



PRESS RELEASE

EU Commission launches consumer rights campaign in Cyprus

Nicosia, 22nd October 2007 – The **European Commission today launched a campaign in Cyprus informing Cypriot 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", Meglena Kuneva, European Commissioner for consumers said a video taped speech shown at today's press conference in Nicosia. "To make these rights work for you in practice, Cypriots 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 Cypriot 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 **"You are a consumer! You have rights!"** as launched today has as its main themes consumer rights concerning package travel, on-line shopping and consumer credit. It uses TV, Radio and Press. 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 Cyprus Consumer Association 'CCA' 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 Cypriot society",* Ms Kuneva said.

On behalf of CCA, Egli Hadjipaschali declared that *"This campaign provides the Cyprus Consumer Association a great opportunity to familiarise consumers with their rights and encourage them to exercise these. During the campaign we will distribute a series of 12 fact sheets about consumer rights. People will find these fact sheets in CCA offices around the country.*



Furthermore Ms Kuneva said that an EU survey conducted in April 2007.¹ in Cyprus has shown that:

- almost 50% of Cypriot consumers between 25 and 45 years did not know their rights when they take out credit to buy a car or a washing machine,
- More than 50% don't know what to do in case of problems with their holiday package
- More than 70% say they don't know their rights when they are shopping on-line
- And, above all, around 90% would like to know more about their consumer rights.

Consumers looking for more information can contact CCA by phone on 22 516112 or visit the official website www.cyprusconsumers.org.cy

Mrs Kuneva also referred to another objective of the campaign: *"We want to involve the Cypriot business community. Companies – large and small – need to know about consumer rights."* Her message to the Cypriot 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 Hungary. Campaigns in remaining new Member States are scheduled for 2008 and 2009.

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.