

# Health & Consumer Voice

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## New "Consumer Agenda" puts EU citizens centre stage



EU Commissioner for Health & Consumer Policy, John Dalli at the European Consumer Summit in May

The European Commission adopted an ambitious new strategy for consumer policy on 22 May. It aims at maximising consumer participation in the EU's single market.

The so-called «Consumer Agenda» supports consumer interests in five key sectors: *food, energy, financial, transport and digital*.

The Agenda's priorities are to improve consumer safety, knowledge and rights, and to adapt consumer policy to meet new challenges, such as increasing internet use.

«56% of the EU's GDP comes from consumer expenditure,» said Commissioner Dalli at the EU's Consumer Summit on 29 May. «Our policy has to work for consumers. They need the tools to participate actively in the market, to exercise their power of choice and to have their rights properly enforced. This is how we can drive innovation and economic growth.»

### Top priorities:

#### Improving consumer safety

The regulatory framework for goods, services and food safety will be made stronger and market surveillance more efficient e.g. the review of product safety laws foreseen for later this year.

#### Enhancing knowledge

Information actions will be stepped up and the

role of consumer organisations reinforced to help consumers navigate increasingly complex markets. Traders will also have clear rules to follow. An EU awareness campaign on consumer rights will be launched in 2013.

#### Reinforcing consumer rights

Enforcement of consumer policy will be closely monitored and it will become easier for consumers to solve disputes with traders, both online and offline. New rules to help consumers solve disputes with traders quickly and easily should be finalised in 2012.

#### Up-to-date consumer policy

Sustainable consumption and the demands of digitalisation will be addressed, as well as the needs of the EU's more vulnerable consumers, e.g. children and the elderly.

All measures will help boost markets as part of the Commission's efforts to support growth in the EU.



## In brief

### Commission steps up pressure to ban individual sow stalls by 2013

Increasing pressure is being put on EU countries to ensure that a ban on individual sow stalls is fully applied by the 1 January 2013 deadline. In a move to improve pig welfare, all holdings with ten sows or more will be required to keep sows and gilts (immature female pigs) in groups for approximately 2½ months of their pregnancy. John Dalli stressed the EU would «take action against those EU countries that fail to comply.»

### Commission funds studies on *Schmallenberg*

The European Commission has earmarked €3 million for 14 scientific studies investigating the transmission of the *Schmallenberg* virus. *Schmallenberg* is an infectious disease that has been linked to birth defects and other problems in cattle, sheep and goats. The results of the studies are expected to be published in April 2014.

### 4th EU Health Prize for Journalists

Entries for the EU's 4th annual Health Prize for Journalists are now open! Articles should have been published in print or online media and must relate to one of the 13 topics listed on the official website of the prize. The deadline for submissions is 31 July 2012.

[http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/journalist\\_prize/](http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/journalist_prize/)

### Council gives green light for new rules for disputes with traders

Commission proposals to help EU citizens find quick, cheap and easy solutions to disputes with traders have been agreed to by the European Council. They are now under discussion in the European Parliament with a view to being finally adopted in late 2012.

# Celebrating 10 years of success for EU Health Programmes



Paola Testori-Coggi, Director-General for Health & Consumers: «Promote...protect...prevent.»

EU Health Programmes have funded 673 health projects, worth over €630 million, since the launch of the first programme in 2003. To celebrate this occasion and present the Commission's plans for the future, a high-level conference took place in Brussels on 3 May.

It brought together over 400 policy makers, scientists, beneficiaries and health sector representatives to share best practice, experience and future perspectives.

EU Health Programmes are aimed at improving public health and preventing human illness. A sample of suc-

cess stories, e.g. the AURORA project, launched in 2010 to identify strategies to promote and implement cervical cancer prevention in women, was published to mark the anniversary.

Paola Testori-Coggi said the Commission's priorities for a third EU Health Programme – the «Health for Growth» programme presented in November 2011 – were to «promote good health, prevent disease, protect citizens, and contribute to the creation of sustainable and innovative health systems.» The Commission's proposals are currently being discussed by the European Council and Parliament. The Parliament will cast its first vote in June.

### HEIDI: your new health data tool

The conference also saw the launch of HEIDI (Health in Europe: Information and Data Interface), a comprehensive online «wiki» tool for European health information. Accessible to everyone, it contains details on health status, determinants, diseases, health systems, trends, policy and much more.

Want to contribute? If you're a health expert or work in health policy you can apply via the website to become one of the editors.

[https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/sanco/heidi/index.php/Main\\_Page](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/sanco/heidi/index.php/Main_Page)

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/programme/events/ev\\_20120503\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/programme/events/ev_20120503_en.htm)

## “eHealth can save lives,” says Dalli

Imagine 24 hour online access to your medical records, discussing them via the internet with your doctor and receiving long-distance treatment all without leaving your home. These were just some of the benefits highlighted at *eHealth* week in Copenhagen on 7-9 May.

Organised by the Danish Presidency, the event brought together representatives from across the healthcare industry to discuss what Commissioner

Dalli called «a new era in healthcare.»

Speaking at the conference, he stressed eHealth was one of the Commission's priorities, citing a recent study in England which shows that «using eHealth to manage chronic diseases can save lives and reduce hospital admissions by 20%». EU initiatives are already underway, e.g. the EU's new eHealth network. Now, we must «work together,» said Dalli to support «a revolution in healthcare systems.»

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ehealth/policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ehealth/policy/index_en.htm)

# Fewer dangerous items reach the EU markets, thanks to EU system

Earlier detection, better market surveillance and better risk assessment mean that fewer dangerous products are reaching the EU markets, according to the 2011 report on the EU's rapid alert system for non-dangerous food products (RAPEX), published in May.



Not for sale in the EU: long cords and drawstrings are a safety risk for children

tation), followed by toys (choking), motor vehicles (injury), electrical appliances (electric shock) and cosmetics (chemical risk). Together, these categories accounted for 74% of all notifications in 2011.

Future work will continue on building a system of «seamless surveillance», improving co-operation

RAPEX ensures that information about dangerous products withdrawn from the market and/or recalled from consumers anywhere in Europe is quickly circulated between Member States and the European Commission so that appropriate action can be taken across the EU.

Commissioner Dalli said the findings were, «good news for consumers,» adding, «we must continue to tackle the challenges of the global supply chain and address any new product safety issues as they emerge».

Clothing and textiles were the most frequently notified products (because of risks of suffocation and irri-

with third countries, notably China, the US, Canada and Australia and promoting greater awareness amongst businesses of their obligations. Proposals for a comprehensive legislative package on product safety and market surveillance should also be finalised later this year.

**RAPEX in 2011**

- 1 803 notifications submitted
- 54% of notifications on products presenting a serious risk concerned products from China
- Clothing topped the list of product notifications

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

# Consumers miss out on full benefits of single market, says EU report

Consumers continue to miss out on the full benefits of the single market because they lack the confidence to shop abroad, according to the results of the EU's latest "Consumer Scoreboard" published in May.

The Scoreboard provides evidence and alerts about how the EU's single market is performing in terms of choice, price and protection of consumer rights. The latest key findings indicate that:

- e-commerce is largely domestic,

- many consumers don't know their rights,
- unfair commercial practices persist.

Commissioner Dalli stressed the advantages of cross-border e-commerce: up to 16 times more choice, and consumer welfare gains worth up to €200 billion if barriers to the single market were eliminated. He called on national policy makers and stakeholders "to create the right conditions for consumers."

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/facts\\_en.htm#5CMS](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/facts_en.htm#5CMS)

## EP News

**MEPs want stricter rules on animal transport**



The European Parliament is finalising work on the own-initiative report on protection of animals during transport.

The document, drafted in the Agricultural Committee by MEP Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR, PL), follows the European Commission's report on the impact of current EU legislation on animal welfare.

This legislation has been in force since 2007. According to MEPs from different political groups it needs improvements.

«We should insist on limiting animal transport for all types of animals», said Wojciechowski during the debate in Strasbourg. MEP Marit Paulsen (ALDE, SE) stressed the need to tighten up controls and enforcement by using available technology such as GPS.

The report will be put to a committee vote on 9-10 July and a plenary meeting in September.

**TOP TIP!**

Travelling to Poland to watch one of the EURO 2012 football matches? Check the website for the EU's top tips for travelling football fans to ensure your trip is hassle free.

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/uefa\\_euro\\_2012/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/uefa_euro_2012/index_en.htm)

# Have your say: animal cloning for food production



A public consultation on animal cloning for food production was launched by the European Commission

in May to gather views and opinions from all interested parties on the various issues surrounding it.

These include the use of the cloning technique, the use of clones and their reproductive materials (semen and embryo) for breeding purposes, and the use of live clones and their descendants for food purposes.

The results will form part of an impact assessment examining possible measures for animal cloning for food production in the EU. Other topics assessed will include measures on pre-market approval, traceability and labelling of food from the offspring of cloned animals.

This impact assessment should be finalised by the end of 2012 after which the Commission will examine the merits of proposing new legislation on animal cloning for food production in 2013.

The consultation remains open until 3 September 2012. Visit the site to have your say.

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/dgs\\_consultations/animal\\_cloning\\_consultation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/dgs_consultations/animal_cloning_consultation_en.htm)

# Ex-smokers: an Unstoppable trip!

**FLYING TO FREEDOM?**

You haven't smoked since you entered the airport. Why not take it further?

The European Commission marked World No Tobacco Day by launching the next phase of its «Ex-smokers are Unstoppable» campaign at Brussels airport on 31 May. It includes three new video clips highlighting the benefits of quitting smoking as well as a public awareness campaign aimed at air travellers.

A new in-flight information card provides tips and advice to help smokers get through their smoke-free flight. It was developed in partnership with the European Lung Foundation, the European Respiratory Society and TAP Portugal Airlines.

UEFA (the Union of European Football Associations) has also announced it will be making the EURO 2012 foot-

ball tournament – the world's third largest sporting event - a tobacco-free zone, in another boost to this high profile campaign. A complete ban on the use, sale and promotion of tobacco products has been imposed. Commissioner Dalli commended UEFA for «leading from the front and setting the standard for sporting initiatives across Europe.»

## Ex-smokers run for Europe!

Elsewhere, over 1 500 people ran in support of the ex-smokers' initiative in the Brussels annual 20 km race.

[Out of puff? Ex-smokers run the Brussels 20km race in May](#)



[www.exsmokers.eu](http://www.exsmokers.eu)

## Coming up in 2012

### June

- 13th: World Blood Donor Day
- 19th: 2nd Open Forum of the European Partnership for Action Against Cancer

### July/August

- 4th: Air Passenger Rights Day
- Launch of a consumer information campaign for the London Olympics
- Proposal on the revision of legislation for clinical trials

### September

- Conference: Healthy Ageing across the life cycle
- EU Veterinary Week
- 28th: World Rabies Day
- New proposals for medical devices

Follow DG Health & Consumers' work:

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

### Survey on the Health-EU Portal

DG Health & Consumers is conducting an online survey on its Health-EU Portal. (<http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/>).

Click here to give us your views:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DXPZZ7M>

And finally... two young consumers pick up prizes for taking part in the DG Health & Consumers' cooking show at the EU Open Day in May. A record 6 500 people visited us.



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