

Contact: John Phelan +32 (0)2 789 24 01
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Consumer organisations across EU call on Apple to stop misleading practices on product guarantees

11 consumer organisation members of BEUC are today calling for an immediate halt to misleading practices by Apple in relation to consumers' product guarantee rights.

Following a case brought by the Italian consumer body Altroconsumo to the Italian Competition Authority, Apple was fined €900,000 in December 2011 for breaching EU-based legislation on unfair commercial practices. The main malpractices were by:

- Prominently advertising that its products come with a one year manufacturer warranty, without clearly indicating consumers' automatic and free-of-cost entitlement to a minimum 2-year guarantee under EU Law.
- The way its 'AppleCare Protection Plan' warranty extension was presented and sold to customers.

The Authority stated that these practices confuse consumers as to their guarantee rights granted by law. Consumers cannot make a fully informed decision and are misled into purchasing Apple's commercial guarantees.

The decision was appealed by Apple and the case will be heard in Italy this Wednesday, March 21.

Many consumer groups in other EU countries found the same practices on Apple websites and received complaints from consumers confused by the presentation and promotion of Apple's warranty service. They demand Apple stop these unfair practices and adapt the information geared to consumers in accordance with EU standards and national legislation.

Monique Goyens, Director General of the European Consumer Organisation commented:

"Consumers are entitled to clear and unambiguous information on all product characteristics, including the legal and commercial guarantees. In a joint effort, consumer organisations across Europe are calling on Apple to bring their unfair practices to an end. In the EU, consumers are entitled to a minimum 2 year legal guarantee. Consumers should not be misled and confused as to fundamental EU consumer rights because a company wants to sell their commercial warranty services. This case is even more important as it concerns such an outstanding market leader whose practices have wide impact."

The consumer organisations who wrote to Apple or launched a complaint to their national authority are:

Italy: Altroconsumo

Belgium: Test-Achats / Test-Aankoop

Portugal: Associação Portuguesa para a Defesa do Consumidor - DECO

Luxembourg: Union Luxembourgeoise des Consommateurs - ULC

Germany: Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband - VZBV

The Netherlands: Consumentenbond - CB

Denmark: Forbrugerrådet - FR

Poland: Polish Consumer Federation National Council - Federacja Konsumentów

Spain: Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios - OCU

Slovenia: Zveza Potrošnikov Slovenije - ZPS

Greece: Association for the Quality of Life - E.K.PI.ZO

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