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European Commission artificial intelligence plans postpone hard decisions to later

The European Commission has set out its plans how European citizens and companies could reap the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) and avoid negative impacts.

The European Commission has identified several key consumers areas such as the risk of discrimination, lack of information and control of data. However, BEUC regrets that the communication does not include a clear commitment to update the EU's product safety and liability rules as well as other relevant consumer right laws to ensure they are fit for the AI era [1].

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

"Autonomous cars, responsive household robots and better medical research are just some examples how AI could benefit consumers. But when AI empowered algorithms become the ultimate decider, there is a risk that consumers are left defenceless in the face of misinformation and discrimination. The EU should avoid such a scenario and take policy measures against and focus research efforts on potential risks of AI for society and consumers.

"Companies should not take advantage of the use of artificial intelligence to dodge responsibility for when things go wrong. Those who produce smart products must be held responsible when an automated car causes an accident, or a home robot causes damage. Current safety, security and liability rules are not sufficient and lack clarity. They need to be modernised."

END

[1] Such updates would include:

- A set of transparency obligations to make sure consumers are informed when using AI-based products and services, particularly about the functioning of the algorithms involved and rights to object automated decisions
- Specific safety standards for AI products and adequate powers for market surveillance authorities so that unsafe or potentially insecure AI products or services are not placed on the market.
- Updated rules on product liability to ensure that consumers are better protected if they suffer damage or harm because of products running on AI technology.

ENDS