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BEUC supports European Commission's competition investigation into Amazon's e-commerce activities

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) welcomes the European Commission's decision today to file antitrust charges against Amazon for competing unfairly with sellers on its marketplace and has formally applied to intervene to support the Commission's investigation.

BEUC wants to ensure consumers can be confident that when they use Amazon, they have the best choice of sellers and prices, and can make informed purchases on the basis of the best options for them, instead of being unfairly nudged towards Amazon's own products.

In particular, BEUC and its members are concerned that Amazon could be breaking EU antitrust rules by abusing commercially-sensitive information gained from independent retailers using the Amazon Marketplace platform to unfairly influence consumers to favour Amazon's own products. Such sensitive information could include the number of ordered and shipped units of products, the sellers' revenues on the marketplace, the number of visits to sellers' offers, data relating to shipping, to sellers' past performance, and other consumer claims on products, including the activated guarantees. Amazon could be using sensitive information from independent sellers to launch, or improve, its own competing products and to undercut its competitors. This would harm transparency and genuine consumer choice.

While we recognise that Amazon has brought important benefits to consumers' online shopping experience, especially during the COVID-19 crisis, BEUC shares the Commission's concerns that Amazon may now be negating these benefits to consumers by using its very powerful position on e-commerce markets, and its dual role as both seller and marketplace, to compete unfairly with independent sellers. Such practices may end up harming consumers in the medium and long term. If it were favouring its own products and making it harder for other sellers to compete, Amazon would be reducing consumer choice of online products and sellers and increasing the prices they have to pay.

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

"Online shopping has become almost essential in recent months for many consumers because of the COVID-19 crisis. It would be very harmful for consumers if a powerful player like Amazon could abuse its strong position as a marketplace to unfairly undermine independent retailers and to deprive consumers of genuine choice.

"We don't want a few big players on online retail markets to call all the shots at the expense of competitors, innovation and consumers. We therefore welcome the Commission investigations and look forward to their swift conclusion."

ENDS

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