

Ref.: BEUC-X-2017-100/MGO/GBE/rs

26 September 2017

Subject: Making 'open trade' and the global market work for EU consumers

Dear Commissioner Malmström,

On behalf of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), we have been pleased to hear the European Commission's [planned changes](#) to the way it conducts trade negotiations. An increase in transparency – be it in the form of publishing draft negotiating mandates or the creation of an EU trade Advisory Group – shows you are making good on your promises in this regard.

Today's globalised markets require refocusing how we approach a key public policy tool at our disposal to ensure they deliver benefits to EU consumers: trade policy. Over the past months, we have looked beyond individual trade deals and asked ourselves what should change for EU trade policy to deliver tangible positive outcomes for consumers. In light of the European Commission's own reflections and willingness to embrace change, we hope you will appreciate our ideas and suggestions.

The context – EU trade policy has gone beyond what it does best

[Our position](#) builds on years of analysing how the EU's trade policy interacts with consumer protection and the promotion of their economic interests. Traditionally, past trade deals have focused primarily on cutting tariffs and other technical ways of increasing free trade with our partners.

Contemporary trade negotiations have gone far beyond this. They have set rules for many areas of economic life, from the flow of personal data, to protecting IPR, to establishing investor-protection mechanisms. In going beyond its core mission, trade mission has lost its focus on what it does best, and has put in peril the promotion of consumer protection as a fundamental public policy guiding principle in many areas.

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To help revert this trend and contribute to developing a consumer-friendly EU trade policy, we have published the following two papers.

1. BEUC's vision on a trade policy to protect consumers in a globalised world

Through our vision, we make these recommendations which are further detailed in our vision:

- *Trade agreements ought to focus back on core trade issues;*
- *Regulatory issues must be addressed outside trade agreements;*
- *Both trade negotiations and regulatory dialogues should be further democratised.*

2. A consumer chapter to be included in any trade agreement

We have developed a blueprint for what a consumer chapter could look like. We would encourage the European Commission to, on the basis of our model, develop a template that can be used in any upcoming free trade deal.

To build upon our effort to contribute to a better, more focused EU trade policy that delivers to European consumers, we would appreciate the opportunity to meeting you to discuss our ideas and proposals in more details.

We thank you in advance for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Goyens
Director General

C/c:

- Maria Asenius, Head of Cabinet
- Jolana Mungengová, Policy Assistant

Enc.: 2 documents:

- BEUC-X-2017-096
- BEUC-X-2017-097