



The Consumer Voice in Europe

Mr Raffaele Fitto
Executive Vice President for
Cohesion and Reforms
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200

B-1049 Brussels

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Subject: The Consumer Mission Letter

Dear Executive Vice President Fitto,

On behalf of BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation, I wish to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Executive Vice President for Cohesion and Reforms. 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.

In your role as Executive Vice President, you will be overseeing important policy areas that matter for ensuring social fairness, protecting our planet and offering a healthier and more prosperous future to people in the EU.

We fully support your mission to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU and to drive investments to make our economies greener and more resilient. We were pleased to learn during your European Parliament hearing that besides supporting rural areas, and focusing on tourism, you will also be proposing a comprehensive policy agenda for cities that will tackle just housing, climate action, digitalisation, mobility, social inclusion and equality. We were also pleased to hear that the fair implementation of the Just Transition Fund and the achievement of the EU Climate Goals matters to you.

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

The current shortcomings

The number one concern for consumers is still the cost-of-living crisis. Many consumers are not able to pay their monthly bills, whether in cities or in rural areas. EU investments into sustainable infrastructures and production methods is key, to make a sustainability transformation a possibility for more people. The EU funds that you will be managing can contribute to this objective.

Consumers' proposals for your mission

Sustainable food and agriculture

We welcome the multi-stakeholder approach taken by the Commission in the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture and urge you to follow up on its recommendations. The forthcoming Vision for Agriculture and Food must take a food systems approach and spell out how the EU and Member States will make healthy and sustainable diets the easy and affordable choice for all consumers. Moving away from the current ineffective model of area-based direct payments, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) must support farmers who need it most, and reward farmers who demonstrably engage in sustainable practices and respond to societal expectations about food and how it is produced.

Clean Industrial Deal – electric cars, energy and housing

Housing represents a significant share of consumer spending and access to decent housing has increasingly become a challenge over the past few years, especially for young consumers. The Affordable Housing Plan is an opportunity to tackle this important issue. While the construction of new affordable housing, including social housing, is important, the future Plan should also focus on scaling-up the renovation of the existing building stock. To do this, new financial capacities and instruments will be needed. Public funds, including NextGenEU, could be mobilized to better leverage private financing, for instance by de-risking individual households investments.

Improving rail

Increasing modal shift towards sustainable transport means, and notably towards rail, is essential to lower transport emissions. Investments in rail infrastructure must increase. To be truly effective, they should prioritise the completion of the TEN-T network and improve regional connections, which have a direct impact on people's daily mobility.

When it comes to international train travel, one of the main avenues to improve the

consumer experience is to ease the booking and ticketing processes, especially when multiple operators are involved. To achieve this, we hope the Single Digital Booking and Ticketing Regulation will be proposed without delay. A new regulation should mandate the exchange of all relevant data (schedules, fares and real-time travel times) between stakeholders should be completed by a revision of the Rail Passenger Rights to ensure the protection of consumers throughout their cross-border or multi-operator journey.

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 decision-makers.

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)*