November meetings of the EU Agriculture Council, Commissioner John Dalli underlined that "the Commission does not intend to postpone the deadline and will not hesitate to start, in 2012, infringement procedures in cases of non-compliance. Failure to implement the legislation has consequences for animal welfare, consumer confidence and functioning of the single market."

The EU's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) will check compliance through inspections from early 2012.

The European Commission is putting pressure on EU countries to implement a ban on the use of unenriched cages for laying hens by the deadline of 1 January 2012. The decision for the ban – taken in 1999 – was to improve the welfare for laying hens by ensuring cages provided adequate space and structures for birds e.g. nests and perches.

Compliance with the EU's laying hens Directive (1999/74/EC) has been step-

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/laying_hens_en.htm

Online shopping

Dalli commits to reduce barriers to cross-border online shopping



Ever been tempted by a cheap online offer from another EU country but wondered how reliable it is to shop abroad? The European Consumer Centres' Network (ECC-Net) has conducted a sample test, monitoring purchasing, delivery and return of over 300 goods bought online across Europe.

Key findings published in the report, *State of the eUnion*, include the delivery success rate - 94%, up 30% from 2003 - and website usability. 60% of sites tested proved unsuitable for online shoppers abroad because of delivery restrictions or limited language and payment options.

Returns and refunds were also a problem: while product costs were reimbursed 90% of the time, only 57% of delivery costs were repaid. Commissioner John Dalli said these barriers "limit consumer choice and undermine confidence in the single market. I am determined to continue the work to abolish them."

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/ecc/consumer_reports_en.htm

Online shopping

Buying tickets online? EU enquiry finds sites are safer

88% of websites selling tickets for sports and cultural events now comply with EU consumer rules, providing clear and accurate information on price, terms and conditions and trader details. It follows an EU "sweep" investigation into problematic sites in the EU, Iceland and Norway, the results of which were published in October.

A "sweep" is an EU investigation and enforcement action to check for compliance with consumer protection laws. It

is targeted at a particular sector to see where consumer rights are being compromised or denied and may be followed up by legal action.

Enforcement "sweeps" are delivering results, targeting problematic sectors and cleaning up the market.

John Dalli

Buying tickets online? What to look out for:

- Contact details of the trader
- Clear and complete information on the price, including all taxes
- The terms and conditions, especially for delivery

"Sweeps" are proving increasingly effective in deterring illegal business practice by making pricing clear and information truthful.

EU Commissioner, John Dalli, said the results represented "a major achievement for EU consumers" at a time when more people are using the internet to check entertainment options.

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/enforcement/sweep/online_ticket_sales/index_en.htm

In brief

New rules on self-extinguishing cigarettes come into force

Only cigarettes which go out automatically will now be sold on the EU market after new rules came into force on 18 November. The so-called 'Lower Ignition Propensity' (LIP) cigarettes will burn more slowly and go out after a minute of not being puffed.

Services markets underperform in latest Consumers' Scoreboard

Consumers are unsatisfied with the way in which financial and network service markets operate according to the 6th Consumer Markets' Scoreboard, published in October. Investment services, mortgage loans, electricity and water provision were rated lowest.

The Scoreboard ranks 51 consumer markets on trust, satisfaction, choice, price, problem solving and handling of complaints to identify which markets are most likely to fail consumers.

Following the latest results, the EU will launch two market studies on consumer credit, ahead of the review of the Consumer Credit Directive in 2013, and fuels. Fuels, which account for a major part of household budgets, ranked second lowest of the goods markets.

CAP reform: a new partnership for the EU and its farmers

New legal proposals for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) presented on 12 October will help the EU achieve a more competitive and sustainable agricultural sector and more vibrant rural areas. They maintain all obligations for food safety and animal welfare, but are more ambitious in economic and ecological terms. For more, visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/index_en.htm

Health

Experts deliver important messages at the Gastein Health Forum



Director-General for Health and Consumers, Paola Testori-Coggi addresses delegates in Gastein

EU Commissioner John Dalli and Director General for Health and Consumers, Paola Testori-Coggi, were among 600 health policy experts who took part in the 14th European Forum of Gastein.

Gastein is considered the Davos Forum for Health. This year's theme was "Innovation and wellbeing: European health in 2020 and beyond". Discussions included active and healthy ageing, health technology assessment, non-communicable diseases and the future of medicine.

"By the end of this decade, around a third of all Europeans will be 65 years old or over," said Paola Testori-Coggi in her opening address. "We want all those involved in technology and health to join forces so that our population's lives are spent as healthy, active and fulfilling as possible."

<http://www.ehfg.org/press.html>

Ex-smokers are Unstoppable campaign

Ex-smokers never stop!



Runners pass the Ex-smokers' tour bus during the Dublin marathon.

Photo: Jason Clarke Photography

It's done a marathon in Dublin, freshers' week in Vienna and clubbing in Paris. It's played basketball in Lithuania, biked around Bucharest and still found time to join Lenny Kravitz in Prague.

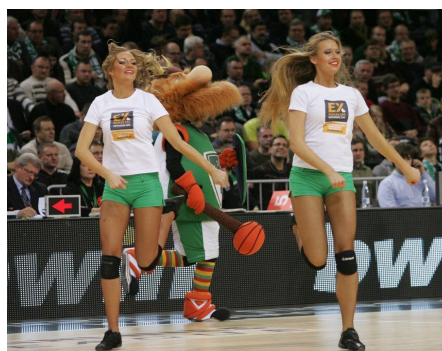
What is it? The EU's "Ex-smokers are Unstoppable" campaign! It has been appearing at major music, culture and sports events across the EU to promote the benefits of a tobacco free lifestyle to the population's 25-34 year olds.

Quit smoking in 2012

If you're struggling to think of New Year's resolutions as the festive period approaches, why not give up smoking with the help of *iCoach*, the EU's on-line tool to help, motivate and advise you on quitting smoking.

iCoach now has over 10 000 registered users in Poland, Romania, the UK, Italy & Spain and over 150 000 across the whole of the EU.

Visit the website to find out more.



Cheerleaders at the Zalgiris-Unicaja basketball Euroleague game in October

www.exsmokers.eu

EU Presidency

EU Budget Conference



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk speaks with European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek.

A two day conference on the future of the EU budget was held in Brussels on 20-21 October as part of the negotiations on the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020. 40 MEPs and 100 MPs from national parliaments took part, alongside representatives from the EU institutions.

Delegates examined the EU's spending priorities for the future, efficiency and added value of the EU budget and the future of the EU's own resources.

The MFF remains one of the largest priorities on the agenda for Denmark's Presidency of the EU which will run from 1 January to 30 June 2012.



www.pl2011.eu



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