Consumer policy: Community action programme 2007-2013

2005/0042B(COD) - 21/02/2006

The committee adopted the report by Marianne THYSSEN (EPP-ED, BE) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure. The original proposal as submitted by the Commission consisted of a single action programme for health and consumer protection. However, on 30 June 2005 the EP Conference of Presidents decided that the proposal should be split into two parts (i.e. two separate programmes) and allocated to two different committees on the grounds that the two areas come under different legal bases (Articles 152 and 153 of the EC Treaty) in which the EU has different powers. The Internal Market Committee was therefore made responsible for drawing up a report on the action programme for consumer protection, and the Environment Committee was given responsibility for a report on the health action programme (see factfile COD/2005/0042A).

The main amendments were as follows:

- the committee fleshed out the objectives of the consumer protection action programme, which should include paying special attention to "the different needs of various age groups", ensuring that consumer protection regulation involved greater participation of consumer representatives, other civil society stakeholders and research bodies, ensuring that such regulation could be complied with by small businesses and craft industries, and providing for both judicial and extra-judicial means of redress;

- as far as the budget for the programme was concerned, MEPs applied the distribution formula used by the Commission for the consumer protection aspects of the original integrated programme, totalling EUR 233.346 million;

- the ceilings for Community financing for "actions in pursuit of the aims and objectives" of the programme should be decreased from 60% to 50%. However, MEPs introduced a new clause providing for a ceiling of 95% for "the functioning of European consumer organisations representing consumer interests in the development of standards for products and services at Community level". They also adopted an amendment defining the eligibility criteria for bodies and legal persons seeking to qualify for Community financing;

- lastly, the committee expanded the list of actions eligible for Community support, so as to include: setting up a permanent consumer information and observation system at EU level; establishing an inventory of existing legislation, regulations and practices in the Member States; strengthening assistance to consumer organisations in the new Member States which have a less longstanding tradition of consumer protection; establishing a general institutional and legal framework for cooperation between Member States; improving communication with EU citizens on consumer issues; ensuring that specific actions are targeted at older consumers and vulnerable groups of consumers; and helping consumers to obtain access to legal aid and advice, mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution, including the Commission's SOLVIT system.