

# European Citizens' Initiative: Commission registers 'We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!' initiative

The European Commission has today decided to register a European Citizens' Initiative entitled 'We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!' which states: *"Governments are struggling to handle migration. Most of us want to help people in need because we care. Millions have stood up to help. Now we want to be heard. Let's reclaim a Welcoming Europe! We call upon the European Commission to act."* The organisers call on the Commission to *"support local groups that help refugees... stop governments punishing volunteers... defend victims of exploitation, crime and human rights abuses"* (see Annex).

The Commission's decision to register the Initiative concerns only the legal admissibility of the proposal. The Commission has not analysed the substance at this stage.

The registration of this Initiative will take place on 15 February 2018, starting a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. Should the initiative receive one million statements of support within one year, from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react within three months. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances would be required to explain its reasoning.

## Background

European Citizens' Initiatives were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty and launched as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens in April 2012, upon the entry into force of the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation which implements the Treaty provisions.

Once formally registered, a European Citizens' Initiative allows one million citizens from at least one quarter of EU Member States to invite the European Commission to propose a legal act in areas where the Commission has the power to do so.

The conditions for admissibility, as foreseen by the European Citizens' Initiative Regulation, are that the proposed action does not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act, that it is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious and that it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union.

For more information

[ECIs currently collecting signatures](#)

[ECI website](#)

[ECI Regulation](#)

Annex – Description of the objectives of ‘We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!’

1. Citizens across Europe want to sponsor refugees to offer them a safe home and a new life. We want the Commission to offer direct support to local groups that help refugees who are granted national visas.
2. No one should be prosecuted or fined for offering humanitarian help or shelter. We want the Commission to stop those governments that are punishing volunteers.
3. Everyone has the right to justice. We want the Commission to guarantee more effective ways and rules to defend all victims of labour exploitation and crime across Europe and all victims of human rights abuses at our borders.

---

## **Public urged not to buy or consume slimming products with doubtful composition (with photo)**

The Department of Health (DH) today (February 14) appealed to the public not to buy or consume four slimming products as they were found to contain undeclared ingredients. The products are:

1. CA NI CAP Arm Slim (sibutramine found);
2. 7 Days Slim hip & Legs (sibutramine found);
3. Slim Perfect Legs (sibutramine found); and
4. CA NI Slim BELLANCE (orlistat found).

Following a public complaint, samples of the above products were purchased from an Internet seller for analysis. Test results from the Government Laboratory revealed that the samples either contain sibutramine or orlistat, which are Part 1 poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap 138) (the Ordinance).

The DH’s investigation is continuing.

Sibutramine was once used as an appetite suppressant. Since November 2010, products containing sibutramine have been banned in Hong Kong because

of increased cardiovascular risk. Orlistat is used for the treatment of obesity. Its side-effects include faecal urgency, fatty stool, increased frequency of defecation, faecal incontinence, headache and abdominal pain. Severe liver injuries may also be induced

According to the Ordinance, all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be legally sold in the market. Illegal sale or possession of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The DH spokesman strongly urged the public not to buy or consume products of doubtful composition or from unknown sources. All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format HK-XXXXX. Safety, quality and efficacy of unregistered pharmaceutical products are not guaranteed.

"Weight control should be achieved through a balanced diet and appropriate exercise. The public should consult healthcare professionals before using any medication for weight control," the spokesman advised.

The public may visit the Drug Office's pages for health messages on weight control and slimming products ([www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/slim.html](http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/slim.html)) and information on slimming products with undeclared Western drug ingredients ([www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/specMedsNews/slimming/en/consumer](http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/specMedsNews/slimming/en/consumer)).

People who have purchased the products should stop taking them immediately and consult healthcare professionals if they are in doubt or feeling unwell. They can submit the products to the DH's Drug Office at Room 1856, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, during office hours for disposal.



# Government welcomes Court of First Instance judgment on “live-in requirement”

The Government welcomed the ruling of the Court of First Instance today (February 14) which upholds the legality of the requirement that persons entering Hong Kong to work as domestic helpers shall reside in their employers' residence (“live-in requirement”) in an application for judicial review.

A Government spokesman said, “We are pleased that the judgment confirms that the ‘live-in requirement’ is lawful. The ‘live-in requirement’ underpins the long-established Government policy that priority in employment should be given to the local workforce and importation of foreign workers should only be allowed when there is proven manpower shortage in specific trades that cannot be filled by local workers. It is in line with this policy objective that foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) have been imported since the 1970s to meet the proven shortage of local live-in domestic helpers.

“Before coming to Hong Kong, the FDH has agreed to Clause 3 of the Standard Employment Contract (SEC), which states that the FDH is to work and reside in the employer's residence by signing the SEC with the employer. In addition to the contractual agreement, the FDH and the employer must each give an undertaking to the Government in the application forms for visa application with the Immigration Department (ImmD) that the FDH would only reside in the employer's residence. In other words, FDHs are fully aware of the ‘live-in requirement’ before signing the contract and they are admitted to Hong Kong on such basis. They can terminate the contract any time if they are no longer willing to comply with the contractual terms, including the ‘live-in requirement’.

“The Government spares no effort in safeguarding the rights and benefits of some 370 000 FDHs in Hong Kong, who enjoy the same statutory protection as local employees under the Hong Kong labour law. Under the SEC, the employer should provide the FDH with suitable and furnished accommodation and with reasonable privacy free of charge. The employer is also required to give an undertaking in the relevant visa application form to provide the FDH with suitable accommodation and with reasonable privacy. The application will be refused if the employer fails to meet the requirement.”

If a FDH considers that his/her employer fails to provide suitable accommodation or has breached any of the terms concerning accommodation arrangements as provided in the SEC, or his/her employment rights are being infringed, he/she may approach the Labour Department for free consultation and conciliation services. He/she may also report to the ImmD for investigation. If an employer breaches his/her undertaking to the Government and/or fails to provide the FDH with free, suitable and furnished accommodation with reasonable privacy as provided under the SEC, it will be one of the factors in the ImmD's consideration of the employer's future

application for employing a FDH from abroad. The adverse record may lead to any such application being refused. Further, employers who knowingly furnish a false representation/statement to immigration officers in respect of the intended accommodation arrangement in the course of a visa application are subject to criminal investigation and possible prosecution for the relevant offence.

---

## **HA approves average selling prices and arrangements for Sale of HOS Flats 2018 and measures to refine implementation of Well-off Tenants Policies**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) today (February 14) approved the income and asset limits for White Form (WF) applicants, as well as the average selling prices and sales arrangements for the Sale of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Flats 2018.

Applications may be submitted from the end of March to mid-April and balloting will be held in June. Successful applicants will be invited to select flats from August.

For the Sale of HOS Flats 2018, the income limit for family applicants will be \$57,000 per month and the asset limit will be \$1.96 million. The income and asset limits for one-person applicants will be set at half of the limits for family applicants, at \$28,500 and \$980,000 respectively (see Table 1).

“Following the established methodology, the income and asset limits are set after taking into account the latest property market and economic conditions,” a spokesman for the HA said.

“As endorsed by the SHC in November 2017, the income and asset limits will also apply to applicants of White Form Secondary Market Scheme (WSM), which will be launched concurrently with the Sale of HOS Flats 2018 in March,” the spokesman added.

A total of 4 431 flats from three new HOS developments will be put up for sale, comprising 2 522 flats in Hoi Lok Court in Cheung Sha Wan, with a saleable area of 35.6 square metres (sq m) to 58.6 sq m; 683 flats in Kai Long Court in Kai Tak with a saleable area of 26.6 sq m to 43.8 sq m, and 1

226 flats in Yu Tai Court in Tung Chung with a saleable area of 25.8 sq m to 53.1 sq m.

The SHC decided that the average selling prices for the HOS flats are to be set at 30 per cent discount from the assessed market values. The selling prices, after applying the discount, will average \$3.6 million and range from \$1.59 million to \$6.30 million (see Table 2) with over 95 per cent below \$5 million.

“The assessed market values have been derived through appropriate adjustments to the recent open market transaction prices of both first-hand and second-hand private and HOS flats in the vicinity to reflect the differences between these flats and HOS flats in terms of building age, location, design and facilities, etc, and in particular the no-frills condition of HOS flats,” the spokesman said.

“As a result, the average selling prices (at 70 per cent of assessed market values) of the HOS flats are generally lower than those of private housing flats that are otherwise comparable, especially when compared with the selling prices of first-hand flats of private developments in the vicinity,” he added.

The SHC also decided to maintain the quota between Green Form (GF) and WF applicants at 50:50 and allow flexibility to re-allocate any remaining quota from the GF queue to the WF queue, and vice versa.

It was also decided that the established order of priority for flat selection will be followed, with absolute priority offered to applicants living in Mei Po House and Mei Tung House of Mei Tung Estate, and residents of Blocks 9, 10, 11 and 13 of Pak Tin Estate who are affected by HA’s announced clearance programmes. As at the end of August 2017, the number of affected households was about 2,900. Within other ordinary GF and WF groups, family applicants have priority over one-person applicants (see Table 3).

“A quota of 1 300 flats will be set aside for families applying under the Priority Scheme for Families with Elderly Members (Priority Elderly Scheme) who have priority over other family applicants, with GF and WF applicants each taking up 50 per cent. This quota seeks to enable other family applicants to have more chance to purchase larger flats, as 1 624 flats are of a larger size of 41 sq m or above,” the spokesman said, adding that if families under the Priority Elderly Scheme fail to obtain a flat under the quota, they will still have the opportunity to purchase under other family categories.

The SHC also agreed to reserve 400 flats for one-person applicants, with GF and WF applicants each taking up 50 per cent, taking into account the persistently strong demand from one-person applicants in previous HOS sale exercises.

“With the lowest priority in flat selection, one-person applicants may have no chance to buy a flat if we do not set aside certain number of flats

for them,” the spokesman said.

Before the sale launch, hard copies of the sales booklets, application forms and application guides will be made available for public collection at the HA Customer Service Centre (HACSC) at Lok Fu. These documents can also be obtained during office hours in the estate offices and District Tenancy Management Offices of the HA, rental estate offices of the Hong Kong Housing Society, Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department and the Sham Shui Po Housing Information Centre.

In addition, soft copies of the sales booklets will be uploaded to the designated websites of the HA/Housing Department (HD), while soft copies of the application forms and the application guides will be available for viewing and downloading from the website. The latest drafts of Deeds of Mutual Covenant of the three HOS developments and aerial photographs will be displayed at the HACSC and made available for viewing at the designated HA/HD websites. Virtual show flat walkthrough videos and “doll houses” of typical flats, building models, and other information including approved building plans, Outline Zoning Plans, land grants, etc, of the three developments will be displayed at the HACSC for inspection by the public.

Before the commencement of flat selection, hard copies of the sales brochures covering full details of the developments and the price lists will be made available for public collection at the HACSC. A few copies of these documents will be placed at the HA’s estate offices for viewing by public rental housing tenants. In addition, soft copies of these documents will be uploaded to the designated HA/HD websites.

At today’s meeting, Members also noted the major implementation details of the WSM. With an annual quota of 2,500, the WSM will be launched concurrently with the Sale of HOS Flats 2018, adopting the same set of eligibility criteria.

“Applicants may choose between the HOS and the WSM or both. However, they need to make separate application for each scheme. The application period for the WSM will be the same as that for the Sale of HOS 2018 (i.e from the end of March to mid-April). Separate balloting will be conducted in June to determine the priority for flat selection under different categories of applications for the Sale of HOS Flats and the allocation of quota under the WSM,” the spokesman said.

Successful applicants of the WSM will be invited to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility to Purchase (CEP), which will be valid for one year, within two weeks from the issue date of the approval letters by the HA in September 2018 tentatively before they can purchase flats with premium not yet paid in the HOS Secondary Market.

“Upon balloting of both the WSM and HOS in June 2018, applicants who have concurrently applied for both schemes will know whether they can obtain a quota flat under the WSM and their priority under the HOS by then. As such, they can choose either to purchase new HOS flats in August when flat

selection commences or to apply for a CEP to buy flats in the HOS Secondary Market under WSM in September 2018 when the approval letters are issued,” the spokesman said.

Application fees for the Sale of HOS and WSM are \$240 and \$120 respectively.

At today’s meeting, Members also noted the implementation of the revised Well-off Tenants Policies and endorsed measures to refine the implementation arrangements of the Well-off Tenants Policies:

(a) at present, households whose members are all (i) aged 60 or above; or (ii) receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance; or (iii) receiving Social Welfare Department’s Disability Allowance are exempted from the Policies. The SHC endorsed extending the exemption to households with all members in different combinations of (i), (ii) and (iii) above; and

(b) to allow households to deduct lump-sum non-statutory compensations and special financial assistance received due to death of family members in the tenancy in calculating total asset value.

The SHC endorsed amendments to the Well-off Tenants Policies and the implementation details at its meetings on December 9, 2016 and February 14, 2017 respectively.

“We will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the revised Well-off Tenants Policies to ensure rational allocation of public rental housing resources,” the spokesman said.

---

## **CHP notified of human case of avian influenza A (H7N4) in Mainland**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 14) received notification from the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) that a human case of avian influenza A (H7N4) was confirmed from February 10 to 14, and reminded the public to maintain strict personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel.

According to the NHFPC, this is the first case of human infection with avian influenza A (H7N4) in the world. The case involved a 68-year-old female patient living in Liyang in Changzhou of Jiangsu Province who developed symptoms on December 25, 2017. She was admitted to hospital for medical treatment on January 1 and was discharged on January 22. She had contact with live poultry before the onset of symptoms. All her close contacts did not have any symptoms during the medical surveillance period.



According to a report from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, upon analysis, the genes of the virus were determined to be of avian origin.

“All novel influenza A infections, including H7N4, are notifiable infectious diseases in Hong Kong,” the spokesman for the CHP said.

“Based on the seasonal pattern, the activity of avian influenza viruses is expected to be higher in winter. Travellers to the Mainland or other affected areas must avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms. They should be alert to the presence of backyard poultry when visiting relatives and friends. They should also avoid purchasing live or freshly slaughtered poultry, and avoid touching poultry/birds or their droppings. They should strictly observe personal and hand hygiene when visiting any place with live poultry,” the spokesman reminded.

Travellers returning from affected areas should consult a doctor promptly if symptoms develop, and inform the doctor of their travel history for prompt diagnosis and treatment of potential diseases. It is essential to tell the doctor if they have seen any live poultry during travel, which may imply possible exposure to contaminated environments. This will enable the doctor to assess the possibility of avian influenza and arrange necessary investigations and appropriate treatment in a timely manner.

While local surveillance, prevention and control measures are in place, the CHP will remain vigilant and work closely with the World Health Organization and relevant health authorities to monitor the latest developments.

The CHP’s Port Health Office conducts health surveillance measures at all boundary control points. Thermal imaging systems are in place for body temperature checks on inbound travellers. Suspected cases will be immediately referred to public hospitals for follow-up.

The display of posters and broadcasting of health messages in departure and arrival halls as health education for travellers is under way. The travel industry and other stakeholders are regularly updated on the latest information.

The public should maintain strict personal, hand, food and environmental hygiene and take heed of the advice below if handling poultry:

- Avoid touching poultry, birds, animals or their droppings;
- When buying live chickens, do not touch them and their droppings. Do not blow at their bottoms. Wash eggs with detergent if soiled with faecal matter and cook and consume the eggs immediately. Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling chickens and eggs;
- Eggs should be cooked well until the white and yolk become firm. Do not eat raw eggs or dip cooked food into any sauce with raw eggs. Poultry should be cooked thoroughly. If there is pinkish juice running from the

cooked poultry or the middle part of its bone is still red, the poultry should be cooked again until fully done;

- Wash hands frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, before handling food or eating, and after going to the toilet, touching public installations or equipment such as escalator handrails, elevator control panels or door knobs, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing; and
- Wear a mask if fever or respiratory symptoms develop, when going to a hospital or clinic, or while taking care of patients with fever or respiratory symptoms.

The public may visit the CHP's pages for more information: the [avian influenza](#) page, the weekly [Avian Influenza Report, global statistics and affected areas](#) of avian influenza, the [Facebook Page](#) and the [YouTube Channel](#).