

# HEALTH AND CONSUMER VOICE

## Tonio Borg to lead EU Health and Consumer Policy



Source: EP Audiovisual Service

Dr. Tonio Borg has been appointed as the new EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy. He left posts as Malta's Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Leader of the House of Representatives to join the team of European Commission President José Manuel Barroso on 28 November.

Describing health and consumer policy as the "people's portfolio," Dr. Borg said his priorities would include new legislation on tobacco products, cloning of animals for food, novel foods, product safety, plant and animal health and access to bank accounts.

Dr. Borg has been a Member of the Maltese Parliament since 1992, and was appointed to his first Ministerial post, responsible for Home Affairs, in 1995. Since then, his various portfolios have included justice, local government, environment, urban planning and state property management. In March 2004, he was elected Deputy Leader of Malta's Nationalist Party and subsequently appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Dr. Borg holds a Doctorate in Law from the University of Malta (1979). Between 1980 and 95 he practised as a lawyer specialising in human rights cases. He has also

lectured in public law at the University of Malta for over 20 years and served as a member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

Dr. Borg was nominated by the Maltese government following the resignation of John Dalli in October. He is married with three children.

1957: Born in Floriana, Malta  
 1979: Graduated in law, University of Malta  
 1980-92: Practising lawyer  
 1987-92: Director, Mid-Med Bank (now HSBC Malta)  
 1988-95: President, Nationalist Party general council  
 1990-present: Lecturer, University of Malta law faculty  
 1992-present: Member of Parliament  
 1995-96 & 1998-2008: Minister of Justice and Home Affairs  
 2004-2012: Deputy Prime Minister  
 2008-2012: Foreign Minister

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/)

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## EP NEWS

### EP supports proposals to tackle cross-border health threats

MEPs have shown their support for new legislation proposed by the Commission to strengthen the EU's response to cross-border health threats. A vote at October's meeting of the EP Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety saw 52 members in favour, none against and 6 abstain.

The draft legislation, which is likely to be adopted at November's plenary, takes into account the lessons learned from recent health crises, e.g. the 2011 E.coli outbreak.

It includes measures to strengthen the Early Warning and Response System (set up in 1998 to identify the nature of the threat), and a plan for EU countries to purchase vaccines jointly.

It also includes the possibility of recognising a European «health emergency» to accelerate the provision of any necessary medicines. Currently, only the World Health Organisation (WHO) can declare a health crisis across continents.

These proposals «will enable us to fill a legislative gap,» said rapporteur Gilles Pargneaux (S&D).

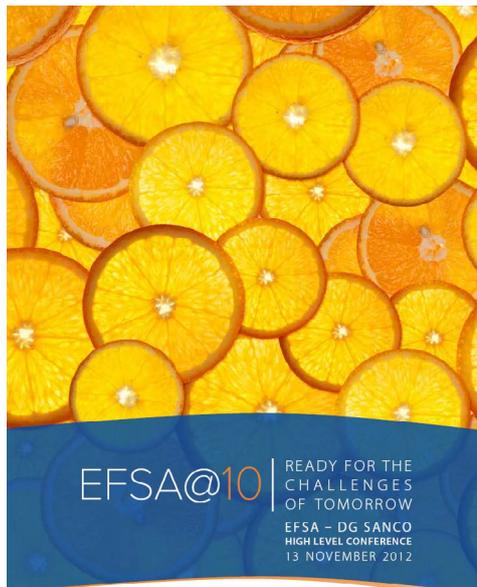
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/envi/home.html>

## TOP TIP!

Got a problem with a Christmas present you've bought online from another European country? The European Consumers' Centre can help:

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/ecc/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/ecc/index_en.htm)

## Celebrating food safety: EFSA @ 10



The European Food Safety Authority celebrated its 10th anniversary on 13 November with a high level conference at its headquarters in Parma, Italy. The event – “Ready for the challenges of tomorrow” – attracted experts in food safety from across the world.

EFSA was set up in 2002 in the wake of various food-related crises, including salmonella and BSE, or “mad cow disease”. Its role is to provide independent scientific advice and technical support for EU policy in all areas that have a direct or indirect impact on food and feed safety. It also plays an important role in communicating food safety information and risks associated with the food chain.

EFSA has made a significant contribution to EU progress in crucial food safety areas, including:

- reduction in Salmonella cases,
- limitation of exposure to food contaminants,
- evaluation of pesticides and safe levels for their residues,
- evaluating food and feed safety,
- examining the scientific basis for food claims.



[www.efsa.europa.eu](http://www.efsa.europa.eu)

## New rules help cross-border organ donation

New rules to help EU countries exchange valuable information about organs and their donors were adopted by the European Commission on 9 October. They include common guidelines for exchanging information on types of organ and the donor, such as age, gender and health history, as well as traceability information and reporting of serious adverse events and reactions.

In future, it will be mandatory for national authorities to record and share information on cross-border organ exchanges, and to provide a 24/7 service for urgent situations. This will allow medical teams to take prompt and appropriate action to ensure patient safety.

EU countries have to bring the new

rules into effect by 10 April 2014. They will apply to the cross-border exchange of all human organs intended for transplant in the EU.

30 300 organ transplants took place in the EU in 2011. There are currently 61 500 people on various national waiting lists for organ transplant in the EU and most EU countries report regular organ shortages.

### EU organ donation in 2011

61 500 patients placed on national waiting lists, of which:

- 42 000 waiting for a kidney
- 10 000 waiting for a liver
- 4 000 waiting for a heart
- 2 300 waiting for a lung
- 5 500 died before an organ became available



[http://ec.europa.eu/health/blood\\_tissues\\_organ/organs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/blood_tissues_organ/organs/index_en.htm)

## Product safety: new «Global Recalls Portal»

Imagine a one-stop-shop where consumers and authorities can find information on any non-food products taken off the market because they do not comply with EU and international safety requirements.



Rintaro Tamaki, Paola Testori-Coggi, Inez Tenenbaum & Ruth Mackay (Chair of the OECD Consumer Safety Working Party)

Now it exists: a new «Global Recalls Portal», developed jointly by the EU and OECD, was launched in Brussels on 19 October as part of International Product Safety Week.

It was presented by Paola Testori-Coggi, the European Commission's Director-General for Health and Consumers, Rintaro Tamaki, OECD Deputy Secretary General and Inez Tenenbaum, Chairman of the U.S Consumer Product Safety Commission as «a case for joining forces to be better able to tackle product safety issues and boost consumer

confidence in the global marketplace.»

Consumers can check the portal for product safety alerts, businesses can track emerging hazards across the world and governments can share key information quickly and easily.

3000 product recall notices are expected to be issued each year.

### Want an example?



Product: toy  
Name: Lovely phone  
Made in: China  
Recall: 27/07/12

Risks:  
- hearing damage (sound level)  
- chemical (the battery compartment is easily opened)



<http://globalrecalls.oecd.org/>

## EU pushes health communication at Gastein



Paola Testori-Coggi, Director-General for Health & Consumers, at the Gastein Health Forum

«Informed patients are empowered patients,» was one of the European Commission's key messages at this year's European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG). The event – held in October under the title, «Health in an age of austerity» - attracted over 600 decision-makers from 45 countries for a debate on the future of the European health care system.

Speaking in a session dedicated to communicating health to citizens and policy makers, Paola Testori-Coggi underlined the need to «optimise our communication efforts to get the right messages to the right people» in a cost-efficient way. She highlighted the importance of combining traditional media with new digital media tools such as Twitter and Facebook.

Other key issues included eHealth, health systems sustainability, global health governance, vaccination, non-communicable diseases and active and healthy ageing. The Forum also introduced promising young decision-makers and experts - nominated by national Ministries of Health - to the Gastein process (Young Forum Gastein).



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

## IN BRIEF

### After *E. coli*: new rules for sprout production

EU countries have given their support to a new package of measures proposed by the Commission to improve safety and hygiene for sprout production, following 2011's *E. coli* crisis. They include tighter traceability, national approval of all EU sprout producing plants after hygiene checks and tests to verify the absence of pathogenic *E. coli* in sprouts.

### EU focus on childhood vaccination

The spotlight was on childhood immunisation at a conference organised by the European Commission on 16-17 October. It focused on progress, challenges and priorities for further action and brought together health policy officials, healthcare professionals, patient associations and experts in immunisation from across Europe.

### EU Health Journalist Prize

National winners of the EU's 4th Health Journalist Prize were announced on 18 October. The EU jury will meet in December to select the overall winners. The awards ceremony will take place on 29 January 2013.

### New President of EHFG

Professor Dr Helmut Brand, Director of the Department of International Health at the University of Maastricht, has been appointed President of the Gastein Health Forum. He replaces Professor Dr Günther Leiner.



## New action plans for active, healthy ageing

Six action plans to keep older people healthy and active were presented at the first Conference of Partners of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing in Brussels on 6 November. The conference brought together key stakeholders from across the EU to look at ways to implement and ramp up innovations for active ageing.

The Action Plans include 261 commitments from over 3 000 stakeholders. By pooling resources from across the EU, they aim to improve the quality of life of 4 million EU senior citizens between now and 2015.

The six action plans address:

- Prescription adherence
- Fall prevention
- Frailty and malnutrition, e.g. by helping people to maintain a healthy and active regime
- Integrated care, e.g. through programmes for chronic disease management and/or tele-monitoring
- Independent living: e.g. by facilitating social contacts and improving household services
- Age-friendly environment: implementing innovative age-friendly practices, including ICT, to help older people get out and about.



<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eipaha/>

## Better monitoring of medicines from 2013

Pharmacovigilance - the science related to the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse reactions to medicines - will be stepped up in the EU following the adoption of new rules by the European Parliament and the Council on 25 October.

They will enter into force in 2013.

It follows a "stress test" run by the European Commission in 2011 that identified weaknesses in the legislation.

The new rules include:

- An automatic urgent review procedure, at EU level, if serious safety concerns present in a product authorised in more than one EU country;
- Clear labelling of products for which post-authorisation safety studies are required, explaining the product's characteristics and asking users to report adverse reactions;
- More transparency, when medicinal products are withdrawn from the market for safety reasons.



[http://ec.europa.eu/health/human-use/pharmacovigilance/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/human-use/pharmacovigilance/index_en.htm)

## COMING UP

1 December: World AIDS Day

1 December: Official launch of "Quit smoking with Barca"

13 December: Consumer credit "sweep": your rights when buying digital content

17 December: Meeting of European Partnership on pig castration

December: Adoption of new rules on Alternative and On-line Dispute Resolution mechanisms

December: EFSA opinion on a review of neonicotinoids and their impact on bees

## TOP TWEETS

**EU Consumer Affairs** @EU\_Consumer

Which unsafe #equipments #clothes #cosmetics & other recalled, withdrawn, banned in #EU last week: #Rapex report is out [bit.ly/Pvh27e](http://bit.ly/Pvh27e)

11 RETWEETS

**EU Health** @EU\_Health

6 questions & answers about what changes from the 1st of January 2013 in #slaughterhouses regulation in #EU [bit.ly/PPTav4](http://bit.ly/PPTav4)

11 RETWEETS

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm)



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