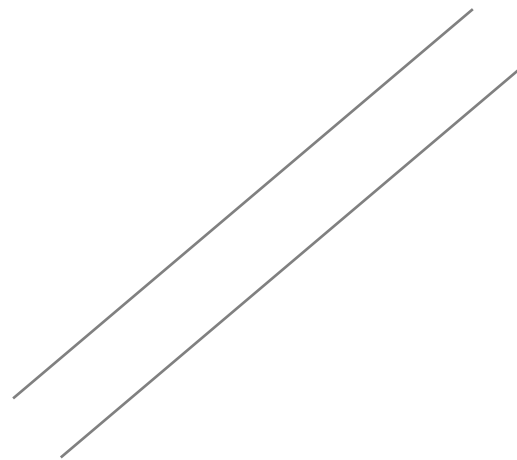


Meglana Kuneva

European Consumer Commissioner

"Ringtone sweep wrap up"



Press conference speaking points

Brussels, 17 November 2009

INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to **bring you up to date** on where we are, after **18 months** of work dealing with the enforcement of EU consumer rules for online sales of ringtones and wallpapers for mobile phones.

And I am particularly delighted to be here today with my colleague, **Mr Paolo Saba**, Director General for Consumer Affairs in the Italian Antitrust Authority who will talk to you in more detail about the countless hours of work that have gone into this investigation by national authorities, and the leading role that Italy has played.

All of this work has been about tackling **hidden charges** and **nasty surprises** in the small print of websites that rip-off and cheat consumers.

These days, people want to be careful about their spending and for that they need transparent prices. They need to be able to compare offers, shop around and find the best deal.

For these mobile products, **younger consumers** are particularly at risk, so they need to be made more aware, and for even younger children we want to alert parents also

The results

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today I am delighted to tell you that **70%** of the problems on websites investigated for mis-selling mobile services like ringtones to consumer law have been resolved.

Over the last 18 months, 52% of the websites investigated have been corrected and 17% have closed.

This is very good news for consumers!

The bad practices

It is worth remembering the kinds of nasty scams and unfair practices which were giving parents, teenagers and young children headaches across Europe.

There were 3 main problems

1. **Unclear information about the price of the offer** – with key information about charges, fees or subscriptions hidden away on the website or only appearing at the very last stage
2. **Incomplete information about trader** – so if the consumer needs to complain they have great difficulty in tracking the company down
3. **And blatantly misleading advertising.** In particular, abuses to do with the word free – so consumers are lured into signing up to an offer and only later find they have to pay.

More than half of all the websites we investigated specifically **targeted teenagers and children** – some of our most vulnerable consumers.

And most of the websites had **multiple problems:**

The progress

WE ARE NOT AT ALL COMPLACENT – but we are getting there.

We have come a long way since we first checked the market in June 2008. Then, these kinds of **illegal practices** were **widespread**.

That is no longer the case.

There has been a "step change" in the level of compliance.

Authorities are working together in an increasingly effective way and they are also targeting problematic areas of the market for consumers more precisely.

Furthermore, the increased media attention is serving to deter bad business practices and make consumers more aware.

Conclusion

My colleague Mr Saba will talk to you in more detail about the work of the network and in particular the excellent work done by Italy, where these practices were taken very seriously and large fines were handed out.

But before I hand over to Mr Saba, I want to underline that these new EU wide sweep investigations are a **totally new way of doing business at EU level**.

In this first two years, they are a huge success story. I want to take this opportunity to give the network of national enforcement authorities **full credit**.

Their hard work is laying the foundation for what we all hope will be a **much better online environment for the future**.

Laws are only as good as their enforcement and implementation. And this kind of EU joint enforcement co-operation is **the future** for EU consumer policy in Europe.

Today's results are a very promising sign for the future.

Thank you.

Now, my colleague Paolo Saba will say a few words about the experience of the Italian Authority and the work of the national enforcement network.

Then we will be happy to take any questions you might have.