

Contact: Johannes Kleis: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
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European and Italian consumer groups meet ministers before Italy's Presidency of the EU

In some EU member states, only 18% of consumers feel adequately protected recently published European Commission data shows¹. This is the background against which consumer groups are urging the Italian government to focus on consumer rights when taking up the EU Presidency for 6 months from July 1st 2014.

At a meeting in Rome today, The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and its Italian member Altroconsumo² presented their organisations' priorities to state secretary in charge of consumer affairs Simona Vicari.

BEUC's priorities for the upcoming Presidency are:

- Product safety: After another record high of risky products reported to the EU's rapid alert system³, consumer exposure to unsafe products must be minimised and market surveillance improved;
- Data Protection: The robust legal protections voted for by the European Parliament in March should not be unravelled by national governments in the Council or transatlantic pressure;
- Package travel: Legal protections for holidaymakers who book travel packages online needs to be modernised;
- Common European Sales Law: The need for this so-called 'optional' regime needs to be thoroughly assessed. It will make cross-border trade more costly and complicated for consumers and business alike.

David Ortega Peciña, member of BEUC's Executive Board and Deputy Director of OCU said: "One way to reduce consumers' exposure to risky products is to make the manufacturer and importer's addresses mandatory on products, as well as the serial number. This important update is blocked in Council and we urge the Italian Presidency to solve the situation."

Paolo Martinello, President of Altroconsumo commented: "Enforcement of consumer rights is becoming increasingly complex as global companies operate across borders. EU and national governments need to adapt to this reality. Cooperation between national authorities should ensure one damaging business practice is not replicated in another country by the same company."

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¹ http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_research/editions/docs/9th_edition_scoreboard_en.pdf

² The delegation consisted of:

- David Ortega Peciña, Treasurer of BEUC and Deputy Director of Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios (OCU)
- Paolo Martinello, President of Altroconsumo
- Luisa Crisigiovanni, Member of BEUC Executive and Director of Altroconsumo
- Gerjan Huis in 't Veld, Member of BEUC Executive and Manager Campaigning and Communications of Consumentenbond
- Ursula Pachel, Deputy Director General, BEUC

³ 2,364 products were reported to the EU's rapid alerts system for dangerous consumer products (RAPEX) in 2013.