



EU Commissioner Kuneva launches consumer rights campaign in Hungary

Budapest, 11th October 2007 - **European Commissioner for Consumers Meglena Kuneva** today launched a campaign in Hungary informing Hungarian citizens about their consumer rights both at home and in other EU countries. *"EU laws have given consumers rights, but making laws is only one step towards empowering consumers"*, she said at a press conference in Budapest. *"To make these rights work for you in practice, Hungarians need to know their rights, need to be reminded of them regularly, and need to know where to turn to for further information and advice"*.

Mrs Kuneva, the first EU Commissioner with a specific portfolio on consumer affairs and the first Bulgarian Commissioner, said that the primary aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of key consumer rights. *"This campaign wants to encourage all Hungarian people to become a better informed and more assertive consumers"(..)* *"Experience in all EU countries, and in particular in those countries that joined the EU more recently shows that there is a constant need for information, and that the EU can help and reinforce national efforts."*

The information campaign "In the EU consumers have rights. Get to know yours" as launched today has as its main themes consumer rights concerning product guarantees, on-line shopping and consumer credit. It uses TV and on-line advertising featuring the Mezga Family cartoon characters, with Aladar starring as the confident and assertive consumer who knows his rights. The campaign will run from October 2007 until June 2008, and further includes publication of fact sheets, and activities involving the general public, the business community and the media.

The campaign promotes the National Association for Consumer Protection 'OFÉ' as a source for further information and advice to consumers. *"Their challenge will be to reach out, to become a point of reference and guidance for many, and a driving force, in consumer protection issues in Hungarian society"*, Ms Kuneva said.

On behalf of OFÉ, Nikoletta Keszthelyi declared that *"This campaign provides the National Association for Consumer Protection in Hungary a great opportunity to familiarise consumers with their rights and encourage them to exercise these. During the campaign we will distribute a series of 11 fact sheets about consumer rights. People will find these fact sheets in OFÉ offices around the country, at various trade and consumer fairs, in the client service centres of some of the major utilities, financial and cable television companies and in the restaurants of a fast food chain."*

Addressing the press conference in Budapest Ms Kuneva said that an EU survey conducted in May 2007.¹ in Hungary has shown that:

- 50% of Hungarian consumers between 25 and 45 years did not know what their rights are when an appliance they purchased did not work properly
- 60% say they don't know their rights when taking out a credit to buy a washing machine or a car
- almost 70% have no idea of their rights when they shop on-line
- and, above all, an overwhelming majority feels they want to know more about their consumer rights

Focus group research conducted for the campaign has also shown that Hungarians would welcome clear guidance on how to exercise their rights. They often find consumer rights difficult to understand, as they are usually worded in complicated legal jargon. Consumers looking for more information can contact OFE by phone on (+36 1) 311 7030, or go to its website www.ofe.hu. OFE also provides regular updates about consumer rights and results of comparative testing of products in its magazine KOSAR, also available at www.kosar.hu.

Mrs Kuneva also referred to another objective of the campaign: *“We want to involve the Hungarian business community. Companies – large and small – need to know about consumer rights.”* Her message to the Hungarian business community was to be “consumer friendly” and to adhere to best practice “beyond legal obligations”. She added that companies should not just consider this as a cost, but rather as a competitive advantage in today’s open and free markets.

Similar campaigns have been undertaken by the European Commission in Poland in 2005, in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2006 and are starting this autumn also in Malta and Cyprus. Campaigns in remaining new Member States are scheduled for 2008 and 2009.

For more information contact Mmd Corporate, Public Affairs and Public Relations Consultants on 266-78-33

**Virág Vinczeffy, virag.vinczeffy@mmdcee.com
Éva Szilasi, eva.szilasi@mmdcee.com**

¹ The survey’s fieldwork was carried out between the 6th and the 11th of May 2007. Over 1000 randomly selected citizens aged between 25 and 45 were interviewed in Hungary.