Basic information

2007/2189(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
EU consumer policy strategy 2007-2013 **Subject** 4.60 Consumers' protection in general 4.60.02 Consumer information, advertising, labelling 4.60.06 Consumers' economic and legal interests	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	LEHTINEN Lasse (PSE)	03/10/2007

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	MONTORO ROMERO Cristobal (PPE-DE)	23/10/2007
JURI Legal Affairs	WALLIS Diana (ALDE)	28/11/2007
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	HEDH Anna (PSE)	15/10/2007

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2820	2007-09-28

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Health and Food Safety	KUNEVA Meglena

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
13/03/2007	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2007)0099	Summary
27/09/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/09/2007	Debate in Council		

08/04/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
16/04/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0155/2008	
19/05/2008	Debate in Parliament		
20/05/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0211/2008	Summary
20/05/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/05/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2007/2189(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	IMCO/6/53458

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE398.699	19/12/2007	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE398.421	31/01/2008	
Committee opinion	ECON	PE398.541	01/02/2008	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE400.643	05/02/2008	
Committee opinion	JURI	PE400.486	31/03/2008	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0155/2008	16/04/2008	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0211/2008	20/05/2008	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2007)0099	13/03/2007	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2007)0321	13/03/2007	
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2007)0323	13/03/2007	
	SEC(2007)0322		

Document attached to the procedure		15/03/2007	
Follow-up document	SEC(2011)0414	25/03/2011	Summary

EU consumer policy strategy 2007-2013

2007/2189(INI) - 13/03/2007 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to propose an EU Consumer Policy strategy 2007-2013.

BACKGROUND: the place of EU consumer policy will be at the heart of the next phase of the internal market, as set out in the Commission's communication to the 2007 Spring European Council on the Single Market Review (COM(2007)0060). The 493 million EU consumers are central to the three main challenges facing the EU: growth, jobs and the need to re-connect with our citizens. The internal market has the potential to be the largest retail market in the world. Today, it remains largely fragmented along national lines, forming 27 mini-markets instead. The advent of the e-commerce revolution, which has still not reached critical mass, has transformed the potential for integration of retail markets in the EU to give a major stimulus to competitiveness and expand the opportunities for EU citizens.

This is an ambitious agenda for a relatively young EU policy. In the period 2007-2013, consumer policy is uniquely well placed to help the EU rise to the challenges of growth and jobs and re-connecting with its citizens. The EU will know if it has succeeded if by 2013 it can credibly demonstrate to all EU citizens that they can shop from anywhere in the EU, from corner-shop to website, confident they are equally effectively protected, whether from dangerous products or rogue traders; and to be able to demonstrate to all retailers, but especially SMEs, that they can sell anywhere on the basis of a single, simple set of rules.

In April 2005 the Commission adopted a joint strategy for health and consumer policy from 2007-2013 (COD/2005/0042B). In order to respond to a demand from stakeholders, the Council and European Parliament, this strategy develops the strategy for consumer policy further. An analysis of the main outcomes of the Consumer Policy Strategy 2002-2006 together with an Impact Assessment are set out in staff working papers.

CONTENT : the consumer policy strategy (2007-2013) seeks to establish equal levels of security and protection throughout the European Union (EU), as well as a more integrated internal market, through the following objectives:

- **empower EU consumers**: putting consumers in the driving seat benefits citizens but also boosts competition significantly. Empowered consumers need real choices, accurate information, market transparency and the confidence that comes from effective protection and solid rights;
- **enhance EU consumers' welfare in terms of price, choice, quality, diversity, affordability and safety**: consumer welfare is at the heart of well-functioning markets.
- **protect consumers effectively from the serious risks and threats that they cannot tackle as individuals**: a high level of protection against these threats is essential to consumer confidence.

In achieving these three objectives the Commission will be guided by the relevant articles of the Treaty which are also reflected in the operational objectives of the new consumer financial programme 2007-2013 which sets out the legal framework for EU consumer policy expenditure in the period covered by the strategy:

- to ensure a high level of consumer protection through a simple legal framework, improved evidence, better consultation and better representation of consumers' interests;
- to ensure the effective application of the rules notably through enforcement cooperation, information, education and redress.

These objectives reflect a high degree of continuity with previous EU consumer policy goals. 2007-2013 will however see a change in gear from the past and different priorities for action:

- better monitoring of consumer markets and national consumer policies;
- better consumer protection regulation;
- enhancing product safety through the development of market monitoring tools;
- putting consumers at the heart of other EU policies;
- better informed and educated consumers, for example through strengthening the role of the European Consumer Centres.

Before March 2011 the Commission will produce a mid-term report and before December 2015 an ex-post evaluation report.

EU consumer policy strategy 2007-2013

2007/2189(INI) - 25/03/2011 - Follow-up document

The purpose of this Staff Working Document is to present the conclusions of the evaluation of i) the ex-post evaluation of the 2004-2007 **Programme of Community Action** in the field of consumer protection; ii) the mid-term evaluation of the 2007-2013 Consumer Policy Strategy (hereafter the "Strategy"); and iii) the mid-term evaluation of the 2007-2013 Programme of Community Action in the field of consumer protection (hereafter the "Programme"). The Programme is the financial framework for funding actions necessary to achieve the objectives set by the Strategy.

Three main sources of data have been used in carrying out these evaluations: i) a literature review, ii) collection of numerical data and iii) consultations with key stakeholders in Parliament, the Commission services, EU and national organisations representing stakeholder interests and Member State authorities.

The evaluation stresses the added value of the Strategy and Programmes and highlights that the actions under the Strategy and Programmes contribute to the Europe 2020 objective of a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Programmes and the Strategy have been increasingly successful in the integration of consumer policy into EU policies. The report suggests pursuing efforts in this field and addressing emerging challenges such as issues linked to digitalisation, moving towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and taking into account the vulnerability caused by the crisis.

Consumer market monitoring, through the Consumer Market Scoreboard and in-depth studies, has played a key role in supporting consumer policy. On product safety, coordination has increased between market surveillance authorities. The report shows the merit of further strengthening surveillance and enforcement through RAPEX, pursuing the efforts aimed at addressing the international dimension of the safety of products and capitalising on the use of new technologies, pursuing the efforts aimed at addressing the international dimension of the safety of products and capitalising on the use of new technologies.

EU consumer policy strategy 2007-2013

2007/2189(INI) - 20/05/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 438 votes to 84, with 166 abstentions, a resolution in response to the Commission’s Communication on the EU Consumer Policy strategy 2007-2013.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Lasse **LEHTINEN** (PES, FI) on behalf of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection.

MEPs take the view that a **horizontal approach** to consumer policy is necessary and that it is vital to take the consumer's interest into account in all relevant policy areas in order to ensure that all EU consumers enjoy a high level of protection. They remind the Commission, in this respect, that consumer policy should be present in all policy areas as early as the stage of the impact assessment.

Regarding the review of the consumer acquis on consumer protection, the parliamentary committee recalls its preference for the adoption of a **mixed approach**, i.e. a horizontal instrument with the primary goal of ensuring the coherence of existing legislation and enabling loopholes to be closed by grouping together, in consistent law, cross-sectoral issues common to all directives. Therefore, specific questions should continue to be considered separately in the sectoral directives.

MEPs deplore the weak emphasis on the law of contract in consumer protection. They call for the removal of all remaining barriers and obstacles in order to secure consumer confidence in cross-border purchases and contracts, particularly concerning services.

Emphasising the important role played by **consumer organisations** in improving consumer culture, MEPs call on the Commission and the Member States to provide adequate funding for such organisations. They also encourage the Commission to continue to support consumers' rights in relation to product safety by ensuring the integrity of the CE marking and improving market surveillance at all appropriate national levels, using the RAPEX (Rapid Alert System for non-food consumer products).

Improved knowledge base: MEPs call for an increased focus on genuine consumer behaviour, while taking into account special needs of vulnerable groups such as children and elderly people and people with certain disabilities. Special focus should also be given to equip consumers with the skills and tools needed to increase their confidence in the digital environment. In this respect, data protection and privacy rules should be included in any consumer strategy. According to MEPs, consumer protection should be an integral part of the processes of the planning and design of products and services by undertakings, and it is therefore vital to examine market change.

Noting that financial, banking and insurance markets are particularly open to e-commerce, MEPs urge the Commission and the Member States to ensure more favourable conditions for the development of the cross-border e-purchase. The Commission is called upon to conduct a study on the different mechanisms for solving disagreements between consumers and enterprises used in the Member States, with the aim to identify and promote the use of the effective ones.

MEPs call for measures to improve dialogue at EU level between consumer organisations and industry, to include all actors in the value chain. Furthermore, they underline the fact that the development of a consumer culture is assisted by the systematic education of consumers as regards their rights and the assertion thereof.

Enhanced focus on services: the report highlights the importance of promoting cross-border transactions in order to increase freedom of choice and the role of competition policy and education about responsible consumption. MEPs stress that enhanced liberalisation of the services market in particular is needed to promote competition, thus offering lower prices for consumers.

Special attention is needed to ensure consumer protection and choice in the completion of the internal market for financial services. In this respect, the report stresses that financial, banking and insurance products are extremely complex. MEPs believe that if citizens are to be encouraged to increase their use of those products, especially when dealing with their future pensions, binding policies favouring consumer information and advice should ensure that consumers are aware of all the options available. They stress, however, that consumer protection cannot be an excuse for protectionism.

In relation to **financial markets**, MEPs recommend strengthening uniform enforcement of existing legislation before proposing additional rules.

Improved access to redress: MEPs take the view that disputes between consumers and economic operators should primarily be settled out of court, which necessitates strengthening the European Consumers Centres and SOLVIT and greater financial resources for their network. The Commission is called upon to explore the merits of establishing a special **European Consumer Ombudsman** in the European Ombudsman's office and MEPs support the proposal for consumer liaison officers to be appointed within the Commission.

The resolution recalls that the Community is not competent to prescribe rules for national procedural law. The specific features of national legal systems must as far as possible be taken into account by leaving Member States free to choose between different options having equivalent effect. MEPs highlight that, in a number of Member States, there are constitutional constraints that have to be taken into account when it comes to designing a European model for consumer redress.

The Commission is called upon to carefully assess, in consultation with the Parliament, the issue of consumer redress, bearing in mind the following considerations:

- that any new proposals by the Commission in the area of consumer redress should be based on a thorough examination of existing problems, if any, and the envisaged benefits for consumers;
- that in respect of cross-border proceedings and possible systems of collective redress, extensive research should be carried out into systems of collective redress, drawing on experience around the world, with special regard to the concerns expressed at the excesses and drawbacks of the US model and at the possible lack of a legal base for such an instrument at EU level.