



European Consumer Consultative Group/Consumer Policy Network

Re-thinking the consumer movement (policy)

23 January 2018

Renatas Mazeika
Head of Consumer Policy Unit
DG Justice and Consumers
European Commission

Consumer movement: a joint effort





Market developments

- The recent scandals (Dieselgate) and hot issues (mortgage loans, planned obsolescence) are showing that the consumer protection framework (consumer law and institutions) is not ready to fully respond to challenges.

Moreover,

- Retail markets get increasingly complex. Digitalisation deepens market asymmetries. There is limited competence to address this complexity.





Reasons of this weakness

- *The consumer law is hard to enforce (difficult to withstand the business powers)*
 - *Consumer law, consumer protection authorities and consumer movement - the pillars on which the EU consumer protection is built – do not have the same significance, influence and professionalism across all Member States*
 - *Consumer representation across Member States is uneven. This contributes to the perception of a second class citizenship*





Main findings concerning the consumer movement today

- *Diversity across Member States*
- *Wide variety of set-ups of national consumer movements*
- *Different "business models" by consumer organisations*
- *Evidence points to the need to take concrete actions from the side of the consumer organisations, national authorities and EU institutions*

Objective: to strengthen the consumer movement across Europe under an enforced consumer protection framework (New deal for consumers)





Efforts to identify the consumer movement landscape

- *The Commission led an exercise in 2017 in order to initiate a debate within the ECCG with the objective of strengthening the consumer movement in Europe*
- *The ECCG responded through a questionnaire indicating the weaknesses and strengths in their constituencies*
- *The Commission took all comments on board and suggested the setting-up of an ECCG Working Group to discuss in a transparent way the main issues signalled by consumer organisations*



ECCG Workshop to discuss the Consumer Movement

- Volunteers from the ECCG participated in a workshop on 5 September





Main issues identified by the ECCG Consumer Movement Working Group

1. **Boost consumer organisations:** *improve cooperation on projects, programmes and provision of services*
2. **Re-brand consumer organisations:** *improve the operation of consumer organisations; enhance their economic resources; identify new sources of sustainable income; introduce acceptable and feasible new business models*
3. **Shift mind-sets** of EU and national authorities towards consumer organisations and consumer policies: *make consumer policy a mainstream policy!*





Deliberation of ECCG

The Commission organised a targeted ECCG meeting in November 2017 to set-up capacity building measures.

Topics:

- How can we recalibrate consumer policy?***
- What measures can we take to optimise consumer organisations' business models?***
- Which avenues to explore to enhance funding opportunities for consumer organisations?***
- How can we introduce a new communication strategy for consumer organisations?***

Action Plan for strengthening the Consumer Movement. *ECCG members made their choices in consultation with their constituencies.*





Examples of the most pertinent measures

COM for National Consumer Organisations

- *Competence and capacity building of consumer organisations, including fund raising, advice, training skills, etc.*
- *Launch/participate in funding programmes (testing, market surveillance, etc.)*

National Consumer Organisations

- *Self-assessment of the status of the national consumer movements*
- *Evaluate and deploy new business models*
- *Set new forms, formats of the national cooperation*

National Consumer Organisations, MS authorities

- *Setting up (revising) national consumer policy strategies*
- *Introduce legislation so that fines of infringement against consumer law are being used to fund consumer organisations*



***It is not hard to tell what is wrong.
It is challenging to tell what should
be done, and then do it...***





Next Steps

- *Individual country action plans. CPN authorities would be indispensable. COM is ready to chip-in*
- *Close cooperation between key actors*
- *Ownership of a change*
- *New deal for consumers and national consumer dialogues as a springboard*

What support one could seek from the European Commission or national authorities?

