

Contact: Johannes Kleis: +32 (0)2 789 24 03
Date: 06/09/2010
Reference: PR 015/2010

BEUC addresses EU energy ministers' meeting

Speaking today at the informal meeting of EU energy ministers, Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation, deplored that EU initiatives to promote energy consumers' interests still fall short of translating into real and concrete benefits for customers. Regulation and sound supervision is needed Monique Goyens said, so that consumers could reap the benefits of liberalised markets, new energy technologies, be able to save energy and enjoy lower energy bills.

The BEUC Director General told the European ministers that the energy sector is one of the most complaint intensive and that BEUC member organisations are aware of a massive degree of consumer dissatisfaction. Consumers all over the EU complain consistently about incorrect and incomprehensible bills, non-transparent prices, inadequate complaint handling and aggressive marketing practices. The bad news is that while energy regulators have strongly recommended the sector to be more customer friendly, recent surveys show that the sector remains as opaque as before and that, even worse, new aggressive marketing practices have appeared in some countries, where consumers face hard pressure selling methods to engage in energy contracts.

Monique Goyens stressed the need that energy providers inform consumers better in order for them to take accurate energy savings decisions. In this context, she drew the attention to the need to design energy efficiency policies in such a way as not to exclude vulnerable groups from the possibility to save energy. On energy markets she said:

"It is an appalling matter of fact that after the liberalisation of the energy markets, many energy suppliers, instead of abiding to the rules of a truly competitive market, use liberalisation to engage in most aggressive marketing practices, such as hard pressure selling of energy subscriptions. This shows that to be competitive, markets need strong regulation. It is time now that the energy sector focuses on delivering to its customers.

It is a good step forward that regulations and guidelines on the comparability of prices, access to information, billing practices and switching of energy suppliers, have been decided by policymakers. Those rules now need to be concretised and their implementation strictly monitored. What we ask for are accurate, clear bills based on actual consumption, not estimation, sent on a regular basis to consumers. Such bills will maximise consumer choice by allowing them to compare offers of different energy suppliers and helping them to switch for a better energy deal.

ENDS

BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation
+32 (0)2 789 24 01 - press@beuc.eu

Want to know more about BEUC? Visit www.beuc.eu

 **[EC register for interest representatives: identification number 9505781573-45](#)** 