

*"DISCLAIMER - The European Consumer Consultative Group (ECCG) is a consultative group set up by the Commission, entrusted to represent the interests of consumers at the Commission and to give opinions on issues relating to the conception and implementation of policy and action on the subject of protection and information of consumers. The opinion of the ECCG does not reflect the opinion of the Commission or one of its Services".*

#### CONTEXT

- *The ECCG discussed the issue of information to patients at its meetings of 19 September 2007, 12 December 2007 and 19 February 2008 with the Commission lead services responsible for this issue.*
- *Following these discussions, the members of the ECCG have adopted the Opinion stated below.*
- *The Commission chairs the meetings of the ECCG. However, the Commission does not interfere with the drafting or adoption of ECCG Opinions.*
- *The Commission lead services will reply to the ECCG Opinion within 20 working days from its publication.*

#### **ECCG Opinion on information to patients – 20 February 2008**

The European Consumer Consultative Group (ECCG) is the Commission's main forum to consult national and European consumer organisations.

At the occasion of its meeting on 19/20 February 2008, the ECCG wishes to express extreme concern and dismay at the developments within Commission Services on the provision of information to patients.

The ECCG regrets that its views, given on several occasions and questioning the relevance and legitimacy of such an initiative, have to no extent been taken into account.

The ECCG questions the need for such a delivery of information on behalf of industry. Consumers/patients should be advised by health specialists, not by the pharmaceutical industry. Assistance for consumers to make informed choices can be improved within the existing legal framework, namely:

- by ensuring the transparency of medicine regulatory agencies
- by guaranteeing access to drug evaluation data and pharmacovigilance data,
- by improving the visibility of some trusted websites such as the European Medicine Agency EMEA and the EU health portal web sites
- or by improving patient leaflets.

The ECCG believes there is an obvious conflict of interests in pharmaceutical industries providing information directly to patients.

Consequently, the ECCG asks the Commission, as well as the other EU institutions, not to allow the pharmaceutical industry to provide the so-called non-promotional information to the public.