The New Consumer Agenda

DG Justice & Consumers

29 January 2021

THE NEW CONSUMER AGENDA
Novelties

Why is a new Consumer Agenda needed?

- The current one expired in 2020

- New Commission's priorities

- Closer link with the new Multi-Annual Framework-MFF

- Addressing both the impact of Covid-19 on consumers and long-term priorities

What is different this time?

- Some key areas, such as effective enforcement are confirmed, but a newly structured prioritisation around green transitions and digital transformation

- A holistic approach for a renewed governance of consumer policy based on closer cooperation between action at EU and national level well as with stakeholders

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THE NEW CONSUMER AGENDA APPROACH & TOPICS

- A holistic, long-term EU consumer policy framework ensuring effective coordination of action at EU and national level around key priority areas:

  - COVID-19;

  - The green transition;

  - The digital transformation;

  - Redress and enforcement of consumer rights;

  - Specific needs of certain consumer groups;

  - International cooperation.

Consumers in the covid-19 pandemic

COM acted throughout 2020 on a number of immediate consumer issues, including:

- Travel/flight cancelations: right to reimbursement/compensation (COM Recommendation)

- Safety in online environment: sweeps and alerts on scams, unsafe products, unfair practices

- Increased financial vulnerability: identification of best practices at MS/industry roundtables

Longer-term and further perspective outlined in the New Consumer Agenda, including:

- Package Travel Directive: report on application (2021) => assessment of effectiveness

- Safety and openness in digital space: stronger responsibility of platforms, prevention of scams and fraud, increased product safety – including through proposals on GPSD review, DSA/DMA

- Foresight: assess longer-term impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and rights, integrate foresight in future consumer policy-making

1. GREEN TRANSITION
empowering consumers to play an active role

Better inform consumers on the environmental sustainability characteristics of products, such as their durability or reparability

Protect consumers against certain practices such as greenwashing or early obsolescence and ensure they have access to reliable information

Promote companies' pledges to sustainable consumption actions, going beyond legal obligations

Repair products and encourage purchase of more sustainable and circular products → review of the Sales of Goods Directive after 2022

In synergy with

Circular Economy action plan, with initiatives such as:

- Sustainable Products Initiative
- Substantiating Green Claims
- Circular electronics initiative,

- Common charger solution,
- Reward systems to return old devices

Also Farm to Fork strategy and Action Plan

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2. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
ensuring consumers are as protected online as they are offline

In close coordination with the Artificial Intelligence Plan and the Digital Services and Digital Markets Acts

Reinforce consumer protection in the context of digitalisation of retail financial services → review the **Consumer Credit Directive** and the **Distance Marketing of Financial Services Directive**

Address new challenges to product safety caused by new technologies and online selling → review the **General Product Safety Directive**

Ensure consumer protection and protect fundamental rights in relation to Artificial Intelligence → proposal for a horizontal legal act laying down requirements for Artificial Intelligence

Tackle online commercial practices that disregard consumers' rights → update guidance documents on the **Unfair Commercial Practices Directive** and the **Consumer Rights Directive**, and analyse whether additional legislation or other action are needed

3. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT AND REDRESS
ensuring all consumers fully benefit from their rights

The Commission will support Member States in implementing recently updated consumer rules that will strengthen consumer rights, provide more digital fairness, stronger sanctions and an effective mechanism to sue collectively in cases of of mass harm.

Coordinate and support the enforcement work of the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) network to tackle illegal practices

Support authorities by providing common and innovative e-tools for online investigations

Assess authorities' toolbox to tackle practices breaching EU consumer law -> evaluation of the CPC Regulation

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4. CONSUMER VULNERABILITY
strengthen consumer awareness, addressing the needs of different consumer groups

Supporting consumers that are more vulnerable than others due to specific information needs, for instance children, older people or those with disabilities.

Improve availability of debt advice services in Member States

Strengthen safety of childcare products -> revision of the General Product Safety Directive and new Safety Requirements for standards on childcare products

Support for local initiatives providing advice to consumers, including in remote areas

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5. CONSUMER PROTECTION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT
promoting high-level consumer protection abroad

Purchases from sellers outside the EU increased from 17% in 2014 to 27% in 2019.

Set up an Action Plan with China to enhance cooperation on product safety for products sold online

Offer regulatory support to EU partner countries

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THE NEW CONSUMER AGENDA ACTORS & TOOLS

- Set up governance mechanisms with the Commission and EU Member States, based on:

  - Annual European Consumer Summits, bi-annual Ministerials, National Consumer Dialogues, seminars, workshops and network meetings with European level and national partners

  - Leading role of national/regional authorities

  - Support and co-ordination by the Commission

  - Engaging consumer organisations and other stakeholders, including business

  - Re-assessing data collection and analysis to inform policy responses to the challenges and trends accelerated by the COVID crisis – Consumer Scoreboards, Foresight

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Thank you