Consumer scoreboard

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The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection adopted an own-initiative report drafted by Anne **HEDH** (PES, SE) on the Consumer Markets Scoreboard.

MEPs stress the importance of enabling citizens to benefit fully from the benefits of the Internal Market, and see the Scoreboard as an important tool to this end. They welcome the five main indicators in the Scoreboard in relation to complaints, price levels, satisfaction, switching and safety. They stress that when a satisfactory level of development of the five basic indicators of the Scoreboard is reached, new indicators should be drawn up in order to make the Internal Market more responsive to the expectations and concerns of citizens.

Developing the indicators: taking the view that an indicator related to complaints is essential to understand consumer satisfaction, MEPs call on the Commission and the Member States to work towards a harmonisation of the complaint classification systems used by the competent authorities and relevant consumer assistance services in the Member States and at Community level and to establish an EU-wide database of consumer complaints.

The Commission is invited to develop indicators relating to cross-border judicial proceedings and compensation for damage suffered by consumers, through judicial and extrajudicial means of redress, as well as through existing national redress mechanisms. According to the report, the Scoreboard should include price indicators, as prices are of key concern to consumers as well as indicators relating to consumer literacy, skills and age (for example level of education, computer literacy and foreign language skills).

Recalling that ethical and environmental concerns are of increasing importance for consumers, MEPs invite the Commission to look into the possibility of measuring the availability of information relating to such concerns in different markets.

Improving the information base: the report underlines the importance of close cooperation between the statistical offices of the Member States, Eurostat and other Commission services in ensuring the quality and completeness of figures.

MEPs encourage Member States to explore the merits of establishing a special Consumer Ombudsman. They call on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to ensure that European consumer information centres are given greater resources and are properly staffed in order both efficiently to solve the increasing number of consumer cross-border complaints and to shorten handling times for such complaints.

Lastly, the Commission and the Member States are called upon to **raise awareness of the Scoreboard**, inter alia by ensuring that it is easily accessible and visible on relevant websites, and to increase efforts to promote the Scoreboard to the media, public authorities and consumer organisations.