



Health & Consumer Voice

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"Better Training for Safer Food" initiative gets off to Africa

On 3 April EU Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou launched at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a new initiative – "Better Training for Safer Food in Africa". The initiative was launched during a high-level conference taking place in the Ethiopian capital city, in an effort to help developing countries improve their food safety systems for the benefit of their populations and economies.

Launched in 2005, the programme BTSF has provided training to both European and third country officials who are responsible for checking that EU rules related to food, feed, plant health, animal health and welfare are properly applied. Jointly with the African Union Commission (AUC), a specific programme targeted at Africa has been now set up, with the view to promoting compliance with international Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) measures as key to bilateral trade, both within Africa and with the rest of the world, and to increasing the protection of citizens.

Indeed, under "BTSF-Africa" the EC and the AUC will jointly coordinate the implementation, from 2009 to 2010, of seven capacity building activities worth around €10 million. The activities target the public and private sectors playing a role in the SPS systems at national, regional and continental levels.



The key objective is to support food safety mainly by the transfer of technical expertise and policy advice in areas of food safety and quality across Africa. The knowledge, expertise and skills transferred will help to produce and distribute agro-food products compatible with international SPS standards, contributing towards the reduction of the likelihood of food-borne diseases and the related health and socio-economic burden.

At micro level, the activities will help improve the use of agricultural inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, veterinary drugs, etc.) and good hygiene practices in the production and distribution chains, as well as animal/product management systems of control and certification, strengthening the competent authorities and producers' associations. At macro level, the activities will support the gradual integration and competitiveness of the agro-food sector, strengthening the vital role of agriculture as a whole towards rural development and food security, increasing market access for African producers with positive knock-on effects on growth and employment in Africa.

For further information, please view:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/training_strategy/index_en.htm



In brief



"Gasteiners" study visit to Brussels

In 2007 and 2008, the Young Forum Gastein scholarship supported 50 young health officials and researchers from EU Member States to attend the European Health Forum Gastein conference, held annually in Austria. The aim of this initiative is to encourage learning about developments in EU health policy and research early on in the careers of health researchers and policymakers.

Commissioner Vassiliou invited the young Gasteiners to Brussels in early 2009 to broaden their knowledge of the main European institutions and the policy process as well as gain in-depth knowledge on key EU health policy issues. 45 Young Gasteiners attended the Brussels study visit.

The workshop, held from 30 March to 1 April, was jointly planned and coordinated by DG Health and Consumers and DG Research in collaboration with the European Health Management Association (EHMA).

A call for applications for the third year of the Young Forum Gastein scholarships will be launched soon by the European Health Forum Gastein. The 2009 Gastein conference takes place from 30 September to 3 October 2009.

The Voice of a Young Gasteiner

by Nicolas Pradalié, EC Directorate-General for Health and Consumers

"I was selected by France to participate in the 'Young Gasteiners' initiative while I was writing my master thesis at the College of Europe (Bruges) on the specificity of health services.

This experience was a fantastic opportunity to meet with other young European citizens (under 35) with interest and experience in the field of health. The idea is to bridge the research-policy gap and it is a wonderful opportunity to exchange both practical and intellectual knowledge.

Future developments include a regular communication channel in order to exchange information between the annual meetings. I hope that as the network grows and matures, we could envisage some concrete actions taking place outside the network, which could contribute to health policies in Europe."

For further information, please view:

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

European Consumer Summit 2009 and Roundtable on Online Data Collection: what's next?

Two key events in the field of consumer's protection have taken place in Brussels during the last month.

On 31 March European Consumer Commissioner Meglena Kuneva took part to the Roundtable on Online Data Collection, Targeting and Profiling, where she gave a keynote speech highlighting all the major challenges Europe has to face with regard to this complex field.

Almost at the same time, the first ever EU Consumer Summit was inaugurated. Taking place on 1 and 2 April 2009, this special event brought together over 250 stakeholders from all over Europe, to look at the challenges and opportunities facing today's consumer, with a special focus on the digital world.

One of the most important and most controversial issues in the fast evolving world of digital communications is represented by the explosion in the volume of collected personal data and its use for commercial purposes and a deep discussion on the new generation of practices and business models built on the ability to profile consumers and then use their profile to target them for commercial purposes is much needed.

The Roundtable responds to such necessity, in order to ensure that the internet and the new generation of digital communications and digital platforms keep offering immense possibilities to consumers in a frame of trust and confidence.

"We have already well established consumer policy principles, articulated in regulations and tools that bring confidence in the traditional world of goods and services. What we need now is a debate on how we apply these tested principles in



digital world, in particular in the activity of collecting consumers' personal data for the purpose of commercially targeting them", declared Ms Kuneva.

During her speech, the Commissioner tackled several issues including privacy policies, commercial communications and commercial discrimination. She also illustrated the responses which are coming both from business and from regulation to such matters.

A similar approach in facing consumer's protection matters vis-à-vis the growing digital world was adopted within the European Consumer Summit, held shortly after the conclusion of the Roundtable. The purpose of such Summit was to review the challenges and the opportunities of the digital environment - for consumers, for consumer advocates, for business and for consumer policy makers. There has been a wide variety of high-level participants from industry, consumer organisations, national administrations, EU institutions and NGOs - as well as many "ordinary" consumers from across Europe - ensuring lively and interesting discussions.

All interested parties were involved in the programme, parts of which presented the distinction of being as democratic as possible: not only

were consumers invited and physically present, but others had the possibility to follow the discussions via web-streaming as well as to interact with the speakers through a functional mailbox that was monitored throughout the Summit.

As part of the European Consumer Summit programme, the pre-event with consumers has been a unique occasion to gather European citizens' views and hear their concerns.

Building on this pre-event geared towards gathering European citizens' views and concerns as consumers operating in the digital world, as well as the political view expressed by Commissioner Kuneva, subsequent workshop and panel meetings took a first step towards formulating the most appropriate response to emerging issues.

Once all the data is analysed, conclusions will complete the view on the challenges and opportunities at stake and will serve to inform re-

flections on future policy making, to create synergies between advocates and stakeholders and to alert and inform consumers themselves on issues of concern to them in the digital environment.



The entire Ms Kuneva's keynote speech held at the Roundtable is available at:
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/156&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>

For further information on the Summit, please view:
<http://www.european-consumer-summit.eu/>

RAPEX media event in Brussels

On Monday 20 April Commissioner Meglena Kuneva launched the 2008 RAPEX Annual Report at a media event taking place in the Berlaymont building in Brussels.

The Annual Report, which is published in English, French, German and Chinese, provides information on the number, origin and type of dangerous products notified through the RAPEX system and highlights how inspections and enforcement actions carried out by Member States are becoming increasingly effective.



The RAPEX Media event, organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers, included a press conference given by Commissioner Kuneva at 12.30 and an exhibition, located outside the Berlaymont press room from 12.00 to 14.00, displaying some of the dangerous products notified by Member States through the RAPEX system.

The 2008 RAPEX Annual Report is available online at:
http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/rapex/stats_reports_en.htm

For further information, please view:
http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/news/index_en.htm
 and
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/594&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>

In brief



Second Open Forum on Alcohol and Health held in Brussels

Within the framework of the European Alcohol and Health Forum, the second Open Forum has been held in Brussels, at Centre Borschette, on 30 April 2009.

In order to give bodies and organisations who are not Forum members an occasion to make their opinions known, the Charter establishing the European Alcohol and Health Forum foresees indeed that an Open Forum is convened once per year.

The Open Forum is a platform for exchange of information and for discussion with a broader range of interested parties, including Member States. It also provides networking possibilities between and among the different stakeholders who wish to contribute to the reduction of alcohol-related harm.

This year's Open Forum provided a particular opportunity to present the European Alcohol and Health Forum's work and actions, and gave an update of policy developments at EU, Member State and international level.

Study on the affordability of alcoholic beverages in the European Union now available

In 2008 European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers commissioned RAND Europe to conduct a study on "The affordability of alcoholic beverages in the European Union - Understanding the link between alcohol affordability, consumption and harms". Apart from an extensive study of literature, RAND Europe has consulted for this study a wide range of stakeholders (EU Member States, economic operators, public health NGOs, and other Directorates-General of the European Commission).

The full report is available at the following URL:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/documents/alcohol_rand_en.pdf



World Health Day and cooperation

To mark World Health Day, European Commissioner for Health Androulla Vassiliou visited several community health projects in Kenya on 6 and 7 April. These projects promote social and economic development through poverty alleviation and strengthening health and education.

“Save lives. Make hospitals safe in emergencies” – the slogan of the 2009 World Health Day represents one of the key issues for the European Commission when supporting relief operations throughout the world. The focus of this year’s World Health Day is indeed the safety of health facilities and the readiness of health workers who treat those affected by emergencies. It is the poorest countries that suffer most from health-related development challenges, such as weak health infrastructure, high rates of poverty-related diseases, poor maternal health and unsatisfactory environmental conditions, all of which contribute to reduced life expectancy. Health issues also constitute a substantial part of the Millennium Development Goals (reducing child mortality, reducing maternal mortality and combat HIV/AIDS), which are the core of the EU’s external aid.

From Nairobi, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou stressed the need for Europe to work together with African partners and step up action towards achieving the health related Millennium Development Goals, as solidarity in health is a global issue. On this occasion, Ms Vassiliou taped a video message recalling the close links between health and productivity and the need to foster good health, especially in vulnerable groups, in particular in these times of economic crisis.

Commissioner Vassiliou visited a medical centre run by “Médecins Sans Frontières” in the Kibera area of Nairobi. The Commissioner also

visited a medical centre and nursery school supported by the Social Foundation for Economic Development and the Orthodox Archbishopric of Kenya and Irinopolis. This visit included the site of a proposed nursing training college which will specialise in cancer pain management. Providing specialised training in palliative care and cancer pain management can assist health systems to better manage non communicable disease such as cancers. Many developing countries today are indeed coping with the double burden of communicable (HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB) and non communicable diseases (heart disease, cancer) and training and education of health workforce represent key elements to tackle such issues.

The European Commission supports health improvements in the EU through different policy areas such as health, research and social protection programmes, investing almost half a billion Euro per year on health actions in its external cooperation. These actions form part of geographic cooperation as well as part of the thematic programme “Good health for all”. This programme addresses three key health issues: support for strengthening health systems and services in response to the human resource crisis, support for the fight against the main communicable diseases (HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria) and neglected emerging diseases and, finally, support for implementation of the Cairo agenda on sexual and reproductive health.

Improving health conditions and strengthening access to healthcare are important objectives for the European Union, both for its own citizens and within the EU’s external cooperation.

For further information on EU external health cooperation, please view:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/universal-issues/health/index_en.htm

In brief



Raising youth’s voice in the European Elections

On 8 April MTV launched an EU-wide initiative called “Can you hear me Europe” which aims to prompt young people to make their voices heard by voting in the European elections next June. The campaign, sponsored by the Commission, will encourage young people throughout the EU to share their feelings, ideas and concerns, and to express what they think about the EU.

For further information, on the initiative, please view:

<http://www.caneuhear.me.eu>

For general information on European elections, please visit:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2009/default.htm?language=EN>



“Be healthy - be yourself”: the Youth Health Initiative

The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Consumers invites young people between 15-25 to have their say on a blog and take part in a competition with health-related videos, posters and pictures.

The topics will range from alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sexual and mental health to nutrition, physical activity, youth involvement, health and work, education and media.

For further information, please view:

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



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

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