

BEUC-X-2024-098

Brussels, 01/12/2024

Subject: The Consumer Mission Letter

Dear Executive Vice President Mînzatu,

On behalf of BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation, I wish to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Executive Vice President for Skills, Education, Quality Jobs and Social Rights. Created in 1962, we represent 44 national consumer groups from 31 European countries. Thanks to our members' markets watchdog role, their product testing and daily contacts with consumers from across Europe, we can support you with evidence-based recommendations to ensure the European economy delivers to consumers.

We fully endorse your mission to support a fair green transition and EU's efforts on crisis preparedness. More specifically, we welcome that during the 2024-2029 Commission mandate you will guide the work on an 'EU Preparedness Union Strategy'. We were pleased to learn during your European Parliament hearing that you consider the healthcare workforce one of its critical elements.

Consumer organisations can, and must be, part of this process. For you to be a true consumer champion, we believe that the below proposals should be part of your mission.

The current shortcomings

The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the need to be better prepared at EU level to address public health crisis. BEUC supports the initiatives that have been implemented in the last years on that front, such as extending the mandate of the European Medicines

Agency and setting up the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA). However, there are some shortcomings.

HERA does not have enough resources to meet sufficiently the needs and expectations in relation to access to medical countermeasures. In addition, Member States health systems should be more resilient, so they can perform more effectively in a crisis and ensure continuation of care.

Regarding the green transition, there is a shortage of skilled workers in housing renovation and a lack of access to interesting financing solutions which makes it more difficult for consumers to engage in this process. This adds to other constraints they face in the transition to sustainable energy and mobility.

Consumer proposals for your mission

Reinforce HERA's governance, mandate, and resources

We call on you to help ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework allocates sufficient resources to crisis preparedness and response. Reinforcing HERA's budget and governance is necessary to protect consumers more effectively against cross-border health threats. In the upcoming years, HERA should evolve into a more independent entity, with a greater scientific profile, and capacity to coordinate research efforts. For example, on antibiotic development. HERA should also contribute more clearly to strengthen the resilience of Member States' health systems. This includes supporting initiatives to uplift the skills of healthcare professionals in relation to health threats and medical countermeasures

Making sure that the future EU Social Climate Fund helps consumers in the transition to sustainable mobility and energy

With the future entry into force of the **Emissions Trading System for road transport and buildings**, consumers will directly face the effect of carbon pricing on their wallets. As you have been tasked with supporting the operational roll-out of the future **Social Climate Fund**, we count on you to give very clear guidance on Member States that revenues from the ETS2 should entirely flow back to consumers in the form of lump sum payments, EV social leasing schemes, incentives for housing retrofit or build-up of public and active transport infrastructure.

Address the shortage of skilled workers needed for the energy transition

Finding trustworthy workers and installers is often an issue for consumers who want to engage in housing renovation projects, switch from a gas boiler to a heat pump or purchase solar panels.¹ This 'skills gap' could even increase in future years with many construction workers retiring at a moment where we are supposed to largely increase our

¹ [Final report of the EU funded CLEAR-X project](#), 'Consumers Leading the EU's Energy Ambition Response, Expansion'

housing renovation efforts.² To address this issue, Member States must roll out skills, training and certification programmes for the heating, renewables and renovation industry. We expect you to coordinate these efforts, notably through the ‘Union of Skills’ which will be under your supervision.

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 hear your reaction to our proposals and would like to elaborate more about the expectations of European consumers towards European decisionmakers.

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.

Yours sincerely,

Agustín Reyna
Director General

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

² BEUC blog, [Workers are the building blocks of the home Renovation Wave. But in Germany, where are they all?](#), February 2022