

# HEALTH AND CONSUMER VOICE

## How do we make online shopping a safe business for consumers?

With 41% of consumers engaging in online shopping in 2013 (compared to 38% in 2012), domestic online shopping is on the up in the EU. Cross-border online shopping is however lagging behind, with a more modest increase from 9.6% to 11% in 2013. Significantly, half of European consumers still perceive cross-border transactions to be too risky.

It is my role as Commissioner for Consumer Policy to unleash the full potential of e-commerce across Europe, by creating an environment which is favourable to consumers. In the run up to the winter sales, I want to take stock of the Commission's recent actions to promote and enhance consumers' rights. I also wish to stress the crucial part played by European Consumer Centres and national enforcement bodies in empowering and defending the rights of Europe's 500 million consumers.



Neven Mimica  
EU Commissioner for Consumer Policy  
*Photo by Bernardo Pérez/Ediciones el País*

Consumers will find it easier to take the leap to cross-border shopping if they are more aware of their rights. Thus, the Commission, in close cooperation with Member States, has organised national

awareness-raising consumer rights campaigns. They proved to be particularly effective for several new Member States. Given these successes, the next EU campaign will now focus on Croatia.

The Commission adopted in 2013 two new laws on Alternative Dispute Resolution and Online Dispute Resolution (ADR/ODR). Both laws will enable consumers and traders to solve their disputes without having to go to court, thus ensuring faster, cheaper and most importantly, accessible conflict resolution. Member States have until July 2015 to implement the ADR/ODR rules.

Consumers operate in an increasingly complex environment; it is my duty, and that of national authorities, to support consumers and to do our utmost to strengthen their trust in the on-line single market.

### TOP TWEETS



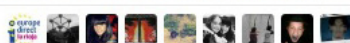
**EU Consumer Affairs** ✓  
@EU\_Consumer

At the end of the Q&A session w. Aniturri Bhi school #Spain, winner of #consumerclassroom competition @MimicaEU pic.twitter.com/quOJhV25zx



11  
RETWEETS

4  
FAVORITES



**EU\_Health** ✓  
@EU\_Health

Have your say! #PublicConsultation on #patient #safety and quality of care bit.ly/18hS2r5. Deadline: 28.02.2014.

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10  
RETWEETS



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## INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

### Product Safety Package

The Product Safety Package, a series of proposals targeted at improving product safety and market surveillance, was adopted by the Commission in February 2013. The IMCO Committee in Parliament voted its report on 17 October.

Trilogues are still to start with the Council, once there is a potential solution to the question of a mandatory origin marking.

The objective is to achieve a first reading agreement before the European Parliamentary elections in 2014, in order to ensure that the Regulations within the package could be applicable as soon as possible in 2015 or 2016 at the latest.

### Tobacco Products Directive

The legislative process concerning the Tobacco Products Directive is on-going. The proposal was discussed on 21 June 2013 in Luxembourg by EU Health Ministers, who agreed on a "general approach". The EP Plenary in October 2013 passed a vote on the issue with a number of amendments. The Commission will support the co-legislators with a view to securing a first reading agreement during the current term of the European Parliament.



*This Christmas you can do something about it.*

## Best Wishes



## Antimicrobial resistance: everyone is responsible

The growth of potentially deadly bacteria, resistant to antibiotics, is an alarming public health threat in Europe and beyond. Antibiotics, which have allowed us to treat previously deadly bacterial infections and save many lives, are becoming less and less effective.

The misuse of antibiotics, i.e. taking them unnecessarily, leads to antibiotic resistance. This can have a knock-on effect on the health of whole communities.

The latest EU-wide survey on Antimicrobial Resistance reveals a persistent knowledge gap about appropriate use of antibiotics. A significant proportion of European citizens (60%) still think that antibiotics are effective against viruses. The report reveals a 5% decrease in the number of people taking antibiotics in 2013, since the last survey on this topic in 2009.

The Commission takes a holistic approach in tackling antimicrobial resistance with an Action Plan that involves many



Tonio Borg  
EU Commissioner for Health

sectors: human medicine, veterinary medicine, and practitioners: doctors, veterinarians, farmers, researchers, pharmacists and communicators.

This reflects our belief that everyone is responsible and that we must all work together to prevent the further spread of resistance and keep antibiotics working.

## Waste not, want not!



In Europe, we waste 90 million tonnes of food a year. Over 40% occurs at retail and consumer levels. This amounts to an average of 179kg per person. As shocking as the figure is, it is very easy to lose track of the food we waste on a daily basis.

Some tips could help you to make a difference:

- Plan your shopping list. What do you really need to fix your weekly meals?
- Check the "use by" and "best before" dates and sort your products accordingly.
- Serve smaller amounts of food. There can always be another helping!
- Use up the leftovers as snacks for the rest of the week or freeze them as ready-made meals to grab after long days at work.
- Set up a compost bin and turn your leftovers into garden food.

## eBilling - The smart way to monitor your consumption

Consumers should have access to objective and transparent energy consumption data in order to reap the benefits of energy markets in which companies compete for clients. It is such information that helps them find the most advantageous offers that suit their consumption patterns. Knowledge of what you consume will also result in being more aware and therefore more likely to consume less.

The Commission published a report in December proposing guidelines on how to provide simple and functional electronic bills, such as those presented on company websites, sent via email or on smartphone apps. The report also looked into best practices in personal energy data management services to the consumers, focusing on how to

better manage energy consumption at home. Such practices, if adopted, would ensure consumer 'buy-in' and set the basis for further consumer-oriented innovation. Innovation can also provide an important contribution to improve Europe's economic competitiveness through the development of products and services that can be exported outside the EU. Better conditions for consumers and industry can be a 'win-win' situation for Europe. Already, good practices exist in some Member States. This report highlights them as a guide for policy makers and stakeholders to consider in other Member States.

For more information about the Commission's work on energy and consumers see the Consumer website.

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/citizen/my\\_rights/energy\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/citizen/my_rights/energy_en.htm)

## Health inequalities: gaps in life expectancy and infant mortality narrow across the EU

The final conference of EU Joint Action on Health Inequalities, "Equity Action", will take place in January 2014. It will bring together international experts on health inequalities, such as Professor Sir Michael Marmot who has been a prominent actor in that field for the past 30 years. The participants will showcase the results of the joint action, assess the progress made on addressing health inequalities in the EU and consider opportunities and priorities for action.

According to the Marmot 2013 report on "Social Determinants and the Health Divide in the WHO European Region", the wide variation in life expectancy and infant mortality historically found between EU countries is narrowing. The gap between the longest and shortest life expectancy found in EU-27 decreased by 17% for men between 2007 and 2011 and 4% for women between 2006 and 2011. The average infant mortality in EU also fell during the same period - from 5.7 to 3.9 per 1000 live births.

European Health Commissioner, Tonio Borg, said: "Inequalities in health



in terms of life expectancy and in particular in infant mortality have been significantly reduced in the European Union in the past few years. This is encouraging. However, our commitment must be unwavering in order to address the continued gaps in health between social groups and between regions and Member States, as shown in this report". For more information about the conference, visit the website.

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/dyna/enews/enews.cfm?al\\_id=1436](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/dyna/enews/enews.cfm?al_id=1436)

## IN BRIEF

### Restricted use of four pesticides enters into force in December in a bid to save honeybees

Pesticides have been identified as one of several factors which may be responsible for the decline in the number of honey bee population in Europe.

The Commission adopted in May 2013 an EU-wide restriction on three pesticides belonging to the neonicotinoids family, and used in the treatment of plants and cereals attractive to bees. The restriction entered into force on December 1, and will be reviewed within two years.

The restricted use of Fipronil, a fourth pesticide used in the treatment of seeds, enters into force on 31 December 2013 and will also be submitted to review within two years.

### EFSA report on Asparthame

The European Food Safety Authority, EFSA published on 10 December an opinion on the re-evaluation of the food additive, aspartame. This re-evaluation forms part of a programme for the re-evaluation of all food additives approved before 2009. The Commission is now assessing the opinion and its possible impact.

### Protect yourself from Online Fraud!

A new report by the European Consumer Centre Network (ECC-Net) takes a look at the scams faced by consumers when shopping online.

It focuses on fraud in cross-border e-commerce and what consumers can do to protect themselves from online fraud.

Full report available on the Health and Consumers website News pages.



## Should the origin of meat be featured on labels?

A recently published Commission report on the possibility to extend mandatory origin labelling for all meat used as an ingredient will be the starting point for discussions with EU Member States and the European Parliament. Based on an external study, completed in July 2013, this report weighs up the need for the consumer to be informed and the feasibility of introducing mandatory origin labelling. It also provides a cost/benefit analysis, including the impact on the single market and international trade.

European Health Commissioner, Tonio

Borg welcomed the report: "In the wake of the horsemeat scandal, I pledged to bring forward the publication of this report. Its findings will serve as a solid basis to launch discussions with the Parliament and the Council on the balance to be struck between consumer information and economic considerations such as costs, competitiveness and trade".

Following these discussions, the Commission will consider what appropriate next steps should be taken. This may include tabling a legislative proposal to regulate the origin of meat used as an ingredient in food.

Nutrition Typical values (cooked as per instructions)			
	per 100g	per 1/4 pack	% adult
Energy kJ	1007	2014	
Energy kcal	241	482	
Protein	8.4g	16.8g	24%
Carbohydrate	20.6g	41.2g	37.3%
of which sugars	1.8g	3.6g	4.0%
Fat	18.8g	37.6g	39.1%
of which saturates	13.7g	27.4g	57.0%
mono-unsaturates	5.7g	11.4g	
polyunsaturates	5.9g	11.8g	
Fibre	1.5g	3.0g	
Salt	0.9g	1.8g	
of which sodium	0.50g	1.00g	7.5%
	0.20g	0.40g	16.7%

GDA = Adult Guideline Daily Amounts are based on a 70kg adult male. GDAs are guidelines and personal requirements vary depending on age, gender, weight and activity.

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/foodlabelling/proposed\\_legislation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/foodlabelling/proposed_legislation_en.htm)

## Ask the Director General - World AIDS Day

**Mrs Testori Coggi, how are people with HIV coping in the EU and how is the Commission helping to address discrimination?**

In 2012\* nearly 30 000 new cases of HIV were reported in the 30 EU and EEA countries. Worryingly, nearly half (49%) of those who tested positive for HIV were diagnosed late in the course of their infection.

We know that early treatment leads to better health outcomes and less likelihood to transmit HIV to others. However, due to stigma, people with HIV/AIDS in the EU are afraid of being tested and of losing their jobs. This costs lives.

Stronger focus will be put on fighting discrimination and breaking down barriers to prevention and treatment in the updated EU Action Plan on HIV/



*Paola Testori Coggi  
Director General  
for Health and Consumers*

AIDS, to be published soon by the Commission. We will continue to put HIV-related discrimination and other forms of discrimination in healthcare in the spotlight throughout 2014, starting with a conference in Brussels on 18 March entitled "Health in Europe - making it fairer".

\* Latest data available.

## COMING UP

December 2013

The proposal for a revision of the legislation on veterinary medicines is on track to be adopted in February 2013. The review will seek to increase the availability of medicines, reduce administrative burdens and address the issues related to anti-microbial resistance.

12 Feb. in Brussels

**Animal Welfare Conference**

Conference to launch the mid-term report on the EU Animal Welfare Strategy - achievements and challenges. MEPs, stakeholders and NGOs will discuss the progress and future of the AW strategy.



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