



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
Consumers

**Consumer Strategy, Representation and International  
Relations Unit**

## European Consumer Consultative Group (ECCG)

19-20 November 2014

### Draft Meeting Report

#### **1. WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

The members adopted the draft agenda and the minutes of the meeting of 4-5 June 2014.

The Commission announced the creation of the Justice and Consumers Directorate General and emphasized the important role of the ECCG in the political agenda of the new Commission.

#### **2. CONSUMER POLICY IN THE NEW COMMISSION'S POLITICAL AGENDA**

The Commission gave an overview of the new political and institutional set-up and presented the new organisation chart of the Justice and Consumers Directorate General. Consumer policy plays a prominent role in the new Commission and it is the responsibility of the ECCG to shape consumer policy in the context of the Commission's priorities as announced by President Juncker, with the aim to contribute to growth and jobs. The Digital Single Market is one of these priorities. To make the Commission's case stronger, consumer organisations are called to provide as much evidence as possible in the form of research and studies in order to feed these into the ongoing efforts to multiply best practices and help build a strong link with citizens.

A short Q&A session followed, where members generally expressed support for the new approach and made enquiries on specific projects. The Commission responded by referring to Commissioner Jourovà's participation in different formations/working groups and to the guidance on the new internal working methods (the document is for internal use only and cannot be disclosed). On harmonisation she referred to Commissioner Jourovà's written reply during her Parliament hearing, which will be circulated after the meeting<sup>1</sup>. A letter from BEUC is being examined, while REFIT will be discussed in an upcoming meeting. CPC is included in next year's priorities.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.elections2014.eu/pdfs/new-commission/hearings/20140910CAD60720/Hearings2014\\_Jourov%C3%A1\\_Questionnaire\\_en.pdf](http://www.elections2014.eu/pdfs/new-commission/hearings/20140910CAD60720/Hearings2014_Jourov%C3%A1_Questionnaire_en.pdf)

### **3. UPDATE ON CONSUMER POLICY ACTIONS**

The Commission gave a presentation on EU consumer policy and an update on the state of play of current legislative proposals, namely: the Product Safety Package, the Package Travel Directive, the Regulation on Air Passenger Rights and the EU Data Protection Framework.

### **4. THEMATIC DISCUSSION: CONSUMER POLICY PRIORITIES IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

All members present at the meeting acknowledge the benefits to consumers that a true Digital Single Market will bring. Most interventions pointed to advantages concerning more choice and better price. They also highlighted the horizontal and cross-cutting nature of the digital revolution as well as the importance of fostering consumer trust and aligning online environments to existing offline rules. In this respect, several Member States launched a process to update existing rules to face changes brought by the digital revolution (e.g. France), while others have already done so by closely involving consumer organisations in the process (e.g. Finland, new Information Society Code entering in force in the beginning of 2015).

Members discussed the discrepancies relating to accessibility and connectivity. Safeguarding the net neutrality principle was also mentioned as of prime importance, and in this respect, many voiced their support to the position adopted by the European Parliament on the Telecoms Single Market Proposal. As regards roaming, many members consider that roaming surcharges do not have their place in the Digital Single Market. Other issues discussed were termination of contracts and hidden surcharges.

Another theme common to most members was the simplification of copyright rules. Specifically the ownership of digital content was raised. Problems related to the lack of interoperability in the case of digital content products were also raised.

Ensuring consumers have better control of their data online was seen as a key priority by a majority of members. They expressed their full support for a swift adoption of a strong Data Protection Reform, giving a central role to the consumers' express consent to the use of their data, consumers' right to be forgotten and their right to data portability. Several consumer organisations also pointed to privacy policies of online platforms which infringe EU and national laws. Several cases were brought to court and won by consumer organisations (e.g. in Germany). Online tracking and personalised pricing are also of concern to most members. Several members highlighted the issues of market segmentation and discrimination on grounds of residence.

There were divergent views concerning the Common European Sales Law and the implementation of the Consumer Rights Directive. Unfair contract terms and the impossibility to read and understand terms and conditions and privacy policies are seen as a major problem.

Enforcement of the rights online remains a key priority and ECCG members called for further coordination between authorities responsible, both at EU level and within their own country.

The Czech and Estonian delegates highlighted the difficulty consumers are facing in understanding logos and trustmarks displayed by websites.

Comparison websites were also described as tools that can greatly improve price transparency and help consumers save time and money online.

Malta raised a point on the safety of products bought online from a third-country, and notably the liability of the consumer in such a circumstance. In this respect some members expressed concern with refunds relating to counterfeit products.

Participants evoked the possible regulatory uncertainty existing in relation to the collaborative and circular economy which has been boosted by the internet.

Many participants raised the high expectations in relation to the ODR platform but also highlighted the lack of ADR bodies in certain Member States.

Several participants highlighted the progress brought by solutions such as **e-identification** and called for more focus on digital literacy.

## **5. LATVIAN PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES**

The forthcoming Latvian Presidency (1 January 2015 until 30 June 2015) showed a welcome video on Latvia and presented the Presidency priorities and the dates of key events in Brussels and Riga.

## **6. CONSUMER CHAMPION PLATFORM**

BEUC gave a presentation of its Consumer Champion pilot project, which will soon be available for testing. It is a unique capacity-building programme for European Consumer Professionals offering training, e-learning, resources and networking opportunities. The Commission reminded that the platform is still in its pilot phase and feedback is welcome. ECCG members and professionals from national consumer associations are invited to explore the website and discover its features. Members from CZ, HR, PT, RO, SK were invited to present their experience with the use of the platform at the next meeting.

## **7. ECCG WORKING METHODS**

The Commission invited the members of the ECCG to adapt to the new working culture and highlighted the increasing focus on implementation and enforcement, with a clear emphasis on digital issues and a stronger reaching out to EU citizens. The Commission stressed the importance of the ECCG as a real policy tool and invited the ECCG members to engage proactively between them and propose actions contributing to the Commission priorities. The Commission welcomed the interaction in today's meeting, which is a good example of stronger engagement. With regard to the organisation of future meetings, it is important to balance the workload and focus on the most important topics in order to have more effective meetings.

The Commission announced the timetable for the meetings scheduled for 2015: 24 and 25 March, 23 and 24 June and 27 and 28 October. Given that the dates of the European Consumer Summit are provisionally scheduled for 1 and 2 June 2015 (pending confirmation), the June ECCG Meeting might not take place. Members will be informed accordingly.

## **8. PRESENTATION OF THE ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ODR) PLATFORM PROTOTYPE**

The Commission gave a presentation of the ODR platform, in view of the testing on 25 and 27 November 2015. ODR will allow consumers and traders to solve their disputes without going to court, in a quick, low-cost and simple way. According to the ODR Regulation, the EU-wide online platform will be set up for disputes that arise from online transactions. The platform will link all the national alternative dispute resolution entities.