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European Parliament clears path for new consumer rights when purchasing online services

MEPs want consumers who buy an online game or who download a piece of software to benefit from consumer rights, such as terminating the contract or getting it repaired, if things go wrong. Such rights currently only exist when buying 'tangible' products for instance an umbrella or a hairdryer.

It is commonplace that consumers pay for the use of digital products and services – like social media, online games or mobile communication apps – by giving the provider access to their data in return. The European Parliament's consumer protection committee supports the European Commission's proposal to apply consumer rights for these kinds of transactions.

Consumers can expect the software embedded in their smart goods – internet-connected fridges or smart TVs – to receive timely updates and to be interoperable. MEPs also introduced a rule which would prevent businesses from making the use of their digital content, such as eBooks, dependent on the additional purchase of a specific device.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"This new law closes a huge gap in consumer protection in the digital market. The purchase of software, eBooks and online films has become an everyday activity. Consumers who today are often left empty-handed will have a right to ask for remedies in case of problems.

"Companies use consumers' personal data to make money from advertising revenue. It would only be fair that consumers benefit from consumer rights in return for making their data available."

The European Parliament and Council can now start negotiations to flesh out the final text.

ENDS