



INFO-C

Information from the Consumer Policy Service of the European Commission - Vol. IV, No 1, 1994

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1994 begins with a serious loss in the staff of the Consumer Policy Service: Mr Kaj Barlebo-Larsen, Director-General of the CPS, decided to call it a day and retired on 31 January.

Mr Barlebo-Larsen joined the Commission in 1973, after a career in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and served as Director in DG VI, Head of the EC Delegation in Australia, and Director-General of DG XXII, before he became Director-General of CPS at its creation in 1989.

The Editorial staff of **INFO-C** would like to thank Mr Barlebo-Larsen for his unfaltering support of this publication. We wish him and his wife Mirdza good luck in their new role as "senior citizens".

Mid-1994 a very important piece of consumer legislation comes into force: the General Products Safety Directive. Preparatory bilateral discussions with Member States on the implementation of the Directive - an innovation in Commission/Member State liaison inspired by the "Sutherland Report" - have demonstrated the keen interest which the concerned parties all over the Union have in this theme.

1994 ends with the coming into force of yet another important piece of legislation: the Directive on Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts. Through this Directive a common test of good faith is established. Although this is of course a broad concept, having it established in Community law opens the opportunity for development through interpretation by the Court of Justice - provided consumers make use of the law and push for their rights.

INFO-C

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BELGIAN PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS OF THE "YOUNG CONSUMERS" COLLOQUIUM - 26 and 27 November 1993 -

Young people are more vulnerable as consumers than others - they are less rational in behaviour and choice, susceptible to swings of fashion and to impulses to consume born of social pressure, they have a taste for risk (they are attracted to dangerous and challenging games), etc. While there are international instruments which recognise the fundamental rights of the child (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989), they rarely mention the child in his capacity as consumer. At European Community level, although there are number of initiatives designed mainly to protect young consumers (toy safety directive, directive on television without frontiers, directive on products which, appearing to be other than they are, endanger the health or safety of consumers, etc.), no global and horizontal policy worth speaking of has been defined that specifically targets the under-age consumer. As regards education, most of the measures adopted up to now are not of a binding nature (resolutions, pilot tests, recommendations, etc.) and so lack real long-term bite.

The colloquium clearly showed the desire of the young participants to give "youth power" organised avenues for expression in the drafting of policies that concern them and, in particular, consumer protection policy.

Proposals for action and reflection were suggested with this end in mind, the most important being:

- greater efforts to identify the problems encountered by the young European consumer;
- drafting of a Communication from the Commission to the Council on the objectives, priority actions and timetable for implementing a policy designed to promote the interests of the young consumer in the European Community; the colloquium pinpointed certain sectors where there is a priority need for intervention, such as toy safety and safety of services, liability of suppliers of services, "unfair" advertising targeted at children, banking facilities offered to young people, and study of the components of a "young" foodstuffs policy;
- the will to help mobilise young people, notably by financing educational and information measures (reintroduction in 1995 of a specific budget heading for awareness campaigns of this nature).

Source:

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THE CONSUMER COUNCIL OF NORWAY AND ITS CONSUMER INFORMATION POLICY

The Consumer Information and Education Unit of the CPS has over the last couple of months had a special visitor from Norway: Charlotte Lycke, Executive Officer, Economic Matters/Consumer Policy in the Norwegian Consumer Council. We have asked Charlotte to give the readers of **INFO-C** a brief overview of the policies and activities of her employer:

Introduction

The Consumer Council of Norway¹ (Forbrukerrådet) is a service organization which protects the interests of all consumers in Norway.

The Consumer Council is funded mainly under the fiscal budget (70%). The remainder of the running costs are

covered by income from the sale of the magazine 'The Consumer Report' and other information material.

Organization of the Consumer Council

The Consumer Council consists of a national assembly, a board, a secretariat and 19 county offices.

The National Assembly (Landsmøtet) is the Consumer Council's highest body. The National Meeting is held every second year, and is composed of 71 delegates.

¹ When the expression "the Consumer Council" is used, it refers to the whole organization (Forbrukerrådet) - including the Council, the Secretariat and the County Offices (see 1.1).

The delegates are appointed by country-wide organizations², the county council or the county executive in each county, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, and the Secretariat in the Consumer Council and the County Offices.

The Board (Styret for Forbrukerrådet) is composed of a chairman - appointed by the Government³ - and eight members elected at the National Assembly.

The Secretariat is divided into three departments, the Information Department, the Administration Department and the Consumer Policies Department.

The County Offices (Forbrukerrådet i ...[county name]) are - with a few exceptions⁴ located in all Norwegian counties. These offices have as their main task assistance to individual consumers.

The Consumer Council has a total staff of some 145 employees who work either in the Secretariat or in the County Offices.

The Consumer Perspective

When the Consumer Council evaluates a policy from the consumer point of view, a checklist of six points is used: price, quality, availability, information, consumer rights and representation of consumer interests.

1. Is the **price** reasonable compared to the quality?
2. Is the **quality** sufficiently high, regarding suitability, safety, taste/consistency and/or other quality aspects that the consumers find important (e.g. ethical or environmental considerations)?
3. Is the **availability** of the product satisfactory? Do the consumers have the opportunity to choose between products meeting their needs?
4. To be able to make rational choices, the consumers also need sufficient, correct and easily understandable **information** about the available products.
5. To protect consumers' **rights** when they encounter faulty goods or services, wide-ranging legislation, surveillance authorities and complaints procedures are necessary elements.
6. The Consumer Council also stress the need for consumer **representation** in bodies who make decisions that will affect the consumers.

These points are also included in what is termed as "objective claims of consumers" i.e. that the price should be "as low as possible", the quality should be "as high as possible", that access/choice should be "as wide as

possible", that the information should be sufficient, correct and easily understandable, and that consumers' representatives should be consulted when decisions concerning consumer matters are taken.

General Strategies of the Consumer Council

The Consumer Council works under three main strategies - influence, education, assistance:

1. It aims to **influence** governmental and private bodies to take the consumer perspective into account.
2. It aims to **educate** consumers to make rational choices, by making them aware of their rights and their choices in the markets for different products and services.
3. It also gives consumers **assistance** in obtaining their rights. (It is a well-known fact that "being right" does not necessarily mean "obtaining a right").

Daily responsibility is shared between the Secretariat and the County Offices in the following way:

- in the Secretariat the highest priority is given to influencing governmental and private bodies, and the lowest priority is given to direct assistance to consumers in different fields;
- in the County Offices the ranking is the opposite, with the highest priority on daily assistance to the consumers.

Information policy

The aim of the Consumer Council's information policy is to "create independent, aware and informed consumers. It is designed to provide individuals with a knowledge of, and insight into, the role of the consumer in a complex

² Twenty-one of the 71 delegates are appointed by country-wide organisations. These are: Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations, National Union of Single Persons, Norwegian Organisation for the Disabled, Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, Norwegian Youth Council, Norwegian National Health Association, Norwegian Society of Fishermen's Wives, Norwegian League of Handicap Organisations, Norwegian Society of Rural Women, Norwegian Housewives Association, Norwegian Co-operative Union and Wholesale Society, Norwegian National Tenants' Association, Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature, Norwegian Society for Rural Development, Norwegian Pensioners' Association, Norwegian Union of Teachers and National Federation of Vocational Unions.

³ The Chairman is appointed for a period of four years, with the option of reappointment for another four years.

⁴ Oslo and Akershus have a common county office. Troms has offices in both Tromsø and Harstad.

society, by providing a basic knowledge of topics such as consumer rights, personal economy and social economics, consumption and environment, global resources, housing, clothing, price and quality, nutrition and health.”⁵

The Information Policy of the Consumer Council is an integral part of the working of the Council. This means that it is not only the Information Department that deals with information to consumers. The Consumer Policy Department and the County Offices are also active in this respect.

Channels Used

The Consumer Council makes use of many different channels for informing and educating consumers via:

- The Consumer Report (Forbrukerrapporten), a magazine published ten times each year, which covers all aspects of consumer policy. With about 115 000 subscribers (in relation to a population of four million), the report represents an important channel to the public.
- Other types of publication - some distributed free of charge, for instance fact sheets and folders concerning consumer legislation, and some sold at reasonable prices (books, booklets and standard contracts).
- Contacts with the press - since Norwegians read more newspapers than most other nationalities, this channel is especially appropriate in Norway.

Consumers' specific problems are mainly channelled through the local press, while the information aimed at influencing important decision-makers is mainly channelled through national newspapers.

- Television and radio - for example a TV spot giving information about consumers' rights vis-à-vis craftsmen, and participation in consumer programmes, televised debates and interviews.
- Participation in numerous conferences.
- Finally, the Consumer Council has made special efforts to reach teachers and pupils in schools:
 - it tries to influence the curriculum of the teacher-training programme with regard to consumer education;

- it cooperates with publishers on the production of textbooks with a stronger focus on consumer topics;
- it holds in-service training courses for teachers;
- it initiates joint projects with teachers and prepares teaching materials; and
- it receives frequent visits from schools, give talks to pupils and arranges exhibitions of consumer-related material in schools.

Consumer Groups Reached

It is the Consumer Councils' aim to be a service organization which protects the interests of all consumers in Norway.

The geographical coverage is good, as the Consumer Council has offices in all counties in Norway, and each year the council has contact with about 120 000 households from all over the country. However, the majority of subscribers to The Consumer Report are educated people with above-average income (survey results from 1991). Nevertheless it is believed that information from the Consumer Council is available to most groups of consumers via the substantial coverage of consumer issues in the general media. In May 1992, the Consumer Council carried out a survey in 100 Norwegian primary and lower-secondary schools which showed that most teachers were familiar with the teaching material prepared by the Consumer Council (61%), have used such material (38%) or have had some contact with the Council (33%). Pupils at this level of education are particularly open to influence, so consumer education aimed at them has good potential. On the other hand, time spent on consumer issues is relatively short.

For more information:

Forbrukerrådet

The Consumer Council of Norway
Postboks 8104 Dep N-0032 OSLO

Tel: 67.59.96.00

Fax: 67.53.14.50

⁵ As expressed in the conference documents from the European Conference on Consumer Education in Schools, Stockholm, 12-14 September, 1993 - cfr. INFO-C No 9 p.31.

European Consumer Information Centres at Your Service

THE EUROPEAN CONSUMER INFORMATION OFFICE AT LILLE

The first European consumer information office, which opened in January 1991, is located in Lille and caters mainly for the Franco-Belgian zone, where cross-border shopping has long been commonplace.

From the start the Lille information office focused on providing information, and for this reason it created a database in the shape of a powerful "custom-built" tool which can rapidly be accessed by a very large number of consumers anywhere in Europe.

Users of the database can easily consult abstracts of consumer protection legislation in French or in English (Community directives, French legislation, case law, etc.), and can also get practical tips on such matters as the prices of products and services in - for example - France, Belgium or the southern United Kingdom.

This database is regularly updated and currently contains over 5 000 records. It may be consulted via Minitel (36.14, code AEIC) or via a PC.

The Lille office also prepares and distributes consumer information factsheets to consumer associations and the general public ("Insurance in Europe", "Package Holidays", etc.).

The office also acts as a host service for consumers who want to get information before purchasing goods or services abroad, or who are seeking advice in order to resolve a cross-border dispute.

Approximately 60% of the queries addressed to the office are from private individuals; other clients include consumer associations and a variety of multipliers (Maisons de l'Europe, journalists, European business information centres, etc.).

These queries constitute a very mixed bag and concern both local and intra-European cross-border issues - price comparisons, financial services and cross-border payments, insurance, VAT, distance selling, package holidays, etc. But the bulk concern the purchase of motorcars abroad, the purchase of furniture in Belgium, construction work by Belgian contractors, and, in a growing number of cases, timesharing.

The Lille office works hand in glove with the Belgian cross-border information centres (Euroconsument at Courtrai and the local cross-border consumer office at Mons).

It is staffed by a team of eight who manage the database, handle the queries and do research on behalf of the public. Office hours are Monday to Friday from 8.30 to 12.30 and from 13.30 to 17.30.

Source:

Agence Européenne d'Information sur la Consommation
47 bis, rue Barthélémy Delespaul
F-59000 Lille
Tel.: +33/20.60.69.19
Fax: +33/20.42.09.31



The Courtrai office¹ has been operating for just under a year and has two employees - one full-time and one part-time. It works in close collaboration with the Lille-based Centre Régional de la Consommation and the Mons local office.

Ten times annually the two agencies organise joint price comparisons of products and services in the cross-border regions.

The results are made available to the public free of charge. They have been distributed to 20 sites (libraries, post offices, tourist offices, etc.) making up a network established by the Courtrai office during its first year of operation.

The price surveys are always accompanied by a press release which is broadcast by the local radio and published in three of four newspapers.

Apart from price information the office also provides other data of interest to consumers - legal texts, the results of comparative tests, mediascans, etc.

¹ The Centre at Courtrai (Kortrijk) is located in the Flemish Region of Belgium; therefore its information material is produced in Dutch. The equivalent french language information can be obtained in the centre at Mons.

In order to provide the consumer with the kind of information he needs, a newsletter containing clear answers to the most popular questions is published every three months.

At the beginning of 1993 the most frequent questions concerned the VAT rates applicable in the other Member States of the Community and the free movement of goods, services and persons. In the course of the year, questions concerning VAT became somewhat less frequent. On the other hand, those concerning free movement and prices were put more often.

This shows that consumers are somewhat confused about the large market. This also explains the success of the office's newsletters. A publicity brochure explaining the office's work has been widely distributed. The office also participated in the information exchange organised by the European Commission on 14 May 1993 at Courtrai.

It also has good contacts with other consumer associations, such as the Ligue des Familles, CRIOC, KAV, KWB, KBG etc. These associations have also drawn their members' attention to the work of the office. On 7 September 1993 a study day was organised during which consumer associations had an opportunity to discuss the second three-year action plan.

Source:

Euroconsument
Wijngaardstraat 48
B-8500 Kortrijk
Tel.: +32/56/23.37.03
Fax: +32/56/23.37.50

LOCAL CROSS-BORDER CONSUMER OFFICE - MONS -

Context and background

The onset of the large European market means that European cross-border activities will expand, as will the exchange of information and means of communication, to the benefit of European citizen-consumers.

In this context consumers must be certain that their interests will be protected and must have access to information and advice enabling them to tackle any problems they may encounter. It was with this in mind that the Mons-based **Agence Transfrontalière de la Consommation** (Cross-Border Consumer Office) was opened on 3 May 1991.

The office's task

The office has four main assignments:

- to provide consumers with pertinent information on products or services;
- to advise consumers on everyday consumer problems (standards, formalities, procedures);
- to refer them to specialists in the event of cross-border disputes involving producers or distributors;
- to inform professionals of the prices of their competitors.

Who are the office's clients?

- the individual consumer;
- any person seeking information (concerning price, quality, legislation, etc.) on a specific product or service;
- specialists (teachers, social workers, lawyers, businessmen, etc.) who want to keep abreast of developments or to get hold of up-to-date documentation).

Main procedures

The office is responsible for the following practical tasks:

1. Surveys

The office, with the help of a cross-border analysis system, conducts price surveys and comparative tests of products or services for specific brands or makes (cars, electrical household goods, foodstuffs, etc.).

The results of the surveys are published in the local press. They are made available to the public at the office's premises and at the Mons tourist office.

2. Providing access to the data network (Minitel or videotext) and a database.

3. Establishment of a steering committee.

Established since 29 October 1991, the Committee defines the type and subject-matter of the surveys, prepares the work schedule and organises more specific actions designed to benefit the consumer.

It represents all local operators directly involved in the consumer sector.

Future objectives

In order to offer a better and more accessible service, we intend in the near future to:

- make more extensive use of the media so as to publish the results of our surveys together with more specific information in response to consumer demand;
- to distribute the survey results more widely (to libraries, municipal administration, post offices, etc.);
- to work more closely with the European institutions so as to ensure more rapid access to information and documentation concerning European consumer protection policy;
- to forge closer links with lawyers specialised in the field of cross-border disputes.

Conclusions

The large market should benefit everyone. The removal of borders within the European Community has stimulated trade and movement between Member States, especially in the frontier regions. The consumer must also be able to make the most of the large market. He must be protected against the risks associated with the removal of these frontiers, against misleading advertising, against monopolies, against dangerous substances contained in products intended for everyday use, against abuses in general. It is in this context that we are endeavouring to respond to consumers' expectations by offering them an appropriate service.

Source:

Agence Locale Transfrontalière de la Consommation de Mons
Jardin du Maieur
Grand Place 22
B-7000 Mons
Tel.: +32/65/84.07.38
Fax: +32/65/31.62.30

INFORMATION ACTIONS: RESULTS OF THE NEW CALL FOR TENDER

The objective of this open call for tender was to stimulate consumer information in the Community, and more specifically information about the expected practical impact of the Single Internal Market on the daily lives of citizens information. The information material should tell consumers what protection they can benefit from throughout the Community.

The tender was published in the Community's Official Journal on 30 June 1993; the deadline for submitting offers was 20 August, 1993.

Forty proposals were declared receivable (i.e. these offers respected the formal criteria of the tender), with some organizations submitting more than one proposal.

The overall objective of the selection process was to achieve the biggest possible impact with the available resources, i.e. to cover as many of the subject areas listed in the tender and to reach as many consumers in as many Community regions as possible, by supporting proposals likely to have a lasting impact and with a good cost/result ratio.

With this objective in mind, the evaluation committee selected eight proposals which it was convinced represented the best-possible cross-section given the overall number and quality of proposals received.

Below, you will find an overview of the consumer information actions which will now be undertaken following this call for tender.

Adiconsum, an Italian consumer organization, will produce and distribute a total of 500 000 brochures and 10 000 posters, on the following subjects: Product Safety, Toy Safety, Misleading Advertising, Banking, Consumer Credit, Insurance, Pharmaceutical goods, Cosmetics, Package Travel, Food labelling.

Address:

ADICONSUM
Via Boncompagni, 19
I-00187 Roma
ITALIA

Consumers in the European Community Group (CECG), an umbrella body for UK consumer organizations concerned with EC developments, will produce and distribute a single poster in combination with nine leaflets. The subjects covered are: Product Safety, Misleading Advertising, Banking, Consumer Credit, Insurance, Pharmaceutical goods, Cosmetics, Package Travel, Food labelling.

Address:

Consumers in the European Community Group
24 Tufton Street
UK-London SW1P 3RD
United Kingdom

The “**Consumers’ Protection Centre**” (**KEPKA**) in Greece proposes to produce leaflets, posters, press articles and radio programmes. These will focus on four subjects: Product safety, Food labelling, Insurance and Misleading Advertising.

Address:

Consumers’ Protection Center
40 Vas. Irakliou str.
GR-54623 Thessaloniki
GREECE

The **Food Safety Advisory Centre** (UK), has been selected to produce leaflets on the issue of Food labelling.

Address:

Food Safety Advisory Centre
14 Soho Square
UK-London W1V 5FB
United Kingdom

The “**Institut Européen Interrégional de la Consommation**” (**IEIC**), a network of regional consumer organizations cutting across most EC countries, will cover all nine subjects (Product Safety, Misleading Advertising, Banking, Consumer Credit, Insurance, Pharmaceutical goods, Cosmetics, Package Travel, Food labelling) with posters and brochures. The idea is to launch one subject per month. The material, which will have a distinctive look, will be disseminated in several Member States.

Address:

Institut Européen Interrégional de la Consommation
47 bis, rue Barthélémy Delespaul
F-59000 Lille
FRANCE

The “**Instituto do Consumidor**” (**IC**) of Portugal will carry out an information campaign on the theme “O consumidor europeu” (The European Consumer) which is designed to address the following issues: Product Safety, Misleading Advertising, Banking, Consumer

Credit, Insurance, Pharmaceutical goods, Package Travel, Food labelling and Ecological consumption. The campaign is to be run by the IC together with specialized companies, the competent authorities and other organizations. The campaign material is quite diverse: leaflets, posters, stickers, newspaper ads, TV and radio spots. Each month, a specific subject would be highlighted and for each subject, target audiences would be identified.

Address:

Instituto do Consumidor
Praça Duque de Saldanha 31
P-1000 Lisboa
PORTUGAL

Editrice Consumatori, publisher of the monthly Italian magazine “Consumatori”, will produce a supplement to their publication which is distributed in more than 1 million copies. This supplement of 48 pages (format A5) would go beyond the nine specific subject areas and paint a broader picture of a “consumers’ Europe”.

Address:

Mensile della Cooperazione di Consumatori
Viale Aldo Moro 16
I-40127 Bologna
ITALIA

Consumers’ Association of Ireland, and the **Office of the Director of Consumer Affairs** in Dublin, will jointly produce a total of 400 000 brochures on the following subjects: Consumer credit, Package Travel, Food labelling and Misleading Advertising. These will be supplemented by 2 500 posters. Distribution will be via existing networks and the mass media, and the brochures will incorporate information relevant to both parts of Ireland.

Address:

Office of the Director of Consumer Affairs
Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Dublin 4
IRELAND



CASE LAW

Free Movement of Goods and Consumer Protection Developments in Case Law

SCHUTZVERBAND GEGEN UNWESEN IN DER WIRTSCHAFT V YVES ROCHER JUDGMENT OF 18 MAY 1993 (CASE C-126/91)

The French firm Yves Rocher had circulated an advertisement among its German clients comparing old and new prices for its products (imported from France). However, German legislation prohibits any advertising containing price comparisons, whenever this advertising is "eye-catching". Hence the German authorities prohibited the firm from this form of advertising.

The question was whether these rules were compatible with Article 30 of the EEC Treaty which prohibits quantitative restrictions on imports and all measures having equivalent effect.

The Court recalled the two essential principles:

- rules which constitute an obstacle to the free movement of goods within the Community have to be accepted in so far as such rules are applied to domestic and imported products without distinction and can be justified as being necessary in order to satisfy mandatory requirements relating inter alia to consumer protection;
- however, the rules have to be in proportion to the objective pursued.

The Court held that German law went beyond the requirements of the objective, i.e. consumer protection, in so far as it prohibited all eye-catching advertising of price comparisons, even if it was in no way misleading.

KECK AND MITHOUARD JUDGMENT OF 24 NOVEMBER 1993 (JOINED CASES C-267/91 AND C-268/91)

The question was whether French law prohibiting resale at a loss was compatible with the provisions of Community law and notably Article 30 of the EEC Treaty which prohibits quantitative restrictions on imports and all measures having equivalent effect.

Previously the Court had broadly interpreted the notion of a measure having equivalent effect, a notion it steadily widened in its case law. It was in the *Dassonville* judgment of 11 July 1974 (*Procureur du Roi v Dassonville*, Case 8/74, ECR 1974, p. 837) that the Court for the first time defined the notion of measure having equivalent effect in very broad terms as comprehending "all trading rules enacted by Member States which are capable of hindering, directly or indirectly, actually or potentially, intra-Community trade". This definition, which was reproduced in numerous later judgments and was part of established case law on the free movement of goods, gave very wide scope to the prohibition contained in Article 30. In particular it did not require any proof of the actual existence of an obstacle to the free movement of goods between the Member States.

The Court, after recalling the principles established inter alia in *Dassonville*, said it considered it necessary to re-examine and clarify its case law "in view of the increasing tendency of traders to invoke Article 30 of the Treaty as a means of challenging any rules whose effect was to limit their commercial freedom even where such rules were not aimed at products from other Member States".

It also held that the application to products from other Member States of national provisions restricting or pro-

hibiting certain selling arrangements was not such as to constitute an obstacle, provided that those provisions applied to all affected traders operating within the national territory and provided that they affected in the same manner, in law and in fact, the marketing of domestic products and of those from other Member States.

The Court held that when such conditions were fulfilled the application of such rules to the sale of products from another Member State was not by nature such as to prevent their access to the market or to impede access any more than it impeded the access of domestic products.

Hence it held that French law did not infringe Article 30 of the EEC Treaty.

This judgment is particularly important because it reverses the case law of the Court in regard to the interpretation of Article 30 of the Treaty.

**HUNERMUND AND OTHERS V
LANDESAPOTHEKERRKAMMER
BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG - JUDGMENT
OF 15 DECEMBER 1993 (CASE C-292/92)**

A question was referred to the Court for a preliminary ruling in connection with a dispute between a number of Baden-Württemberg (Germany) pharmacists and their

professional chamber concerning the legality of a professional rule prohibiting pharmacists practising in the Land from advertising para-pharmaceutical products outside their pharmacies. The question was whether application of this measure to goods from other Member States could hinder trade between Member States, which would be counter to Community law and, more specifically, the provisions of Article 30 on the free movement of goods.

The Court held that this rule, which applies to all pharmacists belonging to the professional chamber, did not affect the marketing of products from other Member States differently from that of domestic products and was thus in conformity with Community law.

With this judgment the Court confirmed the case law it had already established in Keck and Mithouard.

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!!! APPEAL TO RADIO STATIONS !!!

Radio stations in various Member States broadcast programmes on consumer affairs. Given the large number of private stations, it is often difficult to get an overview of what is actually being broadcast in the European Union. **INFO-C** is very interested in broadcasts of this kind and would like to publish an inventory. **INFO-C** appeals to these media and to consumer organisations throughout the Community to notify them of all programmes in the consumer domain. The list will be published in **INFO-C** and could help establish contacts between the CPS's consumer information and education unit and the radio stations themselves. Certain organisations have already provided us with the information we want and so they need not contact us a second time unless there have been changes.

INFO-C would like to thank in advance the radio stations and organisations for their response.

The list will be published in the next issue of **INFO-C**.

Deadline for contributions: 11 March 1994.

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EUROPE

FOURTH EUROPEAN DAY OF COMMERCE

Traders and consumers meet

The 4th European Day of Commerce was held in Brussels on 3 November 1993. This year it was organised by Eurocommerce. The primary purpose of this event was to familiarise participants with Eurocommerce, an associated created in January 1993 by the CECD (European Retail Trade Confederation), FEWITA (Federation of European Wholesale and International Trade Associations) and GEDIS (European Multiple Retailers Association) to bring together the leading national trade associations and ensure their representation vis-à-vis the European

Community. Secondly, the idea was to familiarise participants with the European institutions with which Eurocommerce has contacts and to participate in a high-level forum studying the implications for trade of the activities of the European Community in general, and more specifically the current proposals relating to social and consumer policy.

Hence, after the morning session devoted to commerce, there were two afternoon panels, one on "social affairs" and the other on "consumer affairs". Jacques Delmoly, on behalf of the Cabinet of Christiane Scrivener, Commissioner responsible for Consumer Affairs at the European Commission, Monique Goyens from the BEUC, Marco Tenreiro from the Consumer Policy Service and Carlo Cossalter from the Italiana Trade Group "Rinascente" participated in the latter panel.

This Conference coincided with the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht and for this reason Jacques Delmoly underscored the extent to which consumers could already benefit from the Single Market.

This event also provided an opportunity for dialogue between traders and persons responsible for consumer protection.

The discussions focussed mainly on information contained on product labels and the use of appropriate languages in labelling in the Member States (see the article on this subject in the preceding issue of **INFO-C**, No 9/93). From the discussion it emerged that the general feeling in business circles was that one should "negotiate rather than legislate".

In the European Commission's view (Jacques Delmoly), the first step is to analyse the situation on a case-by-case basis before opting for binding instruments. The Commission's Green Paper on guarantees for consumer goods and after-sales services was also discussed. The Day of Commerce was an opportunity to remind participants that this is a consultation document whose purpose is precisely to allow the different parties involved to air their views (see the article on this subject in the preceding issue).

This Conference has thus allowed an exchange of views between the different circles involved in consumer policy and its problems.

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PACKAGING AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN EUROPE

The meeting was held in Brussels on 3 November 1993, and was organized by the Working Group on Packaging and the Environment (AGVU). The aim was to discuss the functioning of return and management systems on packaging and packaging waste in Member States, as well as the possible effects of the proposed directive on packaging and packaging waste (presented by the Commission on 15 July 1992).

The AGVU (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Verpackung und Umwelt) was founded in 1986 by companies in the retail trade and the consumer goods and packaging industries. The organization has the objective of 'promoting packaging concepts which are designed to meet the needs of the environment and of the consumer.'

The speakers, representing *Fost Plus* (Belgium), *Eco Emballages* (France), *EUROPEN/Beirat der Stichting Verpakking en Milieu* (the Netherlands) and *AGVU* (Germany), gave presentations of the return and management systems in their respective countries:

- In **Belgium**, a voluntary agreement concerning prevention and recycling of packaging waste was signed on 26 June 1990 by the Flemish Government and 17 associations representing producers, users and distributors of packaging and recyclers. Under this agreement the industries concerned agreed to develop and finance an action programme to reduce, collect and recycle packaging waste, and to phase out toxic heavy metals in packaging.
- In **France**, a decree on the elimination of packaging waste was adopted on 1 April 1992. This decree obliges economic operators:
 - i) to establish a deposit system for their packaging;
 - ii) to join a state recognized organization (*Eco-Emballage*); or
 - iii) to organize an autonomous collection network for their packaging after approval from the competent authorities.
- In the **Netherlands**, an open discussion between the Government and a large segment of industry resulted, on 6 June 1991, in the conclusion of a 'Packaging Covenant' covering the whole scope of packaging and packaging waste. One agreed target is that the production of packaging waste has to decrease: the 1986

level of about 2 million tonnes annually has to be reduced by the year 2000 by 10%.

- The **German** Federal Government adopted on 12 June 1991 an Ordinance on the Avoidance of Waste from Packaging, which imposes on manufacturers and/or distributors the obligation to take back packaging for reuse or recycling independently of the public waste disposal system.

Information:

AGVU (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Verpackung und Umwelt)
Poppelsdorfer Allee 48
D-53115 BONN
Tel: 0228/631103/04
Fax: 0228/696890

THE EUROPEAN UNION: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE USERS AND CONTRIBUTORS OF THE COOPERATIVE AND MUTUAL INSURERS

This conference was held in Brussels on 5 November 1993 by the Association of European Cooperative and Mutual Insurers (ACME), on the occasion of ACME's fifteenth anniversary, and supported by the Economic and Social Committee of the European Communities.

ACME is an organization which "brings together European insurance co-operatives and mutuals, societies of persons, founded on the principles of, amongst others, solidarity economy, social responsibility and the finality of which is the well-being of the users."

The objective of the conference was:

- "to provide a forum for exchanges of views on the consequences for the users of the profound changes of the economic and social environment in Europe that are created by the single European market and on the possible role and action of the co-operative and mutual insurers in this new framework, and this with a view to achieve the European Union.
- to put forward the expectations of the users as well as the European challenges the co-operative and mutual insurers have to face.
- to foster the links with the European institutions and, in particular, to respond to the European Commission's offer to start an open and structured dialogue with the citizens."

The speakers on the conference all underlined the importance of the social, as well as economic, aspects of the European Union.

Information:

ACME-Secretariat General
avenue Galilée 5, box 19
B-1030 Brussels
Tel: +32/2/214.94.99
Fax: +32/2/214.96.00

ECO-AUDITING AND ECO-LABELLING

On 4 and 5 November 1993, the "Club de Bruxelles" organized a conference, entitled "The Future of Eco-Auditing and Eco-Labelling in Europe". During the two-day conference the discussion focused on the positive and negative aspects of the eco-auditing and -labelling system. The conference discussed the value of participating in the EC Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), current auditing practices, whether the eco-labelling scheme is working, the need for standards, what effect environmental management will have on industry, public authorities and consumers, and the experience of other countries with similar schemes.

It was one of the first conferences attempting to involve industry in a discussion in which the European consumer was regarded as having an important role in the future. Cooperation between the consumer and industry was also greatly emphasised.

The conference stressed that the EMAS would boost consumer confidence, a necessity for the further development of EC environmental policy and an advantage for companies joining the scheme.

Goffredo DEL BINO (EC Directorate-General for Environment, Nuclear Safety and Civil Protection) highlighted the necessity of improved consumer information. Mistakes in the scheme will damage its credibility among consumers and industry. Meanwhile, some opinions from the industrial sector were different. David Wheeler (Director General, Environment, Health & Safety, Body-Shop International PLC) thought that ethics should be taken into consideration to a higher extent, and he stressed that the existing EC scheme was likely to mislead the consumer. Also Ludo Van Kollenburg (Environmental Affairs, European Lighting Council) criticised the idea, because only the use of energy-saving lamps would really have an impact on the environment, and he felt that the guidelines currently being developed for light bulbs would mislead the consumer.

The representative from BEUC supported the development of standards as a tool to improve the quality of management. For both systems (eco-labelling and eco-auditing) standards should be developed to guarantee uniformity through consultation between industry. Development of such standards would guarantee support from, and the confidence of, the consumer.

There was general consent that more work needed to be done with regard to the definition of the life-cycle analysis, i.e. the environmental impact of products throughout their entire life cycle. Most companies believed that the scheme could be an efficient marketing instrument but that its role, criteria and the technical information proposed in the regulation has to be better defined. The huge diversity between the negative and positive aspects which became apparent during the conference, also showed that this is a complex field and that a lot of work remains to be done.

Contact:

Club de Bruxelles
Rue du Collège St Michel 10
B-1150 Brussels
Tel: 32/2/771.98.90
Fax: 32/2/770.66.71

FRANCE

**THE PATIENT/DOCTOR RELATIONSHIP
TOMORROW**

The Eighth Consumer Law Days organised by the Paris-based Institut National de la Consommation on 6 and 7 December 1993 were an opportunity to discuss health issues from the patient's perspective. There are serious imbalances in the relationship between the patient and the health care provider - consumer in a situation of dependency, impossibility of assessing the risks associated with a course of treatment or intervention, difficulties of establishing proof of negligence in the event of a medical accident, medical secrecy, etc.

The focus was on three issues:

- 1) access of the patient to medical data concerning him and confidentiality vis-à-vis third parties (insurance companies, credit institutions, employers, etc.);
- 2) predictive medicine (i.e. the science of forecasting the risks which a patient may run during his life because of his genetic constitution) and the ques-

tions this raises in regard to protection of privacy, the insurability of the risk and the attendant risks of social exclusion;

- 3) choice between new systems of compensating victims of medical accidents on the basis of the notion of therapeutic risk or hazard rather than the traditional concept of negligence.

The Days demonstrated the importance of reflecting on how to protect the rights of the patient, the consumer of health care. The process of reflection, which has advanced quite remarkably in certain Member States, is now beginning to have an impact at Community level.

Information:

Thierry Bourgoignie
Centre de Droit de la Consommation
Place des Doyens, 1
B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Tel.: +32/10/47.85.31
Fax: +32/10/47.85.32

BELGIUM

THE BELGACOM MEDIATION SERVICE

The legal basis

The Belgian Act of 21 March 1991 granted wide autonomy to the public undertakings - the post, SNCB (Belgian railways) and Belgacom (Belgian telecommunications) - while at the same time focussing on protecting the user.

To this end a **Mediation Service** was established at Belgacom, which has been fully operative since September 1993. The Mediation Service is not subordinate to the authority, management or control of Belgacom and is a completely independent body.

It consists of two ombudsmen (one French-speaking and one Dutch-speaking), each of whom is assisted by five coworkers.

The Act of 21 March 1991 defined the tasks of the Belgacom Mediation Service as follows:

1. to examine all complaints from users concerning Belgacom's activities;
2. to mediate with a view to facilitating an amicable settlement between Belgacom and its clients;

3. to address an opinion to Belgacom whenever an amicable settlement is not possible; a copy of this opinion is sent to the complainant;
4. to hand down rulings in its capacity as arbiter in the event of any dispute which Belgacom and the user submit to arbitration under an agreement concluded after the initiation of the dispute;
5. to report on its activities each year. The report must in particular survey the different complaints or types of complaints and their follow-up, without directly or indirectly identifying the complainant. The report is communicated to Belgacom and to parliament. It is made available to the public;
6. to issue an opinion on the rules of conduct vis-à-vis clients for the year following the entry into effect of the management contract.

The Act also provides that a "royal decree" may make it mandatory for persons appealing to the Mediation Service to contribute to the costs.

This contribution has been set at a sum equivalent to the cost of sending a registered letter.

Tasks

The Belgacom ombudsman is first and foremost a conciliator. His task is to examine complaints of all types (concerning invoices, breakdowns, telephone directories, etc.) and he may in certain cases act as an arbiter.

However, he is not a substitute for the Belgacom services responsible for handling complaints. **A genuine service of last resort for an amicable settlement**, he intervenes only when no satisfactory solution has emerged from the initial contact between the client and Belgacom.

Moreover, each year he prepares **an activity report** which is transmitted to parliament, to the Minister responsible for public undertakings and to Belgacom's board of directors.

The Mediation Service is also responsible for regularly submitting to Belgacom all suggestions designed to improve relations between it and its clients.

Powers

When a complaint is submitted to the Mediation Service it may, without having to visit the undertaking, examine books, correspondence, records and generally speaking all the public undertaking's documents and papers which

directly concern the complaint. The service may require Belgacom administrators, agents or officers to provide any explanations or information it requires and may proceed with any verifications necessary in connection with this examination. Any information obtained in this manner is treated as confidential by the Mediation Service, whenever disclosure thereof could harm the undertaking on a more general level.

Treatment of complaints

Admissibility

If the Mediation Service decides not to treat a complaint or not to pursue treatment, it notifies the complainant in writing at the earliest opportunity, setting out its grounds.

Personal invitation

When the Mediation Service deems it necessary, it may invite and hear the complainant in person. In such a case the complainant may be accompanied by a person of his choice.

Communication to Belgacom

The Mediation Service informs Belgacom of all complaints it receives.

Right to inspection

- *On the part of Belgacom*

Belgacom has the right to consult the dossier drawn up by the Mediation Service. If this dossier contains confidential data, they are withdrawn in advance. Then Belgacom may express its viewpoint in writing.

- *On the part of the complainant*

The Mediation Service may authorise the complainant to consult the dossier it has drawn up. If this dossier contains confidential data, they are withdrawn in advance.

Time limits for the treatment of complaints

After examining the complaint, the Mediation Service attempts to effect conciliation. If it does not succeed, it issues an opinion. This opinion is not binding but is entered in Belgacom's annual report, presented to the responsible Minister and to the Members of Parliament. It is issued within two months of receipt of the complaint. The time limit may be extended only once for a further two months and this only when the parties have been duly informed before expiry of the initial time limit.

The opinion is communicated to Belgacom and, by registered letter to the complainant.

The Mediation Service as an arbitration board

The Mediation Service may act as an arbitration board in the case of disputes in respect of which it has not yet taken a stand or issued an opinion (provided the two parties agree). In this case it hands down a decision which is legally binding.

The Mediation Service establishes the rules of the arbitration procedure and determines the place of arbitration. It hands down its decision within two months of receipt of the registered letter containing the agreement. The time limit may be extended only once for a further two months and this only when the parties have been duly informed before expiry of the initial time limit.

The decision and grounds are communicated to Belgacom and, by registered letter, to the complainant.

Contact:

Service de médiation
Place des Barricades, 1
B-1000 Bruxelles
Tel.: +32/2/223.06.06 (French)
Fax: +32/2/219.77.88
Tel.: +32/2/223.09.09 (Dutch)
Fax: +32/2/219.86.59

GREECE

Just recently **INFO-C** for the first time received information about the activities of a Greek consumer association. It comes from the Athens-based organisation "Ekpizo" (Consumer Association for the Quality of Life) and consists of activity reports concerning 1992 and 1993.

Ekpizo has sent **INFO-C** two texts concerning a variety of activities carried out during specified periods. They are reproduced below.

CONSUMERS' RIGHTS AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGN (1 SEPTEMBER 1992 TO 31 MARCH 1993)

Activity Report

The term 'internal market' is not an abstract concept. It is an evolution with extensive and tangible consequences for the everyday life of the European citizen.

From now on, political, economic and social events within each country, including Greece, will be affected - directly or indirectly - by the events that have taken place in the Community as a whole.

Each of us, and above all the State itself, has a role of crucial importance to play in the realization of Europe without frontiers. Only through our active participation can the appropriate conditions be created, leading - amongst other things - to an improvement in our quality of life.

As a consumer organization with widespread European contacts, EKPIZO has concentrated on all these activities in order to protect the Greek consumer from possible negative results of the internal market caused by a lack of information.

Experience has shown us that the Greek consumer has no knowledge of consumers' rights made available under national and EC rules on consumer protection, and is not in a position to judge developments that have taken place within the European framework. The result of this situation is that Greek consumers can not act as 'catalysts' or as a decision-making group and, even worse, they are not able to act as a 'pressure group' for the correct implementation by the State of EC Directives and Regulations.

In EKPIZO's opinion, the reason is very simple:

- there is no accurate and reliable information; and as a result
- there is no detailed and consistent consumer awareness.

Under these circumstances and in order to bridge the gap, the 'Consumer Awareness Campaign' programme was undertaken by EKPIZO, with the main purpose of informing consumers of their rights and how to fight for them.

Within the framework of this programme, the following activities took place:

Publications

- A 24-page booklet entitled 'Toys: Good or Bad Friends?' was published in December 1992 addressed to parents and all those who care for children.

Part One analyses in a comprehensive manner the basic provisions of the EC Directive concerning toy safety with the objective of informing consumers of es-

sential toy safety requirements, advising on what to look out for when buying toys and, consequently, reducing the number of accidents caused by inappropriate use of toys.

Part Two analyses the unique relationship between children-parents-toys. It draws parents' attention to the fact that a toy could be dangerous to a child's safety or health, but could also be unsuitable as far as the child's intellectual level is concerned.

The booklet is unique in that it contains reliable statistical data regarding parents' ignorance of the existence of this legislation, the number and kind of accidents caused by toys, etc. The data gathered is the result of nationwide research carried out on behalf of EKPIZO by the Research Office 'Icap Hellas', details of which are presented under the heading 'Research'.

- A four-page leaflet entitled 'Travelling' was published in March 1993.

Based on the EC Directive on package travel its purpose is to inform consumers of their rights and responsibilities, when taking a trip organised by a travel company.

Lectures

- Athens, 23 November 1992: 'Guarantees and Repair of Electrical Appliances - Consumers' Rights'
- Patra, 10 to 11 December 1992: 'Consumers' Right to Healthy Water'
- Kavala-Drama 9 to 10 January 1993: 'European Internal Market and Standardised Foodstuffs'
- Heraklion, 6 February 1993: Presentation and analysis of the booklet 'Toys: Good or Bad Friends?'
- Larissa-Kavala, 19 to 21 February 1993: Presentation and analysis of the booklet 'Toys: Good or Bad Friends?'
- Athens, 20 March 1993: 'The Magic of Toys and Reality'.

A one-day lecture held at Pantios University, where different aspects of the term 'toy' were analyzed by experts (child psychologist, pedagogue, lawyer, representative of the Association of Greek Manufacturers of Toys, Professor in mass media).

The lecture was divided into the following topics:

- 'A child is playing: Creative relation or violation?'
- 'Playing in groups: Experience from the Paidotopos nursery school'

- 'European Community: The legislative framework on toy safety'
- 'The Greek toy: The present and future situation'
- 'Advertising of children' toys'.

Research

A nationwide research study was organised by the research office 'Icap Hellas' on behalf of EKPIZO over the period 5 to 25 October 1992.

A cross-section of households (1 012) and toys wholesalers (201) were interviewed.

The commonest accidents recorded were either injuries caused by weak or unstable parts of toys or sharp edges, falls from bicycles or skate-boards, and suffocation from swallowing small parts. Accidents caused by chemical or flammable materials were fewer.

Publicity to Promote Awareness

During the programme, a great effort was made to promote awareness of consumers in general, using the most effective means of communication to notify them of consumer news and events: the mass media. Thus, 90 radio spots were transmitted through the three best-known radio stations of Athens (Antenna, Flash, Sky) as well as through the provincial stations of Kavala, Drama and Heraklion. At the same time, newspapers in the same cities with the widest circulation published relevant notifications from EKPIZO.

Conclusions

The implementation of the programme was on a limited time-scale, but the results were of crucial importance for the continuation of EKPIZO's attempts to promote consumer awareness.

The basic conclusion reached was that, when a citizen is correctly informed, he or she is more aware of, and better able to claim his rights. Our suspicion that Greek consumers are less informed of their rights and European developments than those of other countries was proved to be right. The need for information and awareness-promoting activities is, and will continue to be in the future, very important.

Consumers were extremely receptive to the above-mentioned booklet and leaflet. Requests from associations, services, schools concerned were numerous. At this stage, the conclusion reached was that when a pub-

lication is addressed to a specific consumer group, such as parents, interest is keener and, therefore, the association's work more effective.

The decision to continue the nationwide research concerning toys and accidents is significant. The statistical data was used for promoting consumer awareness and EKPIZO's members obtained a clear picture of the market situation. Last but not least, the consumer realized via these data the magnitude of the problems caused by dangerous toys, and also that the term 'internal market' is no longer meaningless.

Through these publications, lectures and research, EKPIZO strengthened its ties with the mass media in Athens and the provinces. Almost every day, newspapers and periodicals published EKPIZO's articles, press releases and viewpoints on current consumer affairs. A number of radio interviews were given which positively contributed to consumers' information and awareness.

EKPIZO's activities were recognized by certain public services, such as the Ministry of Commerce and ELOT (the Greek Organization for Standardization). Its position as a supporter of consumers vis-à-vis the State was reinforced. Because of improved cooperation, product quality control has been boosted and working groups have been set up to tackle the relevant problems.

Obviously, problems continue to exist, and EKPIZO's work is more difficult because the Greek consumer is quite naive regarding the activities of a consumer association. However, the first steps have been made and EKPIZO will continue with even more dynamic activities in the future.

PROGRAMME FOR CONSUMER INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

(1 JUNE 1992 TO 31 MAY 1993)

Activity Report

This programme was supported financially by the EC Consumer Policy Service.

In general three channels of information (speeches, publications, radio programmes) were used successfully.

A major theme was nutrition and additives, for which the interest of the audience was very keen. The

publication of a book on additives was therefore a major event.

Another book published within the framework of this programme was entitled 'Ecology and Domestic Appliances', and was the successor to a previous publication, 'Familiarity with the House and its Appliances'.

Publication of a leaflet entitled 'Anna and Theano go to the Market' was a unique and pioneering innovation for Greece, as it was the first time a successful effort was made to create consumer awareness for children.

Forty half-hour high quality radio programmes were produced, drawing on EKPIZO's experience in consumer affairs and benefitting from the dedication of the journalists involved.

In addition to the direct effects, this information campaign resulted in a number of repercussions:

- the radio programmes produced in 1991 and 1992 were repeated two or three times upon the request of the audience;
- the leaflets published in 1988 and 1989 have been repeatedly republished, either by EKPIZO, or by local government;
- our efforts to address children has raised very favourable comments;
- the magazine 'Before I Buy' has been recognized and established;
- the acknowledgement and reputation of EKPIZO has increased considerably.

Contact:

EKPIZO

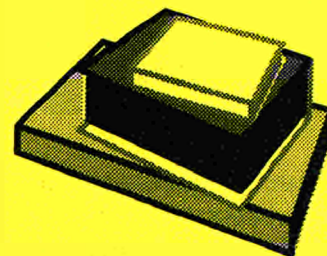
43-45 Valtetsiou str.

GR-Athens 106 81

Tel: 3300673

Fax: 3300591

PUBLICATIONS AND AUDIOVISUAL



- * **The Belgian association "Question Santé" has published a guide entitled "Medicaments - a consumer guide".** The purpose of this 632-page volume is to provide consumers with scientific information about the impact of medicaments on health. Almost 3 000 medicaments were registered in Belgium in 1993. Hence, people should be attentive because careless consumption of medicaments sometimes leads to avoidable illness. Last year, 30 to 50% of medicaments obtained on prescription were not taken as instructed. This is often due to medical jargon which consumers find incomprehensible.

Hence the guide is designed as a communication tool for consumers and describes diseases, symptoms and medicaments. But it should also provide an impetus to improve dialogue with doctors and chemists. It can be found in more than 800 public libraries, or can be ordered on payment of Bfrs 1 950 + Bfrs 90 postage.

Information:

BIBLIO

Brasschaatsteenweg, 308

B-2920 Kalmthout

Tel.: +32/3/620.03.61

Fax: +32/78/11.26.83

- * **"OECD Health care systems - facts and trends"** is the second publication devoted to health "accounts" for Europe, Northern America and the industrialised countries of the Pacific Basin, presented in a standardised form. It is a source of documentation and a collection of statistics on the state of health of 420 million citizens, describing their hospital systems, how their doctors work, pharmaceuticals consumption, lifestyle, as well as disparities in medical practices and the financing of health care. The trends indicate that most of the European countries have managed to slow down the increase in the costs of health services, while in the United States hospital costs and medical fees have continued their upward spiral.

Price: FF 380.

Information:

OCDE

Rue André Pascal, 2

F-75775 Paris Cedex 16

Tel.: +33/1/45.24.82.00

Fax: +33/1/45.24.81.76/85.00

- * Approximately 55 million inhabitants of Western Europe suffer from noise pollution, i.e. noise in excess of 65 DB (which is the nuisance threshold). For this reason **EURIMA (European Insulation Manufacturers Association)** whose members are manufacturers of thermal and acoustic insulating material, has published a brochure. Their conclusion is that the situation today is unsatisfactory, despite efforts to limit noise nuisances to noise nuisances at the source, mainly because soundproofing improvements to flats and residential buildings are not envisaged in the near future. EURIMA has launched an appeal accompanied by a number of proposals on how to build better houses.

The price of the brochure depends on the number of copies ordered.

Information:

EURIMA

Aimée De Rooster

Avenue Louise, 137 bte 8

B-1050 Brussels

Tel.: +32/2/538.63.27

Fax: +32/2/537.10.65

- * The task of the association **"Centre Urbain"** is to improve the quality of life in Brussels. Its activities are informational and educational and it has recently published 17 bilingual folders in French and Dutch dealing with individual aspects of housing. The folders contain advice with an eye to environmental protection and ecological consumption, including the rational use of water, energy and heating with a view to reducing costs and improving the quality of life.

Price of the brochures: Bfrs 220 + postage.

Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental impact of consumer goods. In order to provide basic information on this topic, the "Centre Urbain" has also published factsheets covering 15 different themes, ranging from modes of transport to foodstuffs. The factsheets provide an introduction for each (natural or chemical) product, discussing its pros and cons and providing practical advice on how to use it.

The factsheets can be had free of charge.

Information:

Equipe du Service Environnement
Centre Urbain
Place Saint-Géry, 24
B-1000 Brussels
Tel.: +32/2/512.86.19 or 511.66.43
Fax: +32/2/513.56.11

In the other six cases the order was forwarded to the branch in the consumer's country of residence.

The study provides a sample of the correspondence, notably the replies explaining why no catalogue was sent.

It also shows that the large market is not functioning in this sector, for a number of reasons described in the study.

(1) "Cross-Border Distance Selling" - BEUC/293/93 - October 1993

Information and price:

Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs - BEUC
Avenue de Tervueren, 36 bte 4
B-1040 Brussels
Tel.: +32/2/735.31.10
Fax: +32/2/735.74.55

* In summer 1993 the BEUC carried out a study on behalf of the Consumer Policy Service on **cross-border distance selling**. Is cross-border distance buying a real option today? Broadly speaking, NO!

Four countries were studied - Belgium, Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

Consumers in these countries requested catalogues from mail-order firms located in one of the three other countries. 45 requests were sent. Only 16 catalogues were returned. In five cases the catalogue did not come from the mail-order firm to which the request had been addressed, but from its outlet in the consumer's country of residence.

In response to a total of 45 requests, only 11 catalogues came from abroad.

A comparison of catalogues of brands available in different Member States is very revealing. Sometimes the prices are almost the same. In other cases identical products (same brand, same reference) are sold under the same brand name with price differences of up to 40%. Hence the consumer would do well to order the product from the cheapest source.

Finally, 34 orders were placed. Nine orders were accepted but only three by firms located abroad.

* **The consumer in Europe - a guide to transfrontier disputes**

The Paris-based Institut National de la Consommation has just published a "**Guide to transfrontier disputes**" focusing on consumer problems. Spoilt holidays abroad, misleading advertising originating in another country, the purchase of a defective product during a promotional trip, etc. - in cases like these the consumer is often helpless. The guide, which is intended mainly for consumer organisations and lawyers dealing with consumer problems has been designed with everyday needs in mind. The author, Jean Yves Carlier, solicitor and senior lecturer at the Catholic University of Louvain-La-Neuve (Belgium) provides a wealth of examples and has taken care to describe methods which are valid in all the Member States. The Brussels Convention of 27 September 1968 (on jurisdiction and the enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters) and the Rome Convention of 19 June 1980 (on the law applicable to contractual obligations) are discussed in detail. While the guide focuses on the settlement of individual disputes, it also casts light on the possibilities of collective transfrontier action and notably the opportunities for consumer associations to bring actions in another Member State of the Union.

"Consommer en Europe: Guide des litiges transfrontières" (243 pages)

Copies can be had from:

Institut National de la Consommation
(150 FF + 25 FF postage)
80 rue Lecourbe
F-75015 Paris
Tel.: 33/1/45.66.20.28
Fax: 33/1/45.66.21.70

* **Report of Conference on Labelling, Copenhagen 3-4 June, 1993**

This conference was covered in Nos 7 and 8 of **INFO-C**. Copies of the report - of which only a limited stock is available - may now be obtained, against payment of 100 Danish Kroner (approximately 13 ECU) to cover the cost of handling and postage, from:

Dansk Varefakta Nævn
Amager Fælledvej 56
DK-2300 Copenhagen S
Denmark
Tel: +45/3/296.13.32
Fax: +45/3/296.08.32

D i a r y



10 March 1994

The European Forum for Good Clinical Practice (EFGCP) is organising a conference on "Multisectoral approaches to GCP in Europe". One of the keynotes of the conference will be the ethical and safety aspects of clinical research.

The group is trying to identify ethical standards in such areas as pre-marketing tests of pharmaceutical products conducted on volunteers and patients. The pur-

pose of these tests is to guarantee maximum effectiveness and safety of these products for the future consumer.

Information:

EFGCP

Dr I. Klingmann

Fax: +32/2/772.29.98

The CPS may have lost a Director General, but **INFO-C** has gained a dedicated secretary: **INFO-C** has been condemned in the past to temporary resources for the function of secretary (although blessed with extremely capable persons!). From 1 January, **Sheila Reynolds** has taken over the secretariat, recruited on a permanent post. She has extensive experience in publications so we are really looking forward to her contribution.

Seuls les lecteurs n'ayant pas encore exprimé leur désir d'abonnement (gratuit) à INFO-C, sont invités à compléter le (les) coupon(s)-réponse(s) ci-dessous. Toutefois, si vous avez déjà renvoyé votre demande d'abonnement, nous vous saurions gré de vérifier vos coordonnées sur l'étiquette d'envoi et de nous communiquer toutes erreurs ou changements d'adresse pour la bonne expédition postale de votre bulletin.

Commission des Communautés Européennes

M^{me} SH. REYNOLDS

Service Politique des Consommateurs

J II 70 - 4/14

Rue de la Loi, 200

B - 1049 Bruxelles



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Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften

Frau SH. REYNOLDS

Dienst Verbraucherpolitik

J II 70 - 4/14

Rue de la Loi, 200

B - 1049 Bruxelles



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