



Policy Recommendations to  
EU Institutions and National Governments on  
strengthening the Consumer Movement  
in Central, Eastern and South Eastern European Countries

**Warsaw 2011 Declaration\***

\*It is recommended to read this document in combination with the Implementing Strategy and the Action Plan for Strengthening the Consumer Movement in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe

**Contact:** Monique Goyens & Heike Thomsen – [mgo@beuc.eu](mailto:mgo@beuc.eu) & [hth@beuc.eu](mailto:hth@beuc.eu)  
**Ref.:** X/2011/075 - 29/06/11

BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation  
80 rue d'Arlon, 1040 Bruxelles - +32 2 743 15 90 - [www.beuc.eu](http://www.beuc.eu)

 EC register for interest representatives: identification number 9505781573-45 

BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation, and its 42 member organisations, gathered on 19-21 May in Warsaw, Poland to consider the state of the consumer movement in the countries that have joined the EU in 2004 and 2007; as a result, we call upon the EU Commission, the European Parliament and national governments in the Member States to:

### **Make consumer policy top priority**

EU institutions and national governments need to adopt a consumer policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and acknowledge that consumers are the driving force of well-functioning markets. Truly competitive markets need well informed and confident consumers. Empowered consumers contribute to the improvement of the quality of products and services and to a more efficient functioning of the market economy. Policy makers must raise the profile of consumer policy and strive towards competitiveness and innovation for the benefit of their citizens. They must put consumer policy on all political agendas and integrate it in all relevant policies and programmes.

### **Acknowledge the vital role of consumer organisations**

Civil society has a key role to play in the empowerment of consumers. The independent consumer organisations have a unique role in identifying and giving coherent expression to the consumer problems and in representing the consumer interest. With their actions to enforce consumer rights they contribute to the rule of law.

We have concluded that the consumer movement in the Member States that have joined the EU after 2004 is still weak. The support provided by governments and public authorities is insufficient. The role of consumer organisations is limited, often by narrow-focused public support – if at all, government funding is mainly available to provide information and consumer complaint handling. The important contribution that consumer organisations have to make in policy research and development is largely ignored by government, resulting in an impoverishment in decision-making and imbalance of power between business and consumer interests

### **Support the development of the consumer movement**

The European Union needs strong consumer organisations in all Member States. Strong national consumer organisations are needed not only to participate in policy dialogue in their own countries, but also at the EU decision-making level.

In Warsaw we have adopted an Action Plan for strengthening the consumer movement in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. The Action Plan can be only implemented with the support of the EU Commission, the European Parliament and national governments in the Member States. They should provide strategic support to the development of independent consumer organisations by an efficient and well-targeted public funding, helping them in the medium term to stand on their own feet.

The Action Plan goes beyond the consumer movement in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. It includes targeted activities which would help to increase understanding of consumer policy within the whole society in the region. BEUC and its member organisations are keen to work with EU institutions and national governments on the final design and implementation of this proposed Action Plan. END