

HEALTH AND CONSUMER *VOICE*

EU victory in war against tobacco

Parliament gives seal of approval to the revised Tobacco Product Directive

Every year, 700,000 Europeans die from smoking-related causes. Considering tobacco's devastating effect on health, the endorsement by the European Parliament on 26 February of the revised Tobacco Products Directive, marks a resounding victory for EU public health policy. By ensuring that tobacco products look and taste like tobacco, the new harmonised rules will help reduce the number of people who start smoking in the EU, especially among young persons.

Of central importance to this are: the large mandatory picture and text warnings to be placed on both sides of the cigarette packs and roll-your-own tobacco. These will serve as effective reminders of the severe health consequences of smoking and help people make well-informed choices.

With 70% of smokers in Europe starting before the age of 18 and 94% before the age of 25, the prohibition of characterising flavours, such as fruit or menthol, which have been found to facilitate the uptake of smoking by masking harsher tobacco flavours, is particularly fitting. The same holds true for the ban on attractive lipstick-style cigarette packages which are particularly appealing to young and adolescent women.

Finally, the balanced approach on nicotine-containing electronic cigarettes means that consumers will still be able to buy and use these products, but they can now be assured of their safety and quality.

The positive vote by the Parliament is a great milestone in public health. It marks one of the final



Tonio Borg
EU Commissioner for Health

steps before the entry into force of the new measures, which collectively aim to reduce the number of smokers in the EU by 2% by 2020.

TOP TWEETS

 **EU Consumer Affairs** 
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INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

Clinical Trials

An agreement between Council and the European Parliament regarding the adoption of the Regulation on clinical trials on medicinal products for human use, repealing Directive 2001/20/EC, was reached in December 2013.

The lead committee of the European Parliament (ENVI) voted unanimously in favour of the agreed text in January. The EP vote in plenary is scheduled for 3 April with a view to reaching an agreement in Council soon after.

Publication in the Official Journal can be expected for May/June 2014 and the application of the new rules will start two years after (mid 2016).

Product Safety

Progress on the Product Safety and Market Surveillance proposals has currently slowed down due to Member State divisions over the provision on origin marking.

The Commission's proposals for a new Regulation on Consumer Product Safety and for a new Regulation on Market Surveillance have little chance of being adopted under the current European Parliament, which is scheduled to vote on the two proposed Regulations in the last plenary meeting of its legislative mandate (15/16 April 2014).

The Commission remains committed to working towards their adoption, and if the new Parliament confirms its predecessor's position, the legislative process would continue in second reading after the elections."

Effectively protecting EU citizens on a budget



Neven Mimica
EU Commissioner for Consumer Policy

0.05 € per citizen per year. This is what the European Consumer Programme 2014-2020 will cost each citizen, to support all EU countries' consumer organisations in making the single market safer and consumer-friendly.

With a total budget of € 188.8 million, the Programme, adopted in January 2014, builds on the most

successful elements of the previous programme. With this instrument the Commission will continue co-financing European Consumer Centres, which defend consumers' interests across Europe. The centres helped more than 80,000 people in 2013 alone. Also in the interest of consumers, the Commission will encourage Member States to take forward alternative redress mechanisms, offering consumers and traders a rapid and low-cost out of court resolution of their conflicts.

The challenges and threats inherent to e-commerce will also be addressed. The new programme will support capacity-building of national enforcement authorities to improve cross-border cooperation on EU Consumer Law infringement cases.

The implementation of the programme is due to start in March 2014.

Horsemeat: what have we achieved one year on?

About a year ago, the horsemeat scandal made headline news across Europe and even further afield. The story that horsemeat was being passed off as beef exposed the complex nature of our globalised food supply chain. It also demonstrated that fraudsters were taking advantage of weaknesses in the system to the detriment of both legitimate businesses and consumers. As a consequence, consumer trust and confidence in the food industry hit an all-time low.

The Commission took swift action through its European Rapid Alert System, which links up all the competent national authorities to trace the origin of the problem. An action plan was also launched by the Commission which outlined a series of measures to strengthen the weaknesses identified in the system. Featuring amongst these were: coordinated plans for EU-wide horsemeat DNA testing, the setting up of a "European Food Fraud Network" which has already been dealing with 20 such cases, revising the rules on



horse identification, and strengthening controls and financial penalties. On horse identification, Member States will develop a central database to collect horse passport data, making fraudulent alterations more difficult. On controls and penalties, EU legislation is also being amended to ensure that penalties are at least equal to the fraudulent gains that criminals would expect to make.

Consumers have witnessed a pan-European response in full transparency which has been swift, effective and comprehensive. We continue to work with all the actors involved to ensure that identified gaps are closed.

Electromagnetic fields

Could mobile phones or broadcast transmitters have an impact on public health? Have your say!

The European Commission and its Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) have launched a public consultation on SCENIHR's draft opinion "Potential health effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF)." The Committee was given the task of updating the 2009 opinions, in the light of newly available information.

Participants have until 16 April to comment on the draft opinion. Issues addressed in the opinion include the potential increased risk of brain or ear cancer related to intensive use of mobile phones or the potential association between exposure to broadcast transmitters and a higher rate of childhood cancer - including childhood leukaemia.



In addition to the public consultation, the draft opinion will also be subject to a public hearing in Athens, Greece, on 27 March 2014. A workshop on EMF will follow on 28 March.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/consultations/public_consultations/scenihr_consultation_19_en.htm

European Consumer Centres helped more than 80,000 EU consumers in 2013



Renting a car in another country is usually a straight forward business, but sometimes you end up paying hidden charges you didn't know about when signing the agreement. Ordering online is another easy thing to do, though the goods might never arrive.

The European Consumer Centres Network (ECC) can help if you are looking for a cheap, convenient and effective way to solve a cross-border dispute. In fact, over 80,000 consumers across Europe asked the ECC network for help in 2013, of which 32,000 lodged a complaint.

Of last year's registered complaints, air transport topped the list, followed by car rentals. Other reported issues related to household equipment, the purchase of tickets for sporting and cultural events and time shares. The ECC network found an amicable solution between consumers and traders in over 43% of cases. Another 17% of cases were transferred to another entity.

For more information, visit the ECC Network's webpage below.

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

IN BRIEF

Health Inequalities Conference

Last 23 January, the 'Equity Action' Final Conference marked the end of the Joint Action on Health Inequalities. Commissioner Borg emphasised that health inequalities were now an integral part of European policy making and economic governance processes. However, he also cautioned that 'a lot more has to be done'.

Adoption of the Health Programme

With its budget of €450 million, the new health programme aims to support and add value to Member State policies of improving people's health and reducing health inequalities by promoting health, encouraging innovation in health, increasing the sustainability of health systems and protecting EU citizens from serious cross-border health threats.

Public consultation on fragrance allergens

Commission has launched a public consultation on changes to the Cosmetics Regulation regarding fragrance allergens.

Should additional allergens be subject to individual labelling on the packaging? Should there be a ban on HICC, atranol and chloroatranol, 3 allergens found unsafe by Commission Scientific Committee "SCCS"? Have your say!



Animal Welfare: everyone is responsible

“Most Europeans attach great importance to the ethical treatment of animals. In fact, since 2009, EU law has recognised animals as sentient beings. Attitudes regarding animal welfare have strongly evolved over the past four decades. This is also what we observed at the conference held in February 2014 to mark the mid-term review of our EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015.

During the event, we viewed several video and live testimonials from various actors in the food chain. Though varied in their approach, they

all boiled down to the same simple message: ‘Everyone is responsible’. Researchers, farmers, veterinarians, transporters, policy makers, public enforcement officers, retailers and educators all have a role to play. They described how they had adjusted their daily work to factor in the concept of animal welfare, which is so closely connected to animal health and food safety.

We welcome this positive trend and we will continue working so that it spreads across Europe and further afield, to the benefit of us all.”

The Animal Welfare Unit – SANCO G3

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/information_sources/ahw_events_en.htm

Ask the Director General -

Were you vaccinated for seasonal flu this winter?

Would you recommend it to others?



Paola Testori Coggi
Director General
for Health and Consumers

Yes, I was vaccinated this winter, as I am every winter since the vaccine was developed. It is quick and efficient. The injection is done in a matter of seconds, in return for one year's protection against the flu.

Influenza is a highly contagious virus: a sneeze or a cough are enough to pass the germs on to the people around you, family members and colleagues included. Though many of us bounce back from the flu fairly quickly, we must keep in mind that some people are less resilient than others. Some can develop complications that could be fatal. Those over 65, people with chronic conditions and healthcare workers are particularly recommended to be vaccinated against seasonal flu.

We should all consider having this vaccination. It is quick, it doesn't hurt, and most importantly, it's an act of caring about the people around us.



COMING UP

Conference “Health: making it fairer” Brussels, 18 March

Objectives of the conference:

- 1) Highlight current issues on fairness in health, access to health and discrimination in health in Europe
- 2) Exchange relevant information on policies and good practice
- 3) Conclude with common basic principles and values on improving equity and combatting discrimination in health

Register by 4 March 2014, 12:00
http://ec.europa.eu/health/social_determinants/events/ev_20140318_en.htm

Commission's adoption of the Joint Procurement Agreement for vaccines – March

Under this initiative, participating Member States will have a secured access to vaccines should pandemics outbreaks occur.



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