



The European Consumers' Organisation



COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE  
PRESS RELEASE

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**Date:** 23/05/2011

**Reference:** PR 2011/025

## G8 Leaders to follow the wrong lead on internet issues

The European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC) and Consumers International are deeply dismayed that the G8 group of political leaders' preparatory meeting dedicated to internet issues ('e-G8 Forum', May 24-25 in Paris) will be "organised and financed by industry"<sup>1</sup> in view of the full Summit meeting May 26-27. Debate will centre on the burning issues of the future of the internet, how they should be managed and who should do so.

However, the Forum raises serious concerns due to a complete absence of consumer representatives and participation limited to industry, rights holders and entrepreneurs.

Recent developments such as the controversial conclusion of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), the debate on both sides of the Atlantic on Net Neutrality<sup>2</sup> and now the imbalanced agenda of the e-G8, add to growing criticism of the exclusion of civil society from such key debates.

Helen McCallum, Director General of Consumers International commented:

"To deliberate and decide behind closed doors on such fundamental digital issues prompts serious concerns of legitimacy, process and indeed, whose interests are being served. The voice of users and civil society has been relegated to the spectator's gallery, while the internet's big businesses are encouraged to redraw the maps. All eyes will be on a possible, subtle shift in 'ownership' of the internet, something which should interest us all.

Monique Goyens, Director General of the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC) said:

"Cornerstone policies on digital issues are currently being settled at national, European and global level. Consumers' interests should be at the forefront, of these deliberations, not an afterthought.

"With the electronic explosion in personal information collected, stored, bought and sold, the risks to privacy have multiplied. Indeed, our basic notions of what is privacy are being redefined by the internet. These huge questions need to be carefully and comprehensively answered, but here the G8 only seems willing to act as cheerleader for commercial interests."

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.eg8forum.com/communique\\_EN.html](http://www.eg8forum.com/communique_EN.html)

<sup>2</sup> i.e. an open internet whereby traffic and content is not unduly 'managed', prioritised or charged for higher bandwidth services such as audiovisual streaming, film and torrents.