

HEALTH AND CONSUMER VOICE

Borg: New tobacco rules make «smoking less attractive»



Scaling up the action: Commissioner Tonio Borg in front of a mock-up for new cigarette packaging

Major changes to the EU's rules for tobacco products were proposed by Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, Tonio Borg, on 19 December.

The proposals aim to bring tobacco legislation up-to-date and make smoking less attractive to younger

people. They target manufacture, presentation and trade in tobacco products.

Key elements include:

- A ban on tobacco products with strong flavourings, e.g. vanilla, that mask the taste of tobacco (except pipe tobacco, cigars and cigarillos);
- Mandatory, pictorial health warnings covering at least 75% of the front and back of cigarette packages and roll-your-own tobacco;
- A continued ban on "snus" outside of Sweden;
- Authorisation under pharmaceutical legislation of products containing nicotine above certain limits, e.g. e-cigarettes;
- Regulating cross-border distance sales of tobacco products;
- A new EU-wide tracking and tracing system to protect against illegal trade in tobacco products.

"Tobacco products should look and taste like tobacco products," said Borg. "This proposal ensures that attractive packaging and flavourings are not used as a marketing

strategy [and that people get] the clear message that the product they buy damages their health."

The proposals respond to new scientific evidence and international developments such as the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control which entered into force in 2005.

The Tobacco Products Directive was last revised in 2001. The proposals are now under discussion in the European Parliament and Council. They should come into force in 2015-2016.

The cost of smoking...

- Lives: 700 000 EU deaths linked to tobacco, every year
- Money: €25 billion on smoking related diseases, every year
- Quality of life: 50% of smokers die early and spend many more years in poor health
- Youth: 94% of smokers start at the age below 25



http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/products/revision/index_en.htm

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EP NEWS

MEPs back new rules for dispute resolution

Members of the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumers' Committee gave their support to proposed new EU rules for Alternative and Online Dispute Resolution (ADR/ODR) at a meeting in December.

The proposals – which must be formally approved by the EP and Council – will give consumers access to simpler, faster and cheaper methods to resolve contractual disputes and reach out-of-court settlements with traders. A new online EU platform will also help shoppers to resolve online cross-border disputes and guide them to the most appropriate resolution scheme.

Louis Grech and Róza Thun, the EP's rapporteurs on ADR and ODR, said the new rules would give consumers and traders the «confidence to buy and sell throughout the EU».

Once approved, EU countries will have up to two years to apply the ADR Directive. The ODR platform will become operational in 2015.

TOP TIP!



Stop Food Waste! Watch the European Commission's latest campaign video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9K72SHEPOCE>

Join Barça and quit smoking in 2013



One team: from left, FC Barcelona President, Sandro Rosell, Director-General for Health & Consumers, Paola Testori-Coggi & Dr. Jordi Mones

Already struggling with your New Year's resolution to quit smoking? Stay focussed on your goal with help from the «FC Barcelona iCoach», a free digital tool launched by Barça and the European Commission on 1 December.

Available as a desktop and mobile application, the FCB iCoach gives users personalised daily tips from

Barça's staff, including its coach, medical doctor and chef.

It is a special version of the highly successful «iCoach» which has already attracted over 300 000 users since it was launched in 2011 as part of the European Commission's «Ex-Smokers are Unstoppable» campaign.

Paola Testori-Coggi, Director-General for Health and Consumers, joined Barça for the launch at Camp Nou Stadium ahead of their Primera Division game against Bilbao.

«We hope that the tools and lessons gathered from our extensive experience of anti-tobacco initiatives, combined with the status of Barça, can inspire even more people to live a smoke-free life,» she said.



<http://www.quitsmokingwithbarca.eu>

Boosting eHealth: new EU Action Plan

Managing your health and wellbeing with the help of digital and online tools is set to become easier and more commonplace following the adoption of a second EU Action Plan for eHealth.

This Action Plan – which runs from 2012 to 2020 – aims to make healthcare more efficient, cost-effective and patient oriented.

Studies show that eHealth can have significant economic advantages: in Italy alone the introduction of digital technologies in the health sector is estimated to save over €12 billion. It also has the potential to significantly reduce the number of unnecessary medical appointments and hospital stays.

“eHealth brings healthcare closer to people,” said Commissioner Tonio Borg, who presented the proposals alongside Neelie Kroes, Commission Vice-President responsible for the Digital Agenda. “The Action Plan will help turn the eHealth potential into better care for our citizens.”

In 2014, the Commission will also present ideas to boost Mobile Health, e.g. real-time monitoring of patients' vital signs via mobile telemedicine.

Plan targets five key areas:

- Awareness and skills, to make better use of eHealth;
- Proactive patient management of personal health;
- Improved interoperability of different healthcare systems;
- A clearer legal framework;
- Support for eHealth start-up businesses, including free legal advice and funding.



http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=9156

Key service markets failing consumers



Key service markets – including banking, telecom and energy services – are failing consumers, according to the 8th Consumer Markets Scoreboard published in December 2012.

Banking performed worst, with many consumers struggling to compare different fees and conditions and switch providers. Second-hand cars ranked bottom of the goods markets rankings with the lowest scores

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_research/editions/docs/8th_edition_scoreboard_en.pdf

Unfair terms on 69% of digital sales sites

Buying games, music, videos and books has never been faster. But the time saved by online shopping could now be spent battling unfair terms and chasing missing information, according to a recent EU study of 333 websites selling digital content.

The «sweep», published in December, found that over 75% of the websites checked do not seem to comply with consumer protection rules. The main problems were unfair terms (69%), lack of information on the right of withdrawal (42%) and missing contact information (36% of websites).

A parallel study examined geographical restrictions to downloaded digital content and online games that target children. It found that 73% of websites failed to inform customers whether they could use downloaded content in another country and 87% of games advertised as «free» in-

on trust and comparability and the highest incidence of problems.

“Consumer expenditure accounts for 56% of overall European GDP,” said Commissioner Tonio Borg. “Markets whose consumers are confused, misled or have little choice will be less competitive at a cost to consumers and the economy as a whole.”

The Consumer Markets Scoreboard tracked consumer conditions in 51 markets, accounting for around 60% of household expenditure. It is used to identify underperforming markets, address problems and restore consumer confidence. The Commission will follow-up with two studies: on second-hand cars and consumer vulnerability.

involved payment at a later stage.

“The EU sweep shows that a majority of checked websites do not provide easy access to key contractual terms. In the coming months, national authorities will be working to get these websites on the right track,” said Commissioner Tonio Borg. Information must be clarified or corrected; failure to do so may result in legal action or website closure.

Authorities must report back to the Commission by autumn 2013.

Did you know?

- Contract terms must be clearly indicated on websites
- Traders must inform customers, before they buy digital content, that they lose the right to withdrawal once downloading has begun
- Traders are obliged to indicate their identity, email and physical address on their website.

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/enforcement/sweeps_en.htm

IN BRIEF

Health Claims Regulation in force

Only 222 permitted health claims, as well as those still under consideration by the European Food Safety Authority, can be used on food packaging in the EU following the entry into force of the Health Claims Regulation on 14 December 2012. The list protects consumers against misleading health claims and is based on 44,000 claims submitted to the Commission by EU countries.

Animal welfare experts discussed pig castration

Stakeholders from the pig sector met with the EU Commission in December to look at alternatives to surgical pig castration. Discussions included the voluntary European Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration, the alternatives already in use and a possible end to surgical castration in the EU by 1 January 2018.

MEPs backed new rules for specialised foods

Proposed changes to the EU rules for specialised foods, which include baby foods and foods for allergy sufferers, received the backing of the EP Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety in December. A formal EP vote is expected in the February/March plenary session.

Active & healthy ageing video

Watch the European Innovation Partnership’s new video to promote Active and Healthy Ageing:

<http://youtu.be/Cqcc9bwi5tg>

Třešňák wins 4th EU Health Journalist Prize



Family photo: Commissioner Tonio Borg with the winners nominees and members of jury

Petr Třešňák (journalist of the Czech magazine «Respekt») was awarded the 2012 EU Health Journalist Prize at a ceremony in Brussels on 29 January. His article, «Adventures in ward 14», examined the relationship between patients and nurses in psychiatric hospitals.

Second prize went to Ailbhe Jordan (Ireland) for an article on the cost and effectiveness of cancer screening programmes and third prize to Daniela Cipolloni (Italy) for an article on the usefulness of umbilical-cord blood banks. Tobias Zick (Germany) won the special prize for smoking cessation.

The EU's Health Prize for Journalism stimulates high-quality journalism and raises awareness of healthcare issues and patient related policy initiatives. This year's competition received entries from 394 journalists from across the EU.



http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/journalist_prize/index_en.htm

EU remains committed to fighting HIV

HIV/AIDS «remains a serious health and social threat,» said Commissioners Tonio Borg and Andris Piebalgs in a statement to mark World AIDS Day on 1 December.

They cited a need to «keep up the momentum» in preventing, diagnosing and treating the disease, in particular by reducing the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS and improving access to antiretroviral drugs in developing countries.

34 million people in the world live with HIV/AIDS. There were 2.5 mil-

lion new infections reported in 2011, of which 28 000 in Europe. AIDS is the leading cause of death in Sub-Saharan Africa and fourth leading cause of death worldwide.

“The EU will remain at the forefront of the fight,” said the Commissioners. It will work with partners, agencies and countries across the world to implement strategies to combat the HIV/AIDS. It will also continue to provide strong political and financial support to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.



http://ec.europa.eu/health/sti_prevention/hiv_aids/index_en.htm

COMING UP

Irish EU Presidency (Jan-June)

Priorities include discussions over the future EU budget, the Single Market Act, as well as Commission proposals for new Medical Devices and Clinical Trials Directives. Dublin will also host the 2013 eHealth week in May.

Also...

- World Cancer Day: 4 February
- Review of the General Product Safety Directive February/March
- EU Consumer Summit: 18-19 March

TOP TWEETS



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Take a look at our #eutobacco #infographic to find out how many people smoke in #EU and the #health related costs bit.ly/VRmRbL

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



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