

Alcohol Labeling



European Alcohol Policy Conference

Barcelona - 4 April 2008

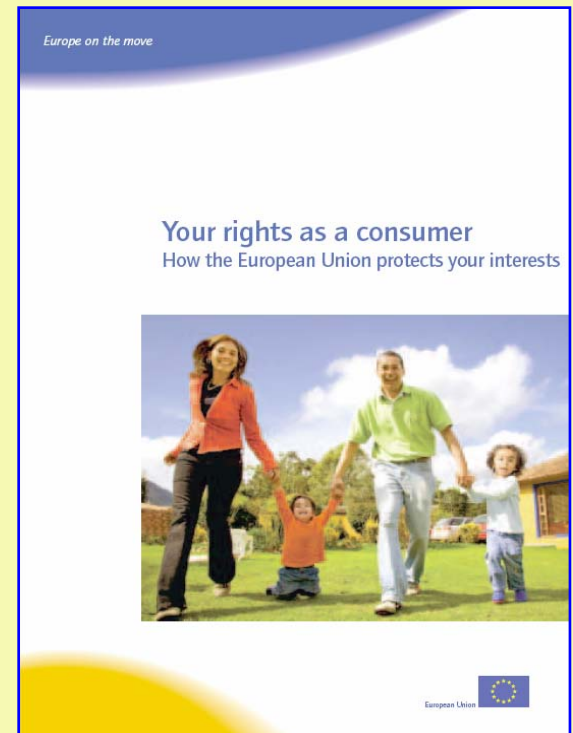
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Centre de Recherche et d'Information
des Organisations de Consommateurs



Outline

- Consumer policy is based on fundamental consumer rights
- Consumers' right to information:
general labelling requirements
- Commission proposal of food labelling rules (January 2008)
- Labelling of Alcoholic Beverages



Consumer policy: fundamental consumer rights

- The European consumer policy is based on the fundamental rights of the consumer such as the right to protection of safety and health, the right to be informed (+ education)...

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm

- On 13 March 2007 the European Commission adopted a **Consumer Policy Strategy for 2007-2013**.

[COM (2007) 99 final - Brussels, 13.3.2007]



Consumer policy: fundamental consumer rights

- Health and consumer protection policies share common objectives relating to
 - protection against risks and threats
 - improving decision-making of citizens about their health and consumer interests
- One of the Commissions actions is to ensure that consumers, through the provision of essential food information, are able to make informed purchasing choices and to make safe use of food

Consumers' right to information

- The consumer should be able to make his choices in full knowledge of the facts: detailed horizontal and vertical rules on labelling of products and services
- For foodstuffs the actual labelling rules* are explicit.
 - The information must be accurate, clear and easy to understand ; not in any way hidden or obscured by other written or pictorial matter ; may not be misleading ; some elements must appear in the same field of vision...
 - The labelling of foodstuffs must contain a list of about 10 elements
 - Alcoholic beverages are not required to carry all label information

* General food and nutrition labelling respectively covered by Directives 2000/13/EC and 90/496/EEC.



Proposal for a Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers

- In January 2008 the EC adopted a proposal on the provision of food information to consumers. This proposal combines Directive 2000/13/EC on the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs and the Directive 90/496/EEC on nutrition labelling for foodstuffs into one instrument.

[COM(2008) 40 final, 2008/0028 (COD) - Brussels, 30.1.2008]

- The proposal recasts and replaces provisions already in place under this Directive.

Proposal for a Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers

- It sets common definitions (art 2), principles (art 3-4), requirements and procedures
- It applies to all foods intended for the final consumer, including foods delivered by mass caterers (art 1) and food sold by means of distance communication (art 15)
- It introduces mandatory labelling of key nutritional elements (art 28) in the principal field of vision (art 34)
- It introduces the obligation to print the mandatory particulars in characters of at least 3mm and with a significant contrast between print and background (art 14).

Proposal for a Regulation: the labelling of alcoholic beverages

- Beverages containing more than 1,2 % by volume of alcohol should mention the actual alcoholic strength by volume. (art 9 and annex X)
- The list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration is not required for wine, beers and spirits (art 20 & art 29.1).

The Commission shall report after five years on the state of the play on the Community rules regarding the ingredient lists on these products and may accompany this report by specific measures determining the rules for labelling ingredients.

- However, ready to drink mixed beverages (so called alcopops) should provide the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration.

Proposal for a Regulation: the labelling of alcoholic beverages and the consumers' health

- Allergen labelling is mandatory for 14 substances (Annex II), e.g. (1) cereals containing gluten... (7) milk and products thereof, (8) nuts...

Except for e.g. cereals, whey, and nuts

used for making distillates or ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin for spirit drinks and other beverages containing more than 1,2 % by volume of alcohol.

- Regulation (EC) 1924/2006 of the EP and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods: beverages containing more than 1,2 % by volume of alcohol shall not bear health claims. [OJ L 404, 30.12.2006 and corrigendum OJ L 12, 18.1.2007]

Proposal for a Regulation: the consumers' health

- One of the Commission's public health priorities is to promote healthier diets ⇒ mandatory nutrition labelling
- No word in the proposal on health warnings on alcohol



“With regard to warning labels, the Commission will explore, in co-operation with Member States and stakeholders, the potential for developing efficient common approaches throughout the Community to provide adequate information”.

“Warning labels are however only one – albeit important – element within a range of measures that can improve information and raise awareness, and should therefore be part of a broader strategy. The Commission will therefore support Member States and stakeholders in their efforts to develop information and education programmes with regard to alcohol consumption and pregnancy.” [Response from the Commission to a question from a MEP]

State of the play

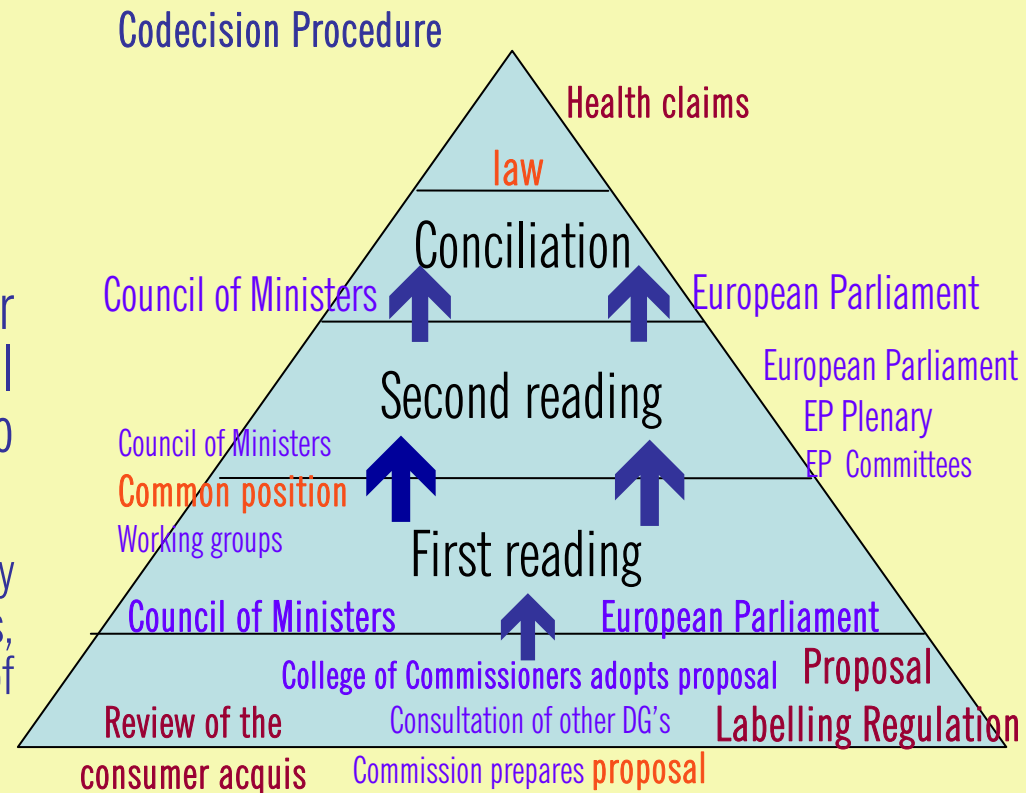
- Proposal was transmitted to EP & Council on 01.02.2008
- Mandatory consultation of EESC

- A regulation

However, there is room for Member States to promote additional national schemes provided they do not undermine the EU rules.

“MS may require additional mandatory particulars for specific types of foods, justified on grounds of the protection of public health or of consumers...” (art 38)

85 % of the legislation affecting consumers is decided on EU level



Thank you Ingrid Vanhaevre

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NE 417541646

Edition 2008
Catalogue Ref. : 901-08

D 2008-2492-34
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Price : 12 €

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