



Health & Consumer Voice

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New European Commission college takes office

On Tuesday 09 February the European Parliament elected in Strasbourg the new European Commission by 488 votes in favour, 137 against and 72 abstentions. The vote was a single vote on the whole College of Commissioners, consisting of one Commissioner from each of the 27 EU Member States.



As a consequence, the new college took office as of Wednesday 10 February 2010 and Mr John Dalli is confirmed as the new Commissioner for Health and Consumers Policy.

On that occasion Mr Dalli said he sees his role as "the guardian of consumers" and, in the case of the so-called Pharmapackage, he stated he wants to "bring more patient perspective in the proposal".

The European Parliament Hearing of Health and Consumer Policy Commissioner-designate John Dalli took place on 14 January.

For further information on the new Commissioner, please check out his website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/dalli/index_en.htm

Be smart before you tan! Sunbeds and UV radiation safety limits

Consumers are not being given sufficient information on hazardous effects of UV radiation and they are not receiving sufficient guidance on how to use them safely, according to the results of a market surveillance check of sunbeds and sunbed services published on 12 February by the European Commission. Market surveillance authorities in 10 Member States inspected more than 500 sunbeds at over 300 locations between September 2008 and September

2009, and found several problems: violation of UV radiation limits, lack of consumer guidance and information and insufficient warnings on the sunbeds themselves.

There is evidence from Member States' market surveillance exercises which indicate a number of problems: UV radiation levels do not always respect the relevant safety limits (sunbeds have to comply with the Low Voltage Directive and the rele-



In brief



E-Health 2010 conference in Barcelona

The eHealth 2010 conference, with the theme of "eHealth for sustainable healthcare: global changes through local actions" will be held in Barcelona between March 15-18.

This is the eight in a series of high-level eHealth conferences that have taken place since 2003 and, for the first time, the Ministerial High Level Conference on eHealth and the World Health IT Conference and Exhibition are being held in the same week in a joint initiative called "eHealth Week 2010".

The event is a collaborative effort of the Spanish Presidency and European Commission (DG Information Society and Media and DG Health and Consumers). It constitutes a key event in the eHealth annual policy awareness-raising agenda.

The "eHealth for sustainable healthcare" theme highlights, among others, the urgent perspective of a rapidly ageing European society, the lack of prevention and prediction of illnesses, the growing demand for quality attention, the lack of electronic health and the interoperability of the systems (nationally and internationally).

Increased life expectancy and the consequent increase in the prevalence of chronic illnesses pose serious challenges to the sustainability of the national health systems. The conference will present how and why on-line health may be the solution to facing these challenges.

For further information, please see:

http://www.ehealthweek2010.org/?set_language=en



vant safety requirements of European Standard EN 60335), consumers using sunbeds in tanning studios are not always sufficiently informed of the hazards involved, such as getting burned or the long term risk of skin cancer, and under 18s are not always denied use of this service as they should be. Member State authorities are aware that more needs to be done to bring such services into line with the relevant safety standards.

Authorities are intensifying their work to ensure compliance with all relevant safety legislation and the results of the 2008/2009 check will feed into a follow up project launched by authorities in 12 Member States to train more inspectors and improve information to consumers. Authorities are also working more with the sunbed industry, which is itself developing training material for service providers such as tanning studios.

The joint project was carried out by market surveillance authorities in 10 Member States (Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland) led by the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority, and concentrated on the safety information and advice provided to consumers, the labelling of the sunbeds, the availability of eye protection and the UV -radiation emitted by the sunbeds.

The safety objectives of the project are:

- To raise the market surveillance profile in the market where these products are used and thereby improve enforcement of the legislation on sunbeds;
- To increase experience and co-operation with industry in the market surveillance of such products;
- To share the information identifying such harmful products with all Member States so that such products can



be used on the market in full compliance with safety rules.

In order to ensure that the highest possible safety standards are maintained in the EU, the project participants recommend: to continue to enforce the rules by market surveillance authorities including more enforcement at the source of entry onto the market; to further align the interpretation of the legal requirements; to better inform consumers about the hazards of tanning and how to avoid them; to increase the number of UV radiation checks for a more representative measure of non-compliance (expected to be higher with more testing).

The European Commission is co-financing a follow up joint project to support industry which is keen to develop training material and code of good conduct for tanning studios and information, especially to young consumers; and to discuss with Member States the application of the product safety rules in the interest of consumer safety. The outcome of this project should be available at the end of 2011.

Certain basic precautions can be taken by consumers. They should seek and follow the guidance information on the tanning scheme suitable for their skin type as well as on the appropriate duration. They should always use eye protection. It is recommended that under 18s they should not use sunbeds.

For further information please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/citizen/my_safety/sunbeds/index_en.htm

Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, organized by WHO/Europe and hosted by Parma (Italy) on 10-12 March 2010, is the next milestone in the European environment and health process, now in its twentieth year.

More than ever, children's health is at risk from a changing environment.

The health impacts of environmental risk factors - inadequate water and sanitation, unsafe home and recreational environments, lack of spatial planning for physical activity, indoor and outdoor air pollution, hazardous chemicals - are amplified by recent developments such as financial constraints, broader socio-economic and gender inequalities and more frequent extreme climate events. They pose new challenges

for health systems to reduce deaths and diseases through effective environmental health interventions.

Focused on protecting children's health in a changing environment, the conference will drive Europe's agenda on emerging environmental health challenges for the years to come.



For further information, please see:

<http://www.euro.who.int/parma2010>

New RAPEX guidelines published

The European Commission published new guidelines for easier and better notification of dangerous consumer products found in the EU. On 16 December the Commission adopted indeed a Decision (2010/15/EU) laying down the new guidelines for the management of the RAPEX (Rapid Alert System for non-food consumer Products) system and of the notification procedure established under Article 11 of the General Product Safety Directive.

Reason for change

Both, RAPEX and Article 11 notification procedures have proven to be reliable systems that are recognised worldwide. In the sixth year since the adoption of the previous RAPEX guidelines (Commission Decision 2004/418/EC), the total number of submitted notifications has more than quadrupled (to 1993) and is still growing.

The new RAPEX guidelines were adopted, so that:

- they could reflect and allow the RAPEX Network to respond to the changes in the product safety environment and to the new challenges;
- RAPEX and Article 11 notification procedure could be adjusted to best practices worked out over the years by the Member States and the Commission RAPEX Team to ensure even more efficient and effective operation of the two notification procedures;
- the operation of the two notification procedures in the Member States could be further unified, by introducing more precise and comprehensible regulation of different aspects of the procedures and by including provisions governing new aspects which have not been yet regulated (such as confidentiality rules).

In brief



Conference "Modernising the Common Plant Health Regime"

On 23 and 24 February a conference on Modernising the Common Plant Health Regime in view of globalisation and climate change was organised in Brussels by the European Commission.

The conference was held in the framework of the currently ongoing evaluation of the European Union's plant health legislation. The aim was to explore and discuss ways to modernise the legislation, which should prevent invasive plant pests and diseases from entering into and spreading in the EU.

The plant health legislation is an important instrument to ensure sustainable agriculture and forestry. Challenges are to adapt the regime, which dates back to 1977, to the new realities of globalised trade, climate change and increasing threats to forests, parks, gardens and the natural landscape from invading pests.

Participants included Member State authorities, scientists, representatives of international non-governmental organisations and stakeholders from the private sector.

The conference was opened with a challenging keynote by Mr Robert Madelin, Director-General for Health and Consumers, on the need for a new EU plant health strategy. This was followed by keynotes from the Spanish Presidency and academia. The EU stakeholders' organisations presented their views on the relevance of the regime and the needs for change.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/strategy/index_en.htm



Content of the new guidelines

The Decision 2010/15/EU replaces the Commission Decision 2004/418/EC. The content of the new guidelines precisely and comprehensibly:

- identify the scope of the RAPEX system and Article 11 notification procedure;
- clarify the notification criteria;
- define various stages and aspects

of the notification and reaction procedures;

- regulate aspects of the procedures which so far have not been subject to specific regulations;
- define the new risk assessment method that was developed by a dedicated working group of Member State experts.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/rapex/guidelines_states_en.htm

2020 Visions for Health and Consumers

The Health and Consumers “clouds” poster maps out the broad visions and general principles which will underpin the work of the Commission’s Health and Consumers Directorate-General (SANCO) over the next ten years. This approach has its roots in an ambitious “futures” exercise, which was launched four years ago and which sought to build up a new perspective on policy development.

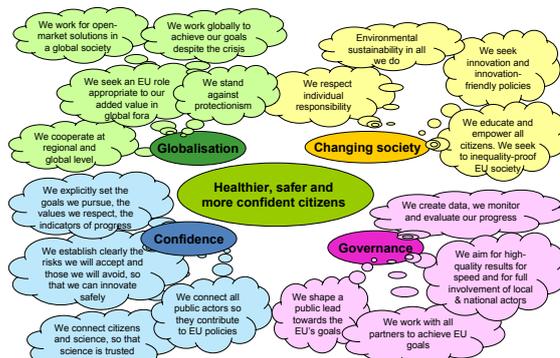
A core aim of the European Commission is to improve the lives of EU citizens and nowhere is this more relevant than in the policy areas of health and consumers. DG SANCO’s mission is to strive for healthier, safer and more confident citizens. We seek to empower citizens, protect and improve human health, ensure food is safe and wholesome, protect the health of animals and plants, and promote the humane treatment of animals.

In pursuing these objectives we need to keep one eye firmly on the future.

We fully recognise the need to foster a proactive rather than reactive approach to health and consumer policy, anticipating change and staying one step ahead wherever possible – to pave the way for delivering a modern, responsive, citizen-driven agenda throughout the next decade and beyond.

The realisation of our vision of “healthier, safer citizens and more confident and empowered consumers” will not only be of direct benefit to individual citizens, it will also contribute directly towards boosting EU competitiveness while promoting equity, social justice, health and well-being throughout society.

The “futures” exercise identified four key drivers which will shape the future policy landscape in the field of health and consumers. These are globalisation, changing society, confidence and governance. The poster amplifies these drivers by elaborating on the core themes.



In brief



“Relais pour la Vie” initiative in Luxembourg on 6-7 March

Organized yearly in D’Coque (Kirchberg) by the Luxembourg Cancer foundation, “Relais pour la vie” is a sport event aimed at breaking the taboo of this illness and showing solidarity, as well as informing, raising awareness and preventing the illness of cancer.

Participants will relay during 12 hours (Classic team) or 24 hours (Master team). The European Commission (including two teams from DG Health and Consumers) and other European Institutions/bodies will take part to the initiative thanks to the voluntary participation of the staff and their families and friends.

For further information, please see:

<http://www.relaispourlavie.lu/>

Rare Disease Day 2010

28 February has been the Rare Disease Day. This is an annual, awareness-raising event coordinated at international level by Eurordis, a non-governmental patient-driven alliance of patient organisations.

Rare Disease Day is the perfect occasion to inform or remind people that rare diseases need to be paid special attention.

Rare diseases are life-threatening or chronically debilitating diseases with a low prevalence and a high level of complexity.

The national healthcare services for diagnosis, treatment and care of rare disease patients differ significantly in terms of their availability and quality. European citizens have unequal access to healthcare services and to orphan drugs.

A disease or disorder is defined as rare in Europe when it affects less than 1 in 2000 citizens. It is estimated that there are 6000 to 8000 rare diseases in the world today, 75% affecting children.

For further information, please see:

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



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Chief Editor: Eric Thévenard.

Editors: Rosita Scanferla, in cooperation with the EC Health and Consumers DG.

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

Email: sanco-newsletter@ec.europa.eu