Consumer policy: strategy for 2002-2006

2002/2173(COS) - 13/03/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the draft by Philip WHITEHEAD (PES, UK) on the Commission's Communication. (Please refer to the document dated 22/01/03.) On the first objective - "a high level of consumer protection"- Parliament felt that serious reflection over any further use of the mutual recognition and country of origin principles without first effectively setting and enforcing a high common level of consumer protection at the EU level. It also emphasised the need to ensure that consumers are fully and reliably informed about GMOs and the products, foods and feed produced from GMOs, so as to allow them to make an informed choice of product and gain confidence in GMO products and technology. On the second objective, the "effective enforcement of consumer protection rules, Parliament felt that the Commission should concentrate on strengthening uniform enforcement of existing legislation before proposing additional rules that might bring about further legal uncertainty if applied unevenly. It noted that unequal enforcement of consumer protection rules amongst national jurisdictions may lead to considerable distortion of competition in certain sectors, and asked the Commission to include a thorough survey of this aspect in its action plan. Parliament also felt that it is necessary for consumer protection legislation to confer on competitors legal status to bring proceedings on matters concerning improper sales methods. On the matter of consumer organisations, Parliament suggested that guidelines should be established to distinguish bona fide consumer groups from those that masquerade as such whilst being funded by industrial interests. Basic requirements for consumer organisations, including safeguards for their internal transparency and democracy, should be established.