

SANCO : HEALTH AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

**MISSION**

The mission of DG « Health and Consumer Protection » is to :

- \* ensure a high level of protection of consumers' health, safety and economic interests as well as of public health at the level of the European Union.

**1. Consumer health and safety protection**

- \* propose and monitor legislation in the areas of veterinary, animal feed and phytosanitary matters in order to protect the consumer ;
- \* manage the work of the eight *scientific committees* and the Scientific Steering Committee which have to provide an independent scientific basis for a policy of consumer health protection, with regard to food at all stages of the production chain, as well as to other products, such as animal feeds or cosmetic products ;
- \* carry out inspections within the European Union and outside to ensure that in the food chain the rules on hygiene and food safety are respected ;
- \* evaluate and assess possible risks to consumer health in a forward looking way ;
- \* contribute to the safety of consumer products and services in the European Union.

**2. Protection of economic interests**

- \* propose and monitor legislation to protect the consumer ;
- \* reinforce market transparency ;
- \* ensure that the interests of consumers are given due consideration in the development of other European Union policies ;
- \* improve consumer confidence, especially by more complete and effective information and education ;
- \* develop a system of dialogue between consumer organisations and industry ;
- \* ensure that consumer organisations are better represented in all decision-making processes.

### **3. Public health**

- \* assure a high level of human health protection in the development of all Community policies ;
- \* to take actions to improve public health in the European Union, to prevent human illness and diseases and to obviate sources of danger to human health.

DG SANCO's organigramme reflects its policy interests and priorities :

- \* Directorate A is largely responsible for the broad area of "developing Consumer Policy".
- \* Directorate B is in charge of the organization, follow up and dissemination of Scientific Health Opinions.
- \* Directorate C coordinates horizontal questions, such as budgetary matters, but is also in charge of consumer information and representation, relations with other institutions of the EU and international aspects of consumer policy.
- \* Directorate D, the "Food and Veterinary Office" (FVO), is responsible for inspections and control both inside and outside the European Union.
- \* Directorate E is mainly in charge of legislation concerning animal and plant health as well as legislation on veterinary aspects of public health.
- \* Directorate F covers public health, which includes public health analysis and policy development, data monitoring, preventive measures (cancer, drug dependence, pollution related diseases, injuries), health promotion, surveillance of communicable and rare diseases.
- \* The "Evaluations of Health Risks Unit" is in charge of risk assessments and advice on the different options for future action.

### **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH INTERESTS**

DG SANCO's interest in the Fifth Framework Programme for Research, Technological development and Demonstration activities is a direct consequence of its policy competences and activities referred to above. In order to develop a good Consumer Policy and an effective health protection in the future, it is vital that the consumers' interest are taken into account in the upstream scientific research activities which are being carried out today.

DG SANCO is therefore interested in scientific research under a variety of themes and activities covered by FP5. The following serve as examples :

- \* Theme "*Quality of life and management of Living Resources*" : Research under all Key Actions is of potential interest to DG SANCO. Key Action 1 (Food, nutrition and health) is of particular relevance because of the DG's policy interest in public health and a safe, healthy, balanced and varied food supply for consumers, which requires research efforts covering all stages of the food chain. Key Action 3 (The cell factory) is equally of capital importance, i.a. in the field of the development of methods to trace and monitor the presence of GMO's in the environment.
- \* Theme "*User-friendly information society*" : Here too, the different Key Actions contain elements of direct interest to consumer needs. Particularly important are the systems and services regarding health and the research concerning different aspects of electronic commerce as well as multimedia.
- \* Theme "*Competitive and sustainable growth*" : Here, DG SANCO could have a direct interest in work related to sustainable consumption but equally in research on such aspects as knowledge and technologies useful for the development of high-quality products which are environment and consumer friendly.
- \* Theme "*Energy, Environment and sustainable development*" : Examples where there is a direct consumer interest in research are the "quality of water" and the "city of tomorrow".

The elements referred to under various themes are, as already mentioned, only some examples of potential consumer interest. Other elements can be found under the themes already referred to as well as under the other activities that are part of the Fifth Framework Programme, such as "Improving human research potential and the socio-economic knowledge base".

For those who want to learn more about DG SANCO's policies and activities, extensive information is available on the internet at the following address :

**<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg24>**