

The Consumer Voice in Europe

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Brussels, 25 October 2019

Subject: The European Green Deal must address consumers concerns about harmful chemicals

Dear First Vice-President,

The future European Green Deal presents a unique opportunity to deliver on the EU's commitment to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). It also has the potential to deliver on the climate challenges as well as on EU citizens' health.

In this context, a strong EU chemicals policy is essential to achieve the SDGs, including the protection of human health. The European Green Deal should therefore promote an ambitious long-term vision for EU chemicals policy. Disturbingly, this now appears to be put in question by parts of the Commission services. Therefore, on behalf of BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation, we urge you, as First Vice-President with horizontal responsibility for sustainable development, to provide the necessary leadership during the current institutional transition to guarantee that the future European Green Deal sets out as a core element a comprehensive strategy for EU chemicals policy to 2030.

We appreciate that the European Green Deal intends to achieve systemic change of our society in the face of a truly existential challenge. We share and support this ambition and currently explore how consumer organisations can contribute to that change.

At your recent hearing in the European Parliament, you observed that "the European Green Deal must put Europe on the right track to a sustainable future and ensure that every European is on board and that no one is left behind". We fully support this approach. The European Green Deal must solve the problems that matter to people and improve life for them now. This should in particular include a commitment to address consumers' concerns about harmful chemicals in their lives.

Consumers worry about their own – and that of their childrens' – exposure to chemicals. Four in five Europeans for example expressed concerns about chemicals in everyday products, according to a 2017 Eurobarometer [survey](#). This figure is up from 43 percent in [2014](#). A 2019 Eurobarometer [poll](#) on food safety in the EU found that concerns most frequently reported by consumers relate to antibiotics in meat (44%), pesticide residues in food (39%), environmental pollutants in animal products (37%) and food additives (36%).

Those concerns must not be ignored.

The European Commission has already acknowledged the need for a long-term strategy for EU chemicals policy, most recently at the June 2019 Commission [conference](#) on EU Chemicals Policy 2030 to which we also contributed the consumer perspective. We urgently need new solutions on how the EU can minimise consumers' cumulative exposures to harmful chemicals, including an integrated policy on chemicals in products, better protection of vulnerable groups, and a response

to known policy gaps, such as combination effects or endocrine disruptors. The European Green Deal is the obvious occasion to advance those solutions.

Failing to do so would be a severe mistake, and a missed opportunity to show Europeans that the European Green Deal will solve the problems that matter to them.

We would gratefully welcome the opportunity to meet you to exchange on how the European Green Deal could address consumers' concerns about chemicals, as well as about the path towards a sustainable food, mobility and energy system.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Goyens
Director General

This letter has also been sent to:

Ms Elżbieta Bieńkowska - Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs;
Mr Karmenu Vella - Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries;
Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis - Commissioner for Health and Food Safety;

Ms Ilze Juhansone - Secretary-General (*Acting*);
Mr Timo Pesonen - Director-General, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs;
Mr Daniel Calleja Crespo - Director-General, DG Environment;
Ms Anne Bucher - Director-General, DG Health and Food Safety;
Ms Tiina Astola - Director-General, DG Justice and Consumers