

To Mr. Emmanuel Macron

French Presidency of the European Union,

Mr. President,

We have listened with great attention to your intentions of governance and impulses on the occasion of the French Presidency of the European Union, and with the greatest regret that we have not found any concrete measure in favour of consumer associations in the EU.

The European Commission, the Parliament and the Council have been working for months on the "New Deal for Customers", as well as on the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act. The focus is on the digitization of consumer relationships, and on the necessary legislative and administrative adaptations that follow.

On these subjects, the European Commission has conducted several consultations with our European Consumers Union (ECU). Each time, our participation concluded that if the digital technology was indeed a primordial tool in the acts of purchase and the resolution of the disputes which result from it, its deployment could not in any case be the occasion to reduce the intervention of the associations of ground, quite the contrary. However, the services of the Commission, as well as most of the national services in charge of consumer issues, make the opposite statement, if not in their speeches, then clearly in their actions.

Thus, in France, while praising the field work of the approved associations, the means of operation are constantly being reduced and the National Institute of Consumption, a true public service for the benefit of consumers, is being undermined. The reports on digital exclusion are far from satisfactory: one of the most recent ones even stated that nearly 20% of the French population is not able to use this tool. This proportion is even higher in the EU.

Let's remember, for all intents and purposes, that digital exclusion, which is largely due to the numerous white zones throughout the country and the lack of adequate equipment, is also based on a lack of knowledge about the use of digital tools and great difficulty in using the resulting information. On these last two points, the accompaniment of consumers by associations in the field is an essential point, which can in no way be answered by influencers whose independence from the brands that make them live remains to be entirely demonstrated.

Consumption in Europe can only be addressed at the level of the issues of our time: purchasing power, field presence, societal issues on the products and services we consume.

The European minimum wage is an essential initiative to enable millions of EU households to deal with energy, food, clothing, access to culture... Currently, inflation in Europe is such that without active support for wages, consumption will remain a figment of the imagination for millions of Europeans condemned to buy only low-quality products, with all the health, social and environmental disasters that this will inevitably generate in the short and medium term. You have stated that you want to succeed on this issue of the European minimum wage during your presidency, but if it turns out that the resulting Directive is devoid of any commitment in terms of figures proportional to the Member States (and even the Nordic reluctance is not an obstacle to such figures), then it would only be a declaration without a future, just another one.

The European minimum wage is a first step, a base beyond which it will be necessary, for all the consumer associations of the EU, to build sustainable means of operation. At the French level, the possibilities of control of the repression of frauds (DGCCRF) must be intensified. At the European level, why not, like the ELA in the field of work, think about the foundation of an ECA (European Consumers Agency) which would support, with the ECC-Net (European Consumers Network), the associations in the field in order to offer them real means (means of functioning, meetings,

exchanges, training...)?

Only a powerful tool, driven by a real will to move towards a harmonization of European standards and labels, will allow us to obtain a high level of consumer protection throughout the EU, and probably even beyond. This tool can only be built in relation and in involvement of European consumer associations, in order to avoid the drifts that we have already been able to point out to the French services during our investigation on phthalates. This investigation, it should be remembered, had shown that a label (the A+ label, of which there are equivalents in several EU countries) left to the manufacturers alone, led to unrealistic claims. It also demonstrated the limits of a European agency (the ECHA) that is primarily concerned with economic considerations, even before the safety of consumers and employees.

Mr. President, hearing great speeches about our essential role with consumers is certainly encouraging, but it does not exempt us from concrete actions in this direction.

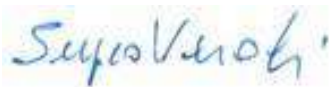
That is why, Mr. President, we are sending you this letter and asking you to listen to our expectations, for the benefit of several million European consumers.

F. BILEM

For INDECOA-CGT, France

Sergio Veroli

For ECU – European Consumers Union

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sergio Veroli". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the typed name and affiliation.