Consumer policy: priorities 1996-1998

1995/2285(COS) - 11/07/1996 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The Commission's sixth Action Plan confirms the considerable importance now attached to Community consumer policy and sets out new guidelines which the Economic and Social Committee fully endorses. As regards the legislative framework, the Committee wishes to see the shortcomings of Treaty Article 129a corrected and urges the Commission to make firm proposals on guarantees and after-sales services, the inclusion of non-processed agricultural products within the scope of Directive 85/374/EEC on product liability. It also asks the Commission to launch new initiatives in respect of service liability and to review the CAP from the consumer's standpoint. Solutions must be found to the exclusion of financial services from the Distance-Selling Directive and the inadequacy of consumer protection in the field of payment systems. With a view to improving the efficiency and reducing the costs of public services, the Committee suggests that the establishment of performance and reliability standards for non-liberalized services might help to increase consumer confidence. The Committee calls on the Commission to examine ways of ensuring the active participation of consumers in building the information society, since they are crucial to its success. Whilst regretting that consumer organizations are still denied the right to choose their representatives, the ESC hopes that the new Consumer Committee will be consulted on all aspects of consumer policy.