



Press Release

22 May 2012

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The New European Consumer Agenda: the start of a "Consumer Spring"?

"ANEC welcomes the proposal of the European Commission, unveiled today, to strengthen consumer confidence and put consumers at the centre of the Single Market", said ANEC Secretary-General, Stephen Russell "However, we should not forget that, in reality, the needs and expectations of consumers are not limited to the repartition of competences among Commission portfolios. All EU policies should aim to benefit consumers, especially in times of economic and financial crisis. Moreover, we believe the trend towards the empowerment of individual consumers needs to be complemented by a real empowerment of the public authorities and the consumer associations entrusted with the task of consumer protection. The empowerment of individual consumers must not avoid or replace the protection of all consumers, vulnerable or not".

He added, "We advocate the mainstreaming and integration of consumer interests in other policies, as shown by our activities and priorities which span many areas outside the usual remit of DG Health & Consumers (DG SANCO). Beyond general product safety, the use of standards as tools for consumer protection is to be found in legislation on specific product safety, the accessibility of products, the environment, and services".

For years, ANEC has been calling for better consumer protection in the field of services by establishing an overarching legislative framework on the safety of services at EU level, underpinned by service-specific standards. "In contrast to the European system of product safety, where legislation is supported by European Standards, there is no legal framework for services", noted Mr Russell. "We await the revision of the Council Recommendation on the fire safety of hotels and the development of a Green Paper on the safety of services. We are pleased our proposals have been reflected by the Commission."

ANEC also welcomes measures aimed at increasing the protection of vulnerable consumers and at better coordinating and harmonising market surveillance at the European level. However, we remain concerned at the lack of coordination among Commission Services responsible for market surveillance. For instance, it is DG Enterprise & Industry (DG ENTR) that is responsible for the implementation of the Low Voltage Directive dealing with the safety of household appliances (such as white goods and luminaires), and the Toy Safety Directive. Effective coordination is a requisite for effective market surveillance.

ENDS

ANEC in brief

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, representing and defending consumer interests in the process of standardisation and certification. ANEC was set up in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and represents consumer organisations from the 27 EU Member States and 3 EFTA countries and Croatia. ANEC is funded by the European Union and the EFTA Secretariat, while national consumer organisations contribute in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.

More information: www.anec.eu

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ANEC-PR-2012-PRL-004