

# What the **EU** has done for consumers

In 2019 EU citizens will go to the polls to elect their representatives in the next European Parliament. This vote matters.

The EU is responsible for many areas which concern us, as consumers, directly – ranging from food labelling to travel rights and toy safety.

EU consumer rules are adopted by the European Parliament – which is directly elected – and the Council – which is composed of governments of all EU countries.

Once adopted it is the responsibility of Member States to implement and enforce EU laws.

And there are abundant examples of how EU laws are benefitting us. Here is a small overview.

## 1

### More safety

- Consumer products have become safer. In addition to product-specific legislation such as for toys and cosmetics, the EU has adopted a general safety net for products and set liability rules. If unsafe products are found, Member States send these to the EU's rapid alert system, a database to exchange information between national authorities on dangerous products found on the market.
- In past years the EU has taken steps to reduce contaminants in food. These contaminants harm our health. Most recently the EU took measures to reduce the presence of cancer-causing acrylamide in chips, crisps and biscuits.
- At least 25,000 Europeans die from infections caused by resistant bacteria every year. Part of the problem of antibiotic resistance is the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in farm animals. Yet thanks to newly adopted EU rules, the routine preventive use of antibiotics in healthy animals will be banned and certain antibiotics which are vital to treat humans will be restricted for veterinary use.
- There are over 100,000 chemicals on the EU market. Based on the 'no data – no market' principle the EU requires manufacturers of chemicals to register and evaluate the safety of those chemicals. Chemicals of concern need an authorisation. You have also obtained a 'right to know' and to ask for information about chemicals of concern in products.

## 2

### More rights

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- When you do not like the trousers you ordered online, EU laws allow you to cancel your purchase and get your money back. When the new washing machine you bought breaks after 4 months, you can also have it fixed or replaced.
- The EU has the world's most comprehensive laws to protect our privacy and our personal data. They give us the power to be in control over what happens with our personal data and oblige companies and public bodies to be transparent and accountable about how they use them.
- At a time when having a bank account is essential to get paid, to receive social benefits and to pay utility bills, the EU has made sure every citizen in the EU has the right to a basic bank account.
- As air passengers, we have a right to a refund and compensation if our flight is cancelled within the 2 weeks before departure. In case of delayed arrival, we also have a right to be refunded or (in some cases) receive compensation.
- Food and drinks sold in the EU must carry a detailed nutrition declaration on the label, allowing each one of us to check how much sugar, salt or calories a cereal bar, tomato ketchup or a sport drink contains.
- Net neutrality rules make sure we can freely decide what to do on the internet and they prevent telecom companies from creating fast and slow lanes depending on how much we are willing to pay.

## 3

### Better deals

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- Travelling inside the EU, you can make phone calls, send text messages and surf on the internet without expensive roaming charges. In the past, sky-high phone bills could easily spoil your holidays.
- When you make an electronic payment to another Eurozone country – or withdraw money at a foreign cash dispenser which uses euros – your bank may not charge you more than what the same type of payment or withdrawal would cost you at home.
- For over 2 decades, the EU has taken steps to open up telecommunication markets which made them more competitive and innovative. As a result of this competitive landscape as consumers we can enjoy new services, lower prices and internet connectivity.

## 4

### More sustainability

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- Thanks to upcoming EU rules, you will have the right to produce, consume, store and sell their own energy. The EU will also lower unnecessary administrative burdens for consumers who produce electricity from renewables in their homes.
- Today, about three quarters of all national environmental protection legislation has its origin at the European Union level. Among the concrete benefits for us as consumers are for example: cleaner drinking and bathing water, cleaner air because of reducing industrial and transport emissions, lower amounts of chemicals in products, less waste and more recycling, more energy efficient buildings and products.
- Thanks to EU Ecodesign rules numerous appliances – washing machines, electric heaters, fridges – have become more energy-efficient, thus saving ourselves on average €332 each year<sup>1</sup>.
- Because of strict limit values for car CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, cars consume less fuel and we pay less at the petrol station.
- An EU-wide Ecolabel ensures that we can choose among more products and services of environmental excellence.
- We have better access to energy efficiency measures which is good for our energy bills and the environment. Thanks to an ongoing revision of an EU Energy efficiency law, there will be more energy efficiency measures available to vulnerable customers, including those affected by energy poverty.

1. [http://www.beuc.eu/publications/beuc-x-2016-108-benefits\\_of\\_ecodesign\\_for\\_eu\\_households.pdf](http://www.beuc.eu/publications/beuc-x-2016-108-benefits_of_ecodesign_for_eu_households.pdf)