Consumer policy: strategy for 2002-2006

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The Council welcomes the Commission consumer policy strategy 2002-2006. It calls upon the Commission to implement its strategy with its three policy objectives and to put a specific emphasis on the following issues: - to prioritise a high level of consumer protection also in other Community policies and activities; - to take into consideration consumers' interests in services of general interest; - to consider as priorities for its work the development of guidance and appropriate standards under the general product safety Directive, the presentation of an analysis of the options for addressing the safety of services and the development of sectoral Community legislation concerning safety aspects, such as new legislation concerning chemicals; - to continue its review of the existing Community consumer legislation and its reporting on the implementation of existing directives; - to present the appropriate proposals to complete the internal market for financial services; - to continue its work and take steps towards actions in order to increase consumer confidence in cross-border transactions including electronic payments in the internal market; - to present the results of the work on follow-up of the Communication on European contract law; - to promote consumer interests in international bilateral and multilateral trade relations. The Commission and the Member States are called upon : - to examine the existing enforcement systems in the Member States and, taking those results into account, to examine the possibilities of strengthening enforcement co-operation by and between the enforcement authorities and the Commission within the areas covered by the strategy; - without prejudice to consumers' option for seeking judicial redress, to promote and support alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to facilitate for consumers to resolve disputes across borders, including the consolidation of the European Extra-Judicial Network; - to continue discussions on and investigate the possibilities to develop a common approach and objectives for consumer statistics; - to ensure that the proposal for a future legal act for Community activities in favour of consumers reflects and supports the objectives outlined in the Commission strategy; - to support representative consumer organisations so that they can independently promote consumers' interests at Community as well as national level; - to encourage the development of dialogue between consumer organisations and business; - to ensure the representation of consumer interests in the standardisation work in relevant areas; - to generally consult with the consumer organisations in connection with the formulation of legislation and policy in all relevant policy areas. The Member States are called upon to ensure that the objectives of the consumer policy strategy are, where relevant, also taken into account in the national policies. It also invites the Commission to present to the Council every 18 months a review of the consumer policy strategy 2002-2006 based on a constant monitoring of the short-term rolling programme of actions including an assessment and evaluation of the effects of the Community and national activities in support of the objectives of the strategy.