

HEALTH AND CONSUMER VOICE



Keeping high profile - *Tonio Borg delivers a statement on horsemeat at the European Parliament (EP) plenary session in Strasbourg, 12 March 2013. Source: EP*

Horsemeat

EU Action Plan to tackle fraudulent food practices

Tonio Borg, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, has proposed a 5-point Action Plan to address the shortcomings identified in Europe's food supply chain. The Action Plan is a response to the recent horsemeat affair first identified by the Irish food inspectors who had found horsemeat in foods marketed as frozen «beef burgers» in a number of UK supermarkets.

The Plan includes the following actions to be implemented by 2014:

1. Develop synergies between enforcement authorities, ensure rapid exchange of information on intentional violations of food chain rules, promote the involvement of Europol in investigations;
2. Ensure that rules on horse passports are enforced correctly, that passports are delivered only by competent authorities and that national databases are created;
3. Require that financial penalties for intentional violations of food chain rules be established at sufficiently dissuasive levels, and that control plans in the Member States include unannounced controls;
4. Adopt rules on mandatory origin labelling of meat (sheep, goat, pig, poultry, horse, rabbit, etc.) and deliver a report in autumn 2013 on the possible extension of mandatory origin labelling to all types of meat used as ingredient in foods;
5. Present & assess the results of the controls currently carried out in the EU countries.

The controls were proposed by Commissioner Borg, and endorsed by the EU countries, in February. They are carried out to detect the presence of undeclared horsemeat in foods marketed as containing beef, as well as possible residues of phenylbutazone in horsemeat. Phenylbutazone is an anti-inflammatory drug for the short term treatment of pain and fever in animals.

The European Commission will assess the results of these controls by the 15th of April. The first results show no evidence of any food safety concern, but point towards deceptive practices in several EU countries.

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EP NEWS

New better rules for consumer redress

On 12 March 2013, the European Parliament voted to support the new legislation on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) proposed by the European Commission in 2011.

ADR will ensure that **consumers can turn to alternative dispute resolution entities** for all kinds of contractual disputes that they have with traders, no matter what they purchased and whether they purchased it online or offline, in their country or across borders.

ODR regulation foresees **an EU-wide online platform will be set up** for handling consumer disputes that arise from online transactions. The platform will link all the national ADR entities and will operate in all EU languages.

Member States will have two years to implement the ADR/ODR rules. The ODR platform will be operational at the end of 2015.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Full EU ban on animal testing for cosmetics



“ *The process was long, but it has finally come to fruition. I am confident that this news will please many European citizens who have shared with us the view that animals should not suffer for the sake of producing cosmetics* ”

– wrote Commissioner Tonio Borg on his «Personally Speaking» blog.

The full EU ban on animal testing for cosmetics entered into force on 11 March 2013. On that day, a 10-year process was completed, which saw the gradual introduction of different bans i.e. on animal testing of finished cosmetic products in 2004, cosmetic ingredients in 2009 and on the marketing of cosmetic products and ingredients tested on animals in 2009. To this marketing ban an exception for complex tests still applied until 11 March 2013.

The date of 11 March puts an end to this last exception. This means that companies will not be able to carry out the tests outside the EU for cosmetic purposes and rely on the results in the EU. At the same time, more research is needed on alternative methods to animal testing. The European Commission made 238 million EUR available for research in the period 2007-2011.

HEALTH

Commission calls to invest in health



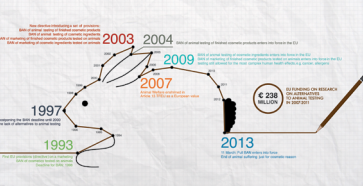
Investing in health not only improves the citizens' health and quality of life, but also supports economic growth and can generate savings. These are the main conclusions of the «Investing in Health» paper, which is part of the «Social Investment Package» published by the European Commission.

The Commission recommends to EU countries reforming their health systems to ensure the twin aims of providing access to high quality healthcare and using public resources more efficiently. Accordingly, the paper covers 3 themes: investing in sustainable health systems; investing in people's health; and investing in reducing health inequalities. Specific areas include strengthening primary care and encouraging the use of less expensive equivalent (generic) drugs.

Commissioner Tonio Borg discussed the paper with the EU ministers at the Informal Health Council in Dublin, and presented it to 52 European public health organisations in the EU Health Policy Forum on 9 April 2013.

FOLLOW THE RABBIT

CONNECTING THE DOTS FOR ANIMALS: HISTORY OF THE EU BAN ON ANIMAL TESTING FOR COSMETICS



EC set to improve product safety

When a children's outfit, or another product, enters the EU market, we must make sure it can be easily identified and traced back. In case this product poses a risk, authorities in EU countries must exchange information to efficiently remove it from the market. This is why the European Commission proposed the Product Safety and Market Surveillance Package, which aims to have a single rule-book and promote enhanced cooperation.

The novelties of the Package include:

- i) information on the country of origin and the name and address of the manufacturer will need to appear on the labels of all consumer products;
- ii) manufacturers will be required to inform the public authorities how they have ensured that their products are safe;
- iii) permanent bans of dangerous products will become easier to establish.

The Package will be now discussed in the European Parliament and in the Council. It is expected to come into effect in 2015.

The Package includes:

- » a proposal for a Consumer Product Safety Regulation
- » a proposal for a Market Surveillance Regulation
- » a Communication from the Commission on more product safety and better market surveillance in the Single Market for products
- » a Communication from the Commission on 20 actions for safer and compliant products for Europe: a multi-annual plan for the surveillance

Exposure to second hand smoking reduced



“Citizens’ exposure to smoking, however, still varies widely across the EU and there is a long way to go to make «Smoke Free Europe» a reality.”

– said Tonio Borg, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy.

You do not have to smoke cigarettes to experience their negative effect on your health. More than 70 000 adults died due to exposure to tobacco smoke in the EU in 2002. Many of them were non-smokers exposed to the so called ‘second hand smoking’, for instance at workplaces.

The good news is that the number of Europeans exposed to second hand smoke in bars fell from 46% in 2009 to 28% in 2012. This data comes from the latest report on «Smoke Free Environments» published by the European Commission.

The report also shows that all EU countries have adopted measures to protect citizens against exposure to tobacco smoke. The strictest measures were introduced by Ireland, the UK, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Spain.

Commission appeals on bees

At the vote on 15 March, EU countries did not reach a binding decision on the Commission's proposal to ban 3 pesticides—nicotinoids: clothianidin, imidacloprid and thiametoxam. The proposal is a response to the European Food Safety Authority's scientific report which identified risks to bees from neonicotinoids. The Commission sent the original text to an appeals committee.

What does ▼ mean?

The black inverted triangle is the new symbol to appear starting September 2013 on medicines subject to additional monitoring. This symbol will flag to patients and doctors that a medicinal product is still monitored. The accompanying text will encourage them to report any unexpected adverse reactions.

Cooking up a storm in Paris



From Holsteins to horses, tourteau de fromage to rillettes de canard: the best of French agriculture, and its produce, was on display at the Salon International de l'Agriculture. DG Health & Consumers was there for people willing to cook and learn about the importance of animal health and welfare.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Better cooperation on consumer rules needed, says Paola Testori-Coggi



Ensuring that existing consumer rules are enforced effectively and consistently all over Europe remains one of the EU's key priorities. This was the main message of the Consumer Summit which brought together 14 EU consumer ministers, secretaries of state and 480 stakeholders on 18-19 March. The consumer legislation is there but «consumers must be aware of it to be used», said Paola Testori-Coggi, Director

General for Health and Consumers.

Commissioner Tonio Borg pointed to the low level of consumer confidence and a high incidence of consumer problems identified in the EU Consumer Scoreboard published every year.

Participants also discussed the two reports resulting from the multi-stakeholder dialogues on how to increase the transparency of web comparison tools (e.g. price comparison websites) and environmental claims on products. Both reports are available online.

The discussions held at the Summit are the first step in a process to reshape the enforcement framework of consumer rights in the EU. The European Commission will soon launch legal studies and an online public consultation.

HEALTH

The worst can turn into something valuable



Petr Třešňák won the 1st award at the EU Health Prize for Journalists 2012 for the article «Adventures in ward 14» published in the Czech independent magazine Respekt. He tells us his story: «I decided to study journalism in high school and in my first University year I was offered a cooperation with «Respekt» magazine - the best political magazine of the era founded by dissidents at the end of the communist regime».

«I began with field reporting and now I do big feature articles about social issues, health, history. I especially write about neurology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, mental illnesses, rare diseases and hospice care».

«I received an email informing me about the Health Prize. It's a great opportunity for a journalist coming from a small country to win it. My article is about the fact that people who seem most lost give you the biggest chance to learn something. If you are able to stay human even when there's no light at the end of tunnel and if you can think outside of the box, sometimes the worst can turn into something valuable and inspirational».

COMING UP

Social media thematic weeks on consumer and health issues during the European Year of Citizens 2013:

27-31 May:

Product Safety Week – focus on RAPEX & General Product Safety Directive

18-22 November:

Patients' rights – focus on cross-border healthcare & active and healthy ageing

2-6 December:

Consumer rights – focus on concrete benefits for EU citizens

TOP TWEETS

 **EU Consumer Affairs** @EU_Consumer

#EU funded #consumerclassroom is now online to provide teaching resources for #consumer education bit.ly/1003Gkb #WCRD2013

8 RETWEETS 2 FAVORITES

12:08 PM - 15 Mar 13

 **EU Health** @EU_Health

New symbol to identify #medicines undergoing additional monitoring bit.ly/Xsi7P9 #pharmacovigilance

19 RETWEETS

1:21 PM - 7 Mar 13

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



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