Consumer policy: strategy for 2002-2006

2002/2173(COS) - 07/05/2002 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present communication sets out the Commission's strategy for consumer policy at European level over the next five years (2002-2006). CONTENT : the new strategy proposed by the Commission sets out three mid-term objectives, implemented through actions included in a short-term rolling programme, which will be regularly reviewed through a working document of the services of the Commission. The three objectives are: - A high common level of consumer protection; - Effective enforcement of consumer protection rules; - Involvement of consumer organisations in EU policies. These three objectives are designed to help achieving integration of consumer concerns into all other EU policies, to maximise the benefits of the single market for consumers and to prepare for enlargement. The new consumer policy strategy will be reviewed regularly. Under each objective, the strategy presents the main illustrative actions that the Commission intends to present over the period. The Commission will come up with separate and individual proposals to Council and Parliament and Council. Key factors have been taken into account in developing this new strategy: the practical introduction of euro notes and coins, social, economic and technological changes such as e-commerce, the current state of integration of the Internal Market, the perspective of enlargement and the current debate on European governance. - Objective 1: "A high common level of consumer protection". This means harmonising, by whatever means is most appropriate (framework directive, standards, best practices), not just the safety of goods and services, but also those aspects of consumer economic and legal interests that give consumers the confidence necessary to conduct transactions anywhere in the Internal Market. Under this objective, the chief actions are initiatives on follow-up to commercial practices issues addressed by the Green Paper on EU Consumer Protection and on the safety of services. - Objective 2: "Effective enforcement of consumer protection rules". As the degree of economic integration in the Internal Market steadily increases and more opportunities are open for consumers, consumers should be given in practice the same protection throughout the EU. Priority actions, under this objective, are the development of an administrative co-operation framework between Member States and of redress mechanisms for consumers. - Objective 3: "Involvement of consumer organisations in EU policies". In order for consumer protection policies to be effective, consumers themselves must have an opportunity to provide an input into the development of policies that affect them. Consumers and their representatives should have the capacity and resources to promote their interests on similar footing as other stakeholders. The main actions to achieve this will include the review of mechanisms for participation of consumer organisations in EU policy making and the setting up of education and capacity-building projects.