

# Consumer policy: strategy for 2002-2006

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The committee unanimously adopted the report by Phillip WHITEHEAD (PES, UK) on the Commission communication. While supporting the three proposed mid-term objectives, the committee called on the Commission to flesh out its new EU Consumer Policy Strategy with more concrete measures. It wanted particular priority to be given to legislation on the safety of services, the CE mark system, revision of the toys directive, a directive on fire safety in hotels, the EU timeshare directive, extension of consumer protection measures from the air transport sector to other modes of transport, improving health and safety in the evaluation of chemical substances, the package travel directive and the promotion of consumer confidence in e-commerce. It also stressed that a single market in financial services - such as insurance, investment and banking - should be developed to the benefit of consumers. In addition, MEPs wanted to raise the profile of Community ecolabels in order to help consumers make informed choices. They also called on the Commission to promote the use of labelling in the WTO so that consumers are informed about the origin of products and production methods. Pointing out that the principle of minimum harmonisation for consumer protection policy was enshrined in the Treaty, MEPs expressed concern at the Commission's proposal to adapt existing EU consumer directives across-the-board 'from minimum harmonisation to full harmonisation measures'. They argued instead that the need for minimum or maximum harmonisation should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. On another front, MEPs noted with concern that only 52% of EU consumers are correctly aware of their rights in the Internal Market and urged the Commission to improve ways of informing consumers about these rights. They also called on the Commission to integrate consumer protection into all relevant EU policy areas as a key objective.