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Single Market gets power boost

The European Commission today unveiled a number of initiatives to help citizens, consumers and business get more out of the EU's Single Market.

A so-called 'Single Digital Gateway' will function as a portal with information about rules and rights for anyone living in, or buying products and services, from another EU country.

The second initiative, the 'Single Market Information Tool', will authorise the Commission to request sensitive business information to ensure EU law is being respected, for example contractual restrictions from a company's supplier to sell their products or services cross-border. This would help the Commission to fulfil its role of policing Single Market rules.

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

"The Single Market has greatly benefitted European consumers to live, shop and travel in the EU's 28 countries. We welcome the Commission's initiatives to improve the consumer experience of the Single Market.

"Consumers are generally more concerned about their rights when buying something from a foreign trader than a domestic one. Consumers would benefit from there being a central place to consult their rights. The Commission should test it on real consumers to make sure it responds to their actual needs. The Gateway should also inform consumers about what they can do when something goes wrong during their stay in a foreign country or when shopping cross-border.

"Unfair restrictions for foreign consumers or fraudulent practices are what weakens the Single Market. To enforce the law, the Commission must have access to market data. The recent struggle for the Commission to get reliable data from car manufacturers about their emissions practices are a case in point. This could be a decisive tool to tilt the scale in favour of consumers and the companies who play by the rules."

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