



Consumer Summit 2021 – Workshops discussion papers

Introduction to all workshops

The New Consumer Agenda (hereafter “the Agenda”) aims for enhanced cooperation among all consumer policy stakeholders to ensure a high level of consumer protection in the Union and a level playing field among all businesses serving the Single Market. In addition, boosting confidence on consumer markets will positively impact the post COVID-19 economic recovery.

The Agenda foresees that yearly concrete priorities are discussed at the annual Consumer Summit and the Informal Ministerial Meeting, and then implementation of the selected priorities reviewed at the Summit the year after. The workshops should therefore review the main Agenda’s themes in order to identify three actions on which to focus in the year to come until March 2022. It should set targets for concrete results, identify which partners would agree to be involved and to work together. It could be a new dedicated group or existing groups which exist under Consumer and Safety policies and laws. Each workshop should present two or three proposals for concrete priorities to the final plenary session of the Consumer Summit, where participants will vote to identify the three suggestions with the broadest support, to be transmitted to Ministers for their meeting the next day.

During each workshop, a number of areas described in the New Consumer Agenda will be highlighted with questions to help identify concrete priority activities. Such activities should be feasible within the coming year and realistic targets should be set. A vote will take place to select three of them for presentation to the plenary. Only three minutes per workshop will be available so the propositions must be S.M.A.R.T., i.e. **S**pecific (which precise area, law, economic sector), **M**easurable (with a target), **A**ssignable (who will do it), **R**ealistic (with a target that can be achieved given available resources), **T**ime-related (that can be achieved until March 2022).

List of workshops

- Workshop 1 – COVID-19 pandemic – Addressing the most urgent impacts on the protection of consumers
- Workshop 2 – Greening consumption
- Workshop 3 – Protecting consumers in the digital age – How to speed up the transition
- Workshop 4 – Enforcement of EU Consumer Law and Product Safety – How to develop capacities of authorities and other actors of the enforcement chain

Workshop 2: Greening consumption

Context

The Agenda announces a series of initiatives aimed at making products more sustainable and at fostering green consumption behaviours. Among those, the initiative for empowering consumers for the green transition aim to improve sustainability information at the point of sale and strengthen legal tools to address greenwashing and obsolescence practices. A proposal on the substantiation of green claims based on the Environmental Footprint methods should also complement the legal arsenal to address greenwashing. However, these initiatives will only come into effect in a few years and it is therefore opportune to reflect on measures that could already be rolled out now in the following areas:

Green Pledges

Announced in the Agenda, green pledges are commitments from economic operators in support of sustainable consumption beyond what is required by law. The pilot phase was launched on 25 January and already 5 companies have committed to undertake concrete, public and verifiable commitments towards sustainable consumption and production.

Greenwashing

Recent coordination screening of websites with green claims (sweep) done by the CPC authorities shows that misleading green claims remains a pervasive problem in the EU. Difficulties faced by enforcers relate notably to the lack of technical expertise to assess the reliability of the claims.

Obsolescence

Recent high-profile cases show that early obsolescence of products can affect consumers at a large scale. However, evidence is often missing to demonstrate early/planned obsolescence practices and yet this could help authorities to address them more effectively.

Questions to bear in mind when identifying possible priority actions

Green Pledges

- What could be the role of stakeholders in monitoring the implementation of the commitments in the pledges?
- How could the number of pledgers be increased in 2022 after the pilot phase? What role stakeholders could play in this regard at the national/local level? What should/could be a target? Should there be specific efforts to promote/support adhesion of SMEs

Greenwashing

- Could companies make commitments to be more transparent about the evidence they have to substantiate their green claims? What assistance would they need from enforcers? Other bodies?
- What could be the role of consumer organisations in flagging problematic claims to authorities?

Obsolescence

- Could consumer organisations or other organisations play a bigger role in collecting evidence of early failure of products, for instance by a way of a network?
 - Could business operators commit to put in place conditions to increase the lifetime of products and make the repair of products easier?