

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

As Greece takes the EU Presidency for 6 months from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and its Greek members EKPIZO and KEPKA<sup>1</sup> presented their organisations' priorities to the minister for development and competitiveness Kostis Hatzidakis, who is also in charge of consumer affairs, and minister for justice Charalampos Athanasiou in Athens today.

The European Parliament's current term ends during the Greek Presidency, with the risk that many important legislative initiatives remain unfinished until the new Parliament convenes. Therefore, BEUC and its members urge the Greek government to do its utmost to prioritise issues of high importance to European consumers.

The delegation highlighted the need to promote the interests of consumers in these times of economic difficulties when people are struggling to pay for energy, for food or other fundamental products and services.

The delegation raised the following issues which will be on the table when Greece takes over the Presidency:

- Product safety and market surveillance: Consumers' exposure to unsafe products needs to be minimised and market surveillance improved;
- Payment accounts: Bank account fees should become more transparent, switching of accounts made easier and all EU consumers given access to a basic bank account;
- Data Protection: An update of EU's personal data protection rules should strengthen citizens' protection and control over their own data;
- Package travel: The legal protection for holiday makers 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 Pecíña, a member of BEUC's Executive Board said: "People expect the EU to deliver results to improve their living conditions. With many laws in the pipeline which will help achieve this, the Greek government is in the driving seat with efforts to achieve a consumer-friendly outcome."

Eleni Alevritou, President of the Association for the Quality of Life (EKPIZO) said: "The Greek government has a unique chance to promote legislation which benefits European consumers, thereby proving the EU, despite the various difficulties it faces, remains there for its citizens."

Evangelia Kekeleki, Secretary General of the Consumers' Protection Centre (KEPKA) commented: "Consumers protection has been undermined for years with the present and ongoing financial crisis. The Greek Presidency has the opportunity to focus on poverty related issues, reducing consumption and giving answers to consumers' everyday problems."

ENDS

Note to editors:

<sup>1</sup> The delegation consisted of:

- David Ortega Peciña, Treasurer of BEUC and member of Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios (OCU)
- Eleni Alevritou, President, Association for the Quality of Life (EKPIZO)
- Evangelia Kekeleki, Secretary General, Consumers' Protection Centre (KEPKA)
- Monique Goyens, Director General, BEUC
- Kostas Rossoglou, Senior Legal Officer, BEUC