

Workshop on Comparative Testing of Products and Services and Dissemination of Test Results

Date: 17th & 18th June, 2010

Venue: India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

This workshop was held with the objective to train comparative testing organizations in India to improve their cooperation with mass media and thus increase the reach of their test results. The workshop was organized by GTZ-DoCA Project 'Consumer Protection and Sustainable Consumption in India'.

Mr. Rajiv Agarwal, Secretary MoCA, guest of honor, complimented GTZ for organizing the workshop and its excellent work for Consumer Protection. In his speech, he recommended that beside the five states, all other states in India should also have State Consumer Helplines so that consumer can easily access to their regional language advice centers and for this he suggested that MoCA can organize a National seminar to include other states by sharing their experiences. He was grateful to GTZ to own the responsibility to develop the IT software for consumer helplines. Secretary DCA informed that Government of India also supports the comparative testing of consumer products. He highlighted the need of wider dissemination of results of comparative testing and appreciated for giving an opportunity to all stakeholders to understand the relevance of comparative testing by the international expert from Stiftung Warentest. He encouraged all the stakeholders to take away as much as possible and internalize the learnings of Stiftung Warentest.





Mrs. Heike van Laak, Head of the Press Department (Stiftung Warentest) moderated the workshop and acted as a trainer. She elaborated the history of Stiftung Warentest as it was founded in 1964 following decision by Federal Parliament and aimed to provide impartial and supportive information for consumers using comparative investigations of products and services. She mentioned that Germany has also gone through similar situation that India is going through in the recent years. She also explained that in 1966 less than 1% people were aware of the magazine and only few buyers made the subscription for it, out of their curiosity. In the initial years of the Stiftung Warentest, the sales went down after a short bloom. But, thereafter by using new PR strategies with cooperation of media by spreading test results, using daily newspapers, broadcasting stations, televisions, the sales increased from 44,000 to 437,000 copies in 1975. She also gave examples of successes and failures of public relations emphasizing the risks involved in such an environment. She focused that for a successful PR there should be reliable and newsworthy information for the journalists and through mass media one can reach critical masses.

Dr. J. Bischoff, Director GTZ-ASEM highlighted the relation between comparative testing and environmental sustainability. He also recommended that it is important to bring different organizations together for healthy impact of comparative testing on sustainable consumption patterns and environment, as environment and sustainable consumption goes hand in hand.

More than 25 representatives from different organizations including VOICE, CERC, CONCERT, state representatives and few journalists were also present at the workshop to explore possible new strategies for improving dissemination of information to a broader audience.