

Sofia, 21 January 2009

## **European Union launches consumer information campaign in Bulgaria under the slogan: 'В ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЯ СЪЮЗ ВИЕ ИМАТЕ ПОТРЕБИТЕЛСКИ ПРАВА. ОТСТОЯВАЙТЕ ГИ!'<sup>1</sup>**

*A campaign initiated by the European Commissioner for Consumers Affairs Meglena Kuneva was launched today informing Bulgarian citizens about their consumer rights, both at home and in other EU countries. In her welcoming message at a press conference in Sofia the Head of Commissioner's cabinet, Ms Jivka Petkova said: "EU laws have given consumers rights, but making laws is only one step towards empowering consumers". "To make these rights work for us in practice, we need to know our rights, we need to assert them firmly, and we need to know where to turn to for further information or advice'. The campaign is part of the initiatives of the European Union to empower Bulgarian citizens and make consumer rights work for them in practice. The campaign is supported and financed (total amount of about 650 000 Euro) by the European Union*

According to Ms Kuneva the primary aim of the campaign is to encourage Bulgarians to become more informed and assertive consumers – to stand up and speak up for their rights.

During a press conference in the EU InfoCentre, chaired by Zinaida Zlatanova, Head of the EC Representation in Bulgaria, an EU survey conducted a few months ago was presented, and it shows that:

- More than two-thirds of Bulgarians between the ages of 21 and 45 want to know more about their rights when a washing machine or an MP3-player they bought does not work properly;
- Two-thirds are interested to learn what they can do if they have been given misleading or incomplete information when buying goods or services; and
- More than six out of ten want to know more about their rights when they take out a credit to buy a car or a computer;

The **В ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЯ СЪЮЗ ВИЕ ИМАТЕ ПОТРЕБИТЕЛСКИ ПРАВА. ОТСТОЯВАЙТЕ ГИ!** campaign will promote 'Active Consumers', the former Bulgarian National Consumer Association, as a source for consumer information and advice.

*"We want to emphasize the importance of Bulgarians taking action to build consumer power in our country, to build it together, as it has been done in other European countries", Bogomil Nikolov, its president, said at the press conference. "The*

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<sup>1</sup> In the European Union you have consumer rights. Use your rights.

*campaign gives us a great opportunity to do just this, and we have refreshed our image and name accordingly".*

In her welcoming message Ms Petkova underlined that *"the challenge for the Active Consumers organisation will be to reach out to a wider audience; and to make their website and magazine a natural point of reference and guidance for consumers"*.

The main themes of the campaign will concern consumer rights in case of faulty products, bank services and package holidays. Key rights in these areas will be promoted in TV, web and print advertising.

More detailed explanations can be found in fact sheets covering a total of 15 themes, published by Active Consumers, and available from their offices, the European Consumer Centre - Bulgaria and at the campaign website at [www.aktivnipotrebiteli.bg/kampania](http://www.aktivnipotrebiteli.bg/kampania)

Mrs Petkova also explained the ambition of the campaign to work with the business community. *"Companies – large and small"*, she underlined, *"need to know about consumer rights too."* Her message to business men and women was to be *"consumer friendly"* and to adhere to best practice *"beyond legal obligations"*. She added that this should not be perceived as a cost, but rather as a competitive advantage in today's open and free markets.

The campaign will run through the end of 2010 and include, amongst others, a roadshow that will visit all regional centers across Bulgaria this summer.

Consumers looking for more information can contact the Active Consumers by phone on 02/989 01 06, check [www.aktivnipotrebiteli.bg/kampania](http://www.aktivnipotrebiteli.bg/kampania), or visit Active Consumers at their offices in Sofia on Friday 22 January's Open Day (София 1504, ул. "Врабча" № 26°)

The contract for the campaign was awarded after an open and competitive public procurement process to a Consortium of companies, including Swing Lowe Communications, PR Point, Initiative Media Club and the South East European Research Centre.

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