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## MEP meets Commissioner Kuneva on European City Guide scam

*by Mr Kevin Mizzi*

MEP Simon Busuttil met consumer affairs Commissioner Meglena Kuneva to discuss ways forward in addressing the European City Guide scam.

The European City Guide is one of a number of business directories which rely on misleading advertising to pin victims, often small businesses, into a three-year business-directory listing against charges of up to €1,000 per year.

During the meeting, Busuttil called on the Commissioner to support the European Parliament in taking action on four fronts.

First to increase the level of public awareness so that people would become more aware of the risks of signing up to unwarranted offers.

Secondly to provide clear guidance on how victims of this scam should respond. Thirdly, to ensure that existing EU law on misleading advertising is adequately enforced in different Member States and finally, to adopt measures, if necessary, to improve the existing European legal framework to ensure that such scams are effectively outlawed.

On her part, Commissioner Kuneva expressed her willingness to do everything within the competence of the Commission to combat this scam, although she admitted that the existing legal tools were not sufficiently adequate.

Kuneva also put forward measures for establishing cooperation amongst European Consumer Centres and to monitor the public's views through a Consumer Scoreboard. Moreover, the Commissioner also committed herself to do her utmost to raise consumer awareness further.

*"This is a problem which has a cross-border dimension and should therefore be tackled at a European level. It is also an opportunity for the EU to demonstrate that it is concerned with citizens' bread and butter issues."* Busuttil told Kuneva.

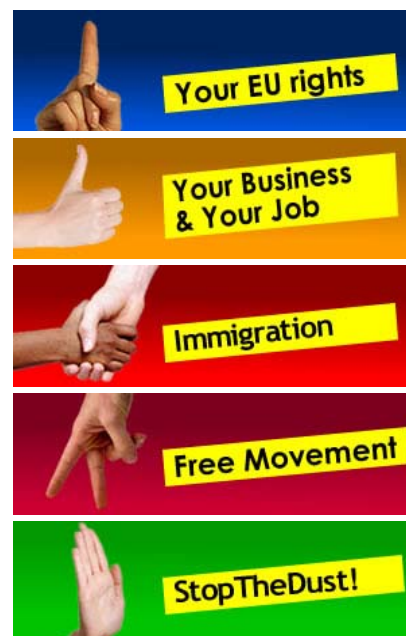
### About misleading business directories

The European City Guide scheme mostly targets small to medium sized businesses, but non-profit entities, such as schools, libraries and even band clubs are also known to fall victims. The scheme relies on misleading advertising whereby it gives businesses the impression that it will advertise their company details free of charge, in its business directory. Subsequently, however, on the basis of 'small print' in the form signed, the European City Guide demands payments in the region of €1,000. The scheme also takes advantage of legal loopholes which make it difficult for national authorities in various Member States to take action, as they do not have the authority to act across European borders.

Over the past years several businessmen across the EU, particularly in Malta, France and the United Kingdom, have fallen victim to this scheme.

### EP report on misleading business directories

MEP Simon Busuttil is the European Parliament's rapporteur on complaints concerning the European City Guide and similar misleading business directories. His report is expected to be presented to the European Parliament before the end of this year.



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