

Contact: Johannes Kleis: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
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European consumer groups meet Latvian EU Presidency

The European Consumer Organisation and its Latvian member LPIAA¹ last Friday presented Economics Minister of Latvia Dana Reizniece-Ozola with European consumer groups' expectations as the country assumes the EU Council Presidency.

Particular focus was placed on product safety, travel issues, energy and consumer policy at both EU and national levels. Additional discussions took place with Justice, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs ministry representatives.

The delegation stressed how **European consumer policy** is essential to reach out to European citizens and should be high on the Presidency's agenda. European and national consumer protection laws are well developed, but too often lack proper enforcement and this leaves consumers unprotected or unable to defend their rights in practice. National consumer organisations have a key role to play by supporting consumers to receive compensation or representing their interests in dispute settlement.

Key priorities for the Latvian governance period include:

- **Product safety:** Thousands of unsafe products are annually found in the EU. Legislation to limit consumers' exposure to them and improve market monitoring needs urgent conclusion.
- **Energy:** In light of rising energy bills and supply insecurity, the EU needs to focus on consumers' expectations when drafting its future energy strategy.
- **Package travel:** Consumers booking package travel online deserve better protection.

BEUC and its Latvian member LPIAA welcome Latvian government plans to organise a Presidency conference on consumer protection this April.

Örjan Brinkman, President of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), commented:

"We had a very constructive meeting with Minister Dana Reizniece-Ozola, pressing the fact that consumers who can trust the market become drivers of economies. The Latvian government has an opportunity to refocus EU decision-making on its citizens. Consumer policy should be at the forefront for the Latvian Presidency and they can count on BEUC's support and that of its national member organisations."

¹ Latvian National Association for Consumer Protection

Baiba Miltovica and Andrejs Vanags from the LPIAA emphasised the necessity of the closer involvement of Latvian consumer organisations in consumer information campaigns, particularly in energy sector liberalisation and in enforcement activities.

ENDS

Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs AISBL | Der Europäische Verbraucherverband

Rue d'Arlon 80, B-1040 Brussels • Tel. +32 (0)2 789 24 01 •

press@beuc.eu • www.beuc.eu • www.twitter.com/beuctweet

TVA: BE 0422 071 051 • EC register for interest representatives: identification number 9505781573-45