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Date: 19/12/2012
Reference: PR 2012/036

Consumers' Association of Ireland and BEUC meet Minister Richard Bruton in view of the Irish Presidency

With the 6-month Irish Presidency of the European Union starting January 1, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and its long-time member the Consumers' Association of Ireland¹ has presented their 2013 priorities to Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Mr. Richard Bruton in Dublin who is also responsible for consumer policy.

The focal points of the meeting were the EU consumer budget, damages actions under anti-trust law and consumer product safety.

Early in 2013, the EU will establish compensation measures for citizens or businesses who are victims of companies in breach of EU anti-cartel rules. The delegation reiterated that the success of any such law depends on the EU's willingness to allow consumers to launch collective court actions. Yearly losses for victims of anti-competitive commercial acts range from €13 billion to €37 billion³. Collective redress actions would be the most effective way for multiple consumers to claim compensation for these losses.

Another key preoccupation of the Irish Presidency will be to conclude the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the EU's budget for 2014-2020. The smallest budget item is the consumer programme, amounting to €28 million per year (0.02% of the overall annual budget).

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC said:

"When Europe's leaders restart talks on the EU budget in the new year, what is its smallest allocation of financial resources should not be further reduced as they compromise. Considering the dire situation facing many European consumers, we urge the Irish Government to do its utmost to prevent cuts to this budget."

Consumer product safety in the EU, particularly with items such as lighters, children's bikes and textiles, is still not always guaranteed. The upcoming major review of EU market surveillance systems and product safety legislation will be other key issues for Minister Bruton's remit.

Dermott Jewell, Chief Executive of CAI commented:

"Unsafe consumer products, including products bearing the CE mark, are often found on the Irish and the EU market. We need to prevent consumers from being exposed to risks to health and safety because of such dodgy products. We have asked Minister Bruton to make the improvement of Europe's product safety rules a priority."

ENDS

Note to editors:

¹ The delegation included Raymond O'Rourke, CAI Vice-Chairman; Dermott Jewell, CEO; Monique Goyens, BEUC Director General; Ursula Pahl, Deputy Director General.

² BEUC's Memorandum for the Irish Presidency and detailed BEUC positions on all its priorities can be found on our website: www.beuc.eu. Follow direct link: <http://bit.ly/U8exHI>

³ European Commission Impact Assessment COM(2008)165