

Mr Michael McGrath
Commissioner for Democracy,
Justice, the Rule of Law and
Consumer Protection
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200

B-1049 Brussels

BEUC-X-2024-094

Brussels, 01/12/2024

Subject: The Consumer Mission Letter

Dear Commissioner McGrath,

On behalf of BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation, I wish to congratulate you on your recent appointment as European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection. Created in 1962, we represent 44 national consumer groups from 31 European countries. Thanks to our members' market watchdog role, their product testing and daily contacts with consumers from across Europe, we can support you with evidence-based recommendations and enforcement actions to ensure the European economy delivers to consumers.

As Commissioner in charge of consumers, you will have an important role to play in this College to ensure social fairness, defending democracy and the rule of law and offering a more prosperous, sustainable and healthier future to people in the EU. While the cost-of-living crisis continues to be the number one concern to consumers, the EU has an important role to play to ensure a just and sustainable transition.

In 2025, the current Consumer Agenda will expire. We count on you to swiftly start preparing a new political programme for the 2025–2030 period which will contribute greatly to improving the quality of life in Europe.

We were very pleased to learn during your European Parliament hearing that you support reinforcing consumer rights online and believe we need to review the consumer protection cooperation Regulation (CPC-Regulation) with a “new consumer enforcement initiative” for EU-wide enforcement. In this regard, we wholeheartedly thank you for committing to ensure consumer organisations are well resourced at EU and Member State level. This is important to strengthen their market watchdog role and help people navigate increasingly complex markets. We were also pleased to note your reassurance that there is compatibility between ensuring a high level of data protection and the development of artificial intelligence and that you intend to assess the need to modernise product safety legislation.

We believe that the below proposals should be part of your mission and consumer organisation stand ready to help you in this process.

Consumers' proposals for your mission

1. Protect and empower all consumers in the digitalised world

An ambitious Digital Fairness Act

We welcome that the President of the European Commission has tasked you to develop a **Digital Fairness Act** to tackle unfair commercial practices related to dark patterns, addictive design, influencer marketing and online profiling. We also support your approach to look at whether other consumer protection issues, such as dynamic pricing or online subscriptions, could be tackled via the Digital Fairness Act. Such law should provide a comprehensive safety net for all consumers online where there are clear gaps to protect them, or when sector-specific legislation such as the Digital Services Act does not apply.

Upholding the GDPR as the cornerstone of the EU digital rulebook

The GDPR is the founding basis for the EU digital rulebook concerning personal data protection including the AI Act, the Data Act, the Data Governance Act, the Digital Services Act, and the Digital Markets Act. It has served as a baseline for innovation that respects our democratic values and has proven an immense value to consumers. We are concerned about the growing narrative portraying the GDPR as being incompatible with innovation or with the uptake of artificial intelligence. We urge you **to keep building on the GDPR success** and focus on improving its implementation, enforcement and consistency across regulatory regimes, notably via the final adoption of the Regulation on cross-border GDPR enforcement.

2. Enforcement as a top priority across the board

During your mandate, improving enforcement networks, structures and redress in all sectors will be essential to ensure that EU rules deliver for consumers. We fully support your commitment to **revise the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Regulation** to effectively tackle EU-wide infringements. The current rules have shown their limits to address multifaceted infringements, especially in the digital area. We believe that such a revision should strengthen the CPC-Network by giving direct investigative and enforcement powers to the European Commission to address widespread infringements with a Union dimension, upgrading CPC procedures, and strengthening cooperation between CPC Authorities and consumer organisations. In parallel, it is essential that the Commission continue its work to further increase the private enforcement of consumer rules through representative actions. The effective enforcement of consumer rules indeed requires complementarity between public and private enforcement.

3. Enhancing the level of product safety for all consumers

We look forward to cooperating with you on modernising, implementing and enforcing product safety policies. BEUC is a member of the Consumer Safety Network (CSN) and we constantly flag to the authorities results from our members' product testing. We count on you to take a leading role in coordinating with other Commission Directorates on improving the enforcement

of EU law against unsafe products, in particular from third country traders who are flooding the European market with unsafe products.

Moreover, the revision of the EU's chemicals legislation REACH is urgent. This project needs to be about better protecting people's health and the environment and not about cutting red tape for industry. In this sense, it will be important for you to bring the consumer perspective on this reform project within the College.

4. Supporting more sustainable lifestyles of EU consumers

Ensuring that the sustainable choice will be the affordable and most interesting choice for consumers is an important task for the EU across different directorates. The European Commission has contributed to significant improvements in the last term regarding modernising consumer law, creating new consumer rights such as the right to repair and addressing greenwashing via the Green Claims Directive, currently at the final stage of negotiations. We believe it will be important for the next Consumer Agenda to identify additional actions on sustainable consumption which can complement existing initiatives such as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation and the EU Ecolabel.

The way forward

We are aware that you have a busy agenda but hope nonetheless that you will find the time to meet with us. We would be keen to discuss our proposals with you and would like to elaborate more about the expectations of consumers towards European decisionmakers.

I would like also to take this opportunity to invite you to BEUC's General Assembly which will take place on Monday, 19 May 2025. This will offer you an opportunity to meet the vibrant European consumer movement, which is working hard to improve market conditions for consumers across sectors and countries.

Please count on our support if you need information about the consumer perspective in your policy area.

Please find enclosed our priorities for this new Commission.

I wish you a most successful mandate and look forward to meeting you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Agustín Reyna
Director General

Encl.: *Europe, Consumers Count on You – BEUC priorities for the next European Commission (2024-2029)*