

ECU General Assembly

29 January 2021
from 10:00 to 12:40 CET

Link for the connection:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85775267411?pwd=VnkrSCtOSFNqTkdmeU5YUVFkNm1Bdz09>

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1

ECU activities and challenges

Good morning,

my speech is divided into two parts: in the first one I summarize what has been done in the last year and a half, in the second one I try to put forward some hypothesis in order to encourage you to reflect & discuss on how ECU should be structured to keep up with the challenges that we have to face.

Part A –

What we have done

The account of activities carried out or ongoing will be focused on three aspects:

- Membership
- A brief overview of ECU's involvement in European project.
- Political Initiative

Membership

To date, ECU counts with 23 Members coming from 16 EU Member State plus 1 from Extra EU. In the past months, two organizations decided to join ECU:

- TALENTED BORDERS from Latvia
- ADOC from Italy.

Welcome, I'll invite both association to brief present themselves later on.

So, the total is 25 Members from 16 EU Countries. A good results, but not enough. In fact, to be appointed in the new CONSUMER POLICY ADVISORY GROUP, promoted by the EU Commission, we

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need to increase our membership up to Members coming from 18 Members States: this is our main objective in the coming three months.

EU projects:

- 1) ECU has been officially involved for years in the Seafood Tomorrow project, now nearing its end, funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 program, which aims to develop innovative and sustainable solutions to improve the safety and nutritional properties of seafood products.
- 2) In March 2020, ECU become official stakeholder of the BIONTOP project, thanks to its Italian member Movimento Consumatori. This project aims at delivering bio-based recyclable-by-design cost competitive packaging solutions that can be mechanically recycled, industrially or home compostable, or suitable for anaerobic digestion.
- 3) In a similar way, in January 2021 ECU become official stakeholder of the NUDGE project, focused on energy efficiency, thanks to its Italian member Cittadinanzattiva. In particular, ECU will be engaged in the dissemination of an online survey in order to collect data & suggestions from European citizens/consumers.
- 4) Today is started the multi annual project "FoodSafety4EU" which main goal is to plan integrated actions to put the basis for building together the platform for the Food Safety System of the future in Europe. ECU is one of the "Supporting Partners" and we now need to identify who can follow this project on behalf of ECU.
- 5) In the last 2 days, has been submitted several H2020 project proposal, both linked to the New Green Deal and the "Farm to Fork" (F2F) EU Strategy. One, called "CoCooS", aims to encourage energy transition across the processing, distribution, conservation and preparation of food. Another proposal, which acronym is "DEMETRA", aims to strengthen the sustainable production of certain foods by focusing on aquaponics, a type of agriculture mixed with sustainable farming based on a combination of aquaculture and cultivation.
- 6) And probably another one project is coming.

Political initiative

As you know ECU is co-promoting a political initiative that aims to create the informal Inter-institutional Group "SDGs for well-being and consumers' protection", opened to the members of the EU Institutions that wish to work together with the civil society to ensure that Europe will be a global leader in the development and implementation of the SDGs.

The Inter-Institutional Group has been created to add a space to reflect on sustainability, and it represents the desire of the civil society to contribute to the SDGs and the Green New Deal, aiming to discuss and raise awareness on how the individual can give her/his contribution. In fact, we

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strongly believe that citizen and consumer empowerment should be the pillar of the transition towards a more inclusive and sustainable Europe.

We can count with the support of several MEPs, and about it I want to thank Anastasia and all the Greek Association EEKE – UNION OF WORKING CONSUMERS OF GREECE and Roberto & all the Spanish Association ASOCIACION MURCIANA DE CONSUMIDORES Y USURAIOS, CONSUMUR for connecting us with their MEPs that have accepted to support the initiative.

This initiative is already endorsed by the “SDGs Multi-Stakeholders Network”, that today counts 47 among National and European Associations, and is in line with European Commission's initiatives as the European Green Deal, the "New Consumer Agenda" and the "Consumer Day”, organized last December by the DG for Justice and Consumers, titled: "Consumer policy in the service of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda". The official launch is planned next February 16th, 2021 from 10:00 to 12:00 in the framework of the webinar “Making sustainability an easy choice for EU citizens”. You have received the save the date and the official invitation by Giuseppe Perretti, our colleague based in Bruxelles, please join the initiative, widespread the information and encourage to attend because this is our main investment for the future. We hope to triggered the attention of stakeholder and Institutions.

Part B –

What we need to do

Well, we must now think about how to organize ourselves to do what the President mentioned in his introduction (sustainability and digitalization) and all that we will decide to do together today. From my side, a lot has been done with very limited resources, mainly on the shoulders of a few, and this is not sustainable in the long run.

It is necessary to draw on the resources of time, skills, contacts that each member of ECU possesses and that still do not become a "common good" within the Association.

The protagonism of ECU will depend on the desire to be protagonists that each ECU member will demonstrate with facts to have.

We need to confront each other more frequently, to recognize among our experts the point of reference on specific consumer issues, to listen ideas and proposals.

The presence today of the European Commission demonstrates, as in the past in Paris, the attention of the European Institutions towards us.

I believe that there is the opportunity in Europe for more associations active in the consumer policy, and I am aware of other entities that are trying to structure themselves. Do you need to make alliances? To merge efforts? Staying like this is not the solution: the future of ECU is in our hand. I'll be happy to listen each one of you.

Thanks for the attention, we can open the debate

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