

2010

BEUC ANNUAL REPORT



Major steps taken in financial services in favour of protecting the consumer



2010 was a difficult year for European consumers because of the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis.

The origin of this crisis is also – if not mainly – a consequence of the lack of consumer protection measures in financial services and shows that a strong consumer policy is needed not only for individuals, but for the market, the economy and society as a whole.

During 2010, this hard lesson has finally begun to bear fruit.

It has led to proactive rethinking of the EU approach to consumer protection in financial services. Commissioner Barnier and his services within DG Markt were much more open to BEUC's contributions on the need to better protect consumers. Major files in the financial sector – such as deposit guarantee schemes and investor compensation schemes, the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA), home loans (e.g.: responsible lending, credit intermediaries, financial advice), access to basic payment accounts and, to a lesser extent, supervision of financial markets have been managed with due consideration of the specificities of the consumer perspective. Other legislative proposals which should be finalised in 2011 such as investment services also seem to be on the right track.

More generally, the need to counterbalance the overwhelming influence of the financial sector in EU decision making has been acknowledged, both by MEPs and the Commissioner, who has initiated a reorganisation of stakeholder participation in expert groups.

Also at global level, clear political will has been signalled to address the current blatant lack of efficient consumer protection in the financial services area. BEUC contributed to a campaign coordinated by Consumers International (CI)



towards the G-20 which led to a request of global leaders, as mentioned in the conclusions of the November Summit in Seoul, to prepare recommendations for enhanced consumer protection in financial markets.

The challenge is now for all these consumer-friendly initiatives to last the course once the memories of the downturn have faded away!

Besides the output in financial services, the consumer rights directive still remains a highly complex and controversial issue of European consumer policy. BEUC is playing a crucial role to avoid shortcomings and to guarantee effective improvements in consumer protection.

Paolo Martinello
President

Towards a Single Market for consumers



Major initiatives to relaunch the Single Market...

In 2010, many EU policy discussions were focused on the relaunch of the Single Market, whose 20th anniversary will be commemorated in 2012.

Successful markets are driven by informed consumers making good choices in a truly competitive environment. What's good for consumers helps good businesses to thrive. This is why the relaunch of the Single Market should focus on measures aiming at making markets work properly and thereby placing consumer welfare at the heart of EU policy. In particular, the Single Market should not be narrowed down to a market of cross-border activities for businesses, but should also provide for a genuine level-playing field for all market operators, acting both locally and internationally.

BEUC therefore welcomed the fact that President Barroso at the beginning of his second mandate promised to put the consumer at the centre of the EU Single Market.

President Barroso entrusted former Commissioner Mario Monti with the preparation of a report on the policy initiatives indispensable to complete a Single Market fit to deliver to its businesses and citizens. In parallel, the European Parliament prepared an opinion on 'Delivering a Single Market to Consumers', based on a report by Louis Grech, MEP. On the basis of these reports, the Commission published in the autumn a draft Single Market Act which contained 50 individual proposals.

...in a consumer-friendly way?

Several of the Commission's initial proposals for a new Single Market will contribute to an increase in consumer confidence. This is the case for example with the proposals on access to basic banking services and passenger rights, but also to increased market surveillance or improved access to justice. We welcome these proposals and believe they should be given priority.



However, other proposals do not deliver any benefits to consumers and even constitute a threat to their rights. This is particularly true for the proposals listed in the area of intellectual property rights, which demonstrate an unbalanced approach towards the conciliation of the right to ownership of creativity and the right of access to information and culture.

Moreover, some initiatives which are key to the promotion of a consumer-friendly market – such as the review of the data protection directive, investor protection, review of the copyright directive, copyright levies – have not been addressed.

Therefore, BEUC relentlessly called on EU policy makers to define priorities according to their potential to boost consumer confidence in a well-functioning market.

Monique Goyens
Director General

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Highlights

Over the last 12 months, BEUC achieved some notable successes in the following areas:

★ In the area of financial services, BEUC has been recognised as a key stakeholder, for instance in the context of SEPA (Single Euro Payments Area). BEUC President Paolo Martinello has been appointed as a member of the SEPA Council, jointly set up by the European Commission and the European Central Bank as a forum for SEPA governance. The European Commission published a proposal on SEPA for regulation of direct debit and credit transfers, including safety measures BEUC has long been calling for. BEUC was involved in many workshops to feed into the preparation of consumer-friendly financial services legislation. Commissioner Barnier also asked BEUC to be involved in the project on bank fee transparency. Ahead of the G-20 Summit in Seoul, BEUC alongside Consumers International (CI) met the Cabinet of European Council President Van Rompuy to stress consumer interests within the work of financial supervision authorities.

★ The new EU Pharmacovigilance rules strengthen the system and will increase consumers' safety, giving them the possibility to report side-effects of medicines directly to competent authorities.

★ BEUC Director General Monique Goyens gave a presentation to the informal Energy Council in September and talked to ministers about the current implementation shortcomings of the Single Energy Market for consumers, major areas of consumer complaints in energy markets, energy efficiency and the specific needs of vulnerable energy consumers.

★ The European Commission's communication on the review of the Data Protection Framework Directive reflects the vast majority of BEUC concerns such as strengthening the rights of data subjects as well as general principles of transparency and 'privacy by design'.

★ On the proposal for a directive on consumer rights, we were able to convince policy makers to abandon the Commission's dogmatic approach of full harmonisation and to work towards a more pragmatic approach which would combine elements of minimum and maximum harmonisation. We were able to convince the European Parliament that additional issues, not included in the Commission's proposal, e.g. on unjustified fees for the use of credit cards or rules on digital products, should be addressed in this directive.

★ The issue of collective consumer redress remains high on the EU agenda, with three Commissioners being appointed in 2010 to coordinate the Commission's approach to the issue and a public consultation launched in early 2011. Both the reports of Prof. Monti and the European Parliament report on delivering a Single Market to consumers and citizens stress the importance of putting in place a collective redress scheme for consumers.



Institutions and other stakeholders: building sound relationships

Presidency and the Council

BEUC published two Memorandums, for the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies, to put forward its priorities for each. During the year, BEUC met with high representatives of both the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies in order to discuss consumer priorities.

BEUC was also invited for the first time to give a submission on energy issues to a Council meeting.

On a variety of dossiers – ranging from the consumer rights directive to food information – we were in close contact with Member States' Permanent Representations to the European Union to brief Member States as to our position on on-going legislative proposals. We coordinated actions with our members to voice our concerns on legislation pending at national level.

European Parliament

As in previous years, we worked in positive and close co-operation with many key MEPs in the new Parliament working with them on a broad range of dossiers. Our activities included liaising individually with MEPs, in particular rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs, coordinators and their assistants.

We were also invited as speakers to several public hearings and expert meetings, for instance on the Single Market Forum (9.11.2010), the Privacy Platform meeting on 'Awareness and Empowerment: the Role of Users in Privacy Protection' (27.01.2010) or the proposed consumer rights directive (15.04.2010).

Malcolm Harbour, Chair of the Internal Market and Consumer Affairs committee exchanged views with us at the BEUC General Assembly in Brussels.

Following the launch in June by 22 MEPs of Finance Watch, an advocacy group on banking and financial services, BEUC participated in its establishment.

European Commission

After the confirmation of the new Commission, the BEUC Director General and relevant team leaders met several Commissioners who are key decision-makers in the context of consumer policy: John Dalli, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Affairs participated in BEUC's General Assembly in May and visited BEUC offices earlier that month to share his views with our staff during an informal lunch. We met Viviane Reding, Vice-President and Commissioner for Justice on 10 May, Joaquin Almunia, Vice-President and Commissioner for Competition on 22 June, Michel Barnier, Commissioner for the Internal Market on 2 July. On 8 December, we met Commissioner De Gucht in the context of the preparation of the Washington Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) meeting held on 17 December as part of the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD) delegation.

Common campaigns with our members

BEUC participated with TACD in the organisation of the all-day Financial Forum which took place in Ljubljana on 20 May and was initiated by its Slovenian member ZPS on its 20th anniversary. Its aim was to connect the key stakeholders in the field of financial services from across both sides of the Atlantic. With the Ljubljana Declaration, consumer organisations called for the realisation of independent and more effective supervision of financial markets.

On 15 November in Brussels, we co-organised a conference with our Belgian member Test-Achats/Test-Aankoop themed 'Group Action: A Necessity for Consumers'.

Dialogue with other stakeholders

We continued our dialogue with other stakeholders, be they NGOs such as ANEC, EEB or the EPHA on files from energy labels, nanotechnologies, eco-design in



products, food information and nutrient profiles, or be they business representatives such as BUSINESSEUROPE, Eurocommerce and UEAPME on the proposal for a directive on consumer rights and on SEPA.

We held several meetings with AIM, the Association of Manufacturers of branded products, to discuss common principles on consumer information and to reflect on a pilot project implementing these principles.

We have worked closely in conjunction with Consumers International (CI) in the area of financial services in order to make G-20 decision-makers aware of our concerns and to encourage financial supervision which takes account of the needs and expectations of consumers.

At the end of 2010, we joined the EFIN network (European Financial Inclusion Network), in order to coordinate our actions on financial inclusion.

Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD)

From 25 to 28 April, the 11th TACD conference took place in Washington. Representing the EU, Commissioner Dalli and the then newly appointed Director General of DG SANCO Paola Testori, participated in discussions hosted by the US Department of State. This year's topic for the public conference was 'Climate Change: Can Consumers Save the Planet'. Several BEUC members and staff attended the conference. The BEUC Director General was appointed EU co-chair for a period of one year, alongside her US counterpart, Ed Mierzwinski from PIRG, the federation of Public Interest Research Groups.

EU working groups

BEUC has a seat in more than 80 working groups. Between them, BEUC staff as well as many members, actively participated in the Commission's European Consumers' Consultative Group (ECCG) and its sub-groups. BEUC Director General Monique Goyens was invited as a member of the Single Market Informal Dialogue Group, established in 2010 as a cross-section of DG MARKET's horizontal stakeholder organisations.

Policy areas

Consumer Contracts

Consumer Rights Directive

The draft directive on consumer rights prompted, as during 2009, numerous activities in 2010 by BEUC and our members. We very much welcomed the more pragmatic approach adopted by Vice-President Reding in her Consumer Day speech in Madrid and before the European Parliament in mid-March, where she expressed the Commission's willingness to accept a mixed harmonisation approach, combining full and minimum harmonisation in the proposed directive. We had several meetings with the European Parliament's rapporteur, the main shadow rapporteurs and numerous national Permanent Representatives to identify the approach that will best tackle consumer needs in the Single Market.

In sum, BEUC's approach favouring a more pragmatic and consumer-friendly solution which applies full harmonisation only where there is evident added value for companies whilst not reducing consumer rights, was increasingly supported.

In September 2010, BEUC published a 'Decision Makers' Guide' on the consumer rights directive mainly addressed to MEPs in the context of the relevant committee votes. Aligning with the BEUC position, discussions in the Internal Market and Consumer Affairs Committee as well the Legal Affairs and Economic Affairs Committee clearly showed the Parliament favours an approach which would not jeopardise consumer rights at the national level, but rather try to include added value for consumers. Furthermore, BEUC's package of proposals for amendments, which we continuously developed from the outset of 2010 and distributed widely in December, was given due attention by MEPs. Many of our proposals were submitted as amendments by MEPs from across the political spectrum. The fact that around 2000 amendments were tabled, illustrated the broad parliamentary consensus that the Commission's initial proposal was not an adequate basis to work from.



European Contract law

We were increasingly concerned with Vice-President Reding's initiative on a Common Frame of Reference for European contract law. In July 2010, the Commission launched a consultation to identify the scope of a potential EU contract law instrument, its possible format and its applications. In our response to the consultation, BEUC expressed major concerns in relation to what has become known as the 'optional instrument' for contract law, which is the strongest candidate for the policy option for a European contract law initiative.

In September 2010, BEUC became a member of the Commission's new stakeholder group on European contract law which comments on the work of the Commission's Expert Group in this field. BEUC participates and provides regular comments to the Commission and the Expert Group. However we, in conjunction with the main business stakeholders in this process, asked the Commission not to rush to any decisions on the adoption of a legislative proposal and to first consider the results of the proposed consumer rights directive.

Air Passenger Rights

In February 2010, BEUC responded to a Commission consultation on the revision of the Package Travel Directive and in November to a Commission questionnaire for the impact assessment. BEUC also responded to the Commission's public consultation on the revision of the legislation on air passengers' rights in March. This was succeeded by our contribution to a consultation on passenger protection in case of airline insolvency, as we expect the adoption of a proposal by the end of 2011.

Digital Rights

Digital Agenda

In light of the publication of the EU Digital Agenda, BEUC published its own Digital Agenda outlining a list of horizontal principles which would empower consumers in the digital and online era with concrete recommendations for policy actions.

The EU Digital Agenda largely reflects BEUC's requests and recommendations, namely with respect to the need to enhance consumers' privacy in the online environment, the need to promote multi-territory licensing of content and provide Europeans with access to broadband and fast internet access.

Data Protection

The European Commission's communication 'A comprehensive approach to personal data protection in the EU' reflects key BEUC demands, namely the need to strengthen the rights of data subjects' privacy by design, the introduction of a general data breach notification obligation and the need for stronger enforcement of existing legislation.

Content online

BEUC has also succeeded in raising the importance of reforming the current licensing mechanisms for copyright-protected content and the European Commission is expected to adopt specific legislative proposals to promote multi-territory licensing of online content in 2011.

Financial Services

Financial supervision authorities

In the context of the Financial Supervision Package – designed to review European financial regulation and aimed at averting a recurrence of the financial crisis – consumer representatives have been given seats in the three newly established European Supervisory Authorities (EBA, EIOPA and ESMA). Consumer protection has been identified as one of the goals of these new supervision bodies.

Laying the foundation for consumer-friendly financial services

In 2010, BEUC offered its contribution to the forming of many consumer-related legislative proposals in the financial services sector. Legislation on deposit guarantee schemes and investor compensation schemes, mortgage credit and access to basic payments accounts (foreseen in 2011) required many preparatory activities including hearings, responses to consultations and high-level meetings.



BEUC appointed an expert in financial investment services (such as UCITS, PRIPS and MiFID) to actively follow and influence the policy debates in this area. BEUC is represented in the Financial Services User Group set up by the Commission, whose role it is to advise on issues affecting users of financial services.

Towards a consumer-friendly Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA)

The European Commission proposal for regulation on SEPA – published in December 2010 – was an important milestone in improving the safety of SEPA direct debit. Further evidence that BEUC’s concerns on the roll-out of SEPA have been acknowledged by all EU institutions was reflected in the appointment of our President as a member of the SEPA Council, jointly set up by the European Commission and the European Central Bank to provide a forum for SEPA governance.

Food

Food information to consumers

In the context of the 2010 European Parliament 1st reading on the draft regulation on food information to consumers, we have engaged in extensive lobbying, in coordination with our members and in cooperation with other NGOs such as the European Heart Network and the European Public Health Alliance. We were disappointed that our fight for a traffic light system in nutrient labelling was unsuccessful.

However, we were able to convince MEPs of other crucial consumer-friendly measures such as information on the country of origin, the labelling of nano-materials etc. The Council agreement on food information, reached in the second half of 2010, supported BEUC’s call for legibility, however Ministers did not support mandatory front of pack labelling of a limited number of nutrients.

Health and nutrient claims

Claims are statements used by food companies to entice consumers to buy their products. Too often claims are exaggerated or unsubstantiated, misleading consumers about the qualities of food. We have welcomed and supported the work carried out by EFSA in assessing the

dossiers submitted to them. To date, over 80% of the submitted claims received negative opinions.

However, we continue to be concerned about the lack of progress by the Commission in setting up the positive list of allowed claims and putting forward a proposal for nutrient profiles. We have maintained pressure on the Commission to come forward with its proposal for profiles as a matter of urgency and have worked with health NGOs and MEPs on this issue.

Novel Food

BEUC reacted to the Commission's report on cloning published in October wherein they proposed to come forward with specific legislation establishing a temporary ban of the cloning technique and food from cloned animals. We asked for the extension of the ban to also cover the offspring of clones, as it is food from the offspring which would be consumed. We also called for a full compulsory traceability system of clones and their offspring as well as an appropriate risk assessment, authorisation procedure and labelling rules for derived food, should the moratorium be removed in the future. BEUC presented this position to MEPs in the conciliation committee and to Permanent Representations.

Consumer Redress

BEUC has been successful in keeping the issue of collective redress high on the agenda of the new European Commission. October's 'Information Note' issued by Commissioners Reding, Dalli and Almunia outlined the need for a coherent approach towards European collective redress and a set of principles applicable to any such initiative. A consultation on the common principles was expected in autumn 2010, but only launched at the beginning of 2011. Strong opposition by businesses coupled with the sensitivity of the issue, which touches upon national procedural law, has delayed the preparation of this initiative.

The need for a European judicial collective redress mechanism has also been stressed in both the report of Mario Monti 'A New Strategy for the Single Market' and included in one of the initiatives in the Commission communication 'Towards a Single Market Act'.



BEUC successfully organised a conference on Group Actions in cooperation with Test-Achats/Test-Aankoop, our Belgian member. Bearing the label of the Belgian Presidency, the conference took place on 15 November and a number of high-level speakers participated, including Commissioner Dalli and the Belgian Minister in charge of Consumer Protection, Paul Magnette.

Health

Information to patients

The Commission proposal as adopted in December 2008 did not provide a clear distinction between information and advertising. This proposal was heavily criticised by BEUC. Our concerns have been well reflected in the report adopted by the European Parliament in 1st reading. The Parliament re-wrote the proposal, changing the perspective from the industry right to disseminate information, to the consumers' right to access information on treatments. The text introduced strict restrictions on the information that pharmaceutical companies can provide, on the channels of communication and on the monitoring system. In addition, following calls from BEUC ahead of the vote in plenary, a highly controversial amendment on industry material distributed via healthcare professionals was withdrawn.

Pharmacovigilance

The directive and the regulation on pharmacovigilance fully take into account the BEUC position, particularly in relation to information requirements and the possibility for consumers to directly report side-effects of medicines to the competent authorities. The new legislation strengthens the EU pharmacovigilance system and increases consumers' safety. This is the result of regular contact with the Parliament's members and participation in several events.

Counterfeit Medicines

Our lobbying efforts clearly paid off, as the agreement reached by the Institutions takes into account all BEUC demands, especially with regard to the scope of the Directive, the information measures to increase consumer awareness on the risks of buying medicines online from illegal sources, privacy and safety concerns and the distinction between counterfeit and intellectual property rights infringements.

Sustainability and Energy

Smart metering & smart grids

In the context of an ever faster roll-out of smart meters in various Member States, BEUC stepped up its work at European level to ensure smart meters become a consumer-friendly tool. In the Commission Taskforce Smart Grids & Smart Meters, BEUC highlighted the need to safeguard adequate consumer protection and the importance of informed consent provided by consumers. BEUC called for consumer control over their personal data and to make mandatory the principles of 'privacy by design', of data minimisation and data deletion.

European Energy Strategy: A place for consumers?

In November, the European Commission published its Energy Strategy 2020. One of the five chapters of this Strategy is devoted entirely to consumers. BEUC welcomed this, but highlighted the fact that what consumers really needed was a swift implementation of existing consumer related rules in the energy sector. During the European Parliament's discussion on this Strategy, BEUC also called upon MEPs to invite the Commission and Member States to implement national strategies for the realisation of consumer benefits of smart energy systems.

Ecodesign

BEUC, together with ANEC and Öko-Institut as project partners, have been awarded a new three year service contract to ensure consumer representation in the EU Ecodesign process. As the scope of the Ecodesign directive has been enlarged to energy-related products, we are planning to cover new product groups in the coming three years.

Sustainable consumption and production: contribution to the EU Retail Forum

In 2010, BEUC contributed to the EU Retail Forum which aims to make the supply chain more sustainable. The Forum was created by the European Commission in 2008 as part of its Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production. We are happy to see that some of our recommendations on the consumer perspective have been taken into account in the Issue Papers.



EU Ecolabel: Criteria development for the EU Flower

BEUC, together with the European Environmental Bureau, contributed to the revision and development of Ecolabel criteria for products. We lobbied to exclude nanomaterials in products such as dishwashing detergents and all-purpose cleaners based on the precautionary principle. BEUC also proposed possible improvements to the Ecolabel scheme at the Belgian EU Presidency Meeting on the Ecolabel in December 2010.

Safety

Nanomaterials

We updated, in cooperation with ANEC, the inventory of consumer products which claim to contain nanoparticles or materials. We found 475 products and published a corresponding leaflet. The inventory was presented to Commissioner John Dalli during a stakeholder workshop and was frequently referred to in the press. BEUC has long been calling for a definition of nanomaterials for regulatory purposes.

General Product Safety Directive

In the area of consumer safety, we were active in the context of the preparation of the revision of the General Product Safety Directive, where we settled on a common position with ANEC. We lobbied MEPs on the own initiative General Product Safety Directive and Market Surveillance report while managing to have most of our requests adopted: our call for a European framework for market surveillance which improves traceability of products, allows for quick intervention and reliable long-term solutions for withdrawing unsafe products, an improved injury database and an accident statistics system – one which ensures the safety of vulnerable consumers, including people with disabilities.

Cosmetic products

The Commission is developing guidelines on common criteria for claims on cosmetic products. BEUC participated in sub-working group meetings and published a position paper on common criteria for cosmetic product claim substantiation. In this paper we call for better regulation of claims, similar to nutrition and health claims on food products.

BEUC communication and campaigning

In 2010, several campaigning tools were developed to support our lobby activities. At the time of the European Parliament 1st reading on the draft regulation on food information to consumers, we designed a mock breakfast cereal carton in order to illustrate our support for colour coding of nutritional information. In September, to prepare our contributions to the discussion in the Parliament on the consumer rights directive, we prepared 'A Decision Makers' Guide: The Consumer Rights Directive – How To Get It Right'. The BEUC website was translated into German, broadening our organisation's reach. Via its recently created Twitter account, BEUC gained an additional communication tool to be heard by external audiences.

Over the year, BEUC was quoted almost 500 times and took part in over 90 broadcast interviews. The highest number of quotes and interview requests were related to food policy (in the context of the food information to consumers vote).

Training

TRACE programme

In 2010, the TRACE training programme – which is designed to help build the capacity of European consumer organisations – consisted of nine courses. Themes covered included: Management, Consumer Law, Media & Presentation Skills, Consumer Redress and PR & Lobbying. Three new training courses were developed and organised: How to Write Project Proposals, Competition Policy and Retail Financial Services. The latter two courses were explicitly requested by the Directorate General for Competition (DG COMP) and the Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) and developed in collaboration with the Commission.

The main aim of the course on Competition Policy was to put Commission officials in contact with national consumer organisations and provide a platform for exchange and networking. The three-day workshop was closed by Director General of DG Competition, Mr. Alexander Italianer.

Equally important was the introduction of Retail Financial Services to the TRACE training programme aimed at providing participants with an overview and understanding of the current debates in the financial services sector and the instruments used at European level to ensure the protection of consumer rights. Jackie Minor, Director of Consumer Affairs at DG SANCO, spent a morning actively participating in a TRACE course in order to gain a personal insight in the training programme and the management of the project.

Training for Consumer Organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey

After the success of the People-2-People seminars for consumer organisations in Belgrade and Ankara under the TAIEX programme in 2009, a third workshop entitled 'Putting Theory into Practice: The Dynamics of Consumer Organisations' was organised in Skopje on 21 and 22 June 2010, to conclude the cycle of seminars enhancing the capacity of civil society organisations engaged in consumer protection in the candidate and potential candidate countries. BEUC welcomed the invitation to co-organise the workshop together with DG Enlargement and DG SANCO again. This follow-up workshop gave the relevant staff of the most representative independent consumer organisations from the Western Balkans and Turkey the opportunity to exchange experience in implementing their business plans and to receive professional advice on how to overcome obstacles.

BEUC internal matters

General Assembly

The two General Assemblies of 2010 were organised in Ljubljana (May) and in Brussels (November). The spring General Assembly took place in combination with the Financial Forum, organised by our Slovenian member ZPS, and allowed us to welcome Commissioner John Dalli, (Health and Consumer Affairs). The second General Assembly coincided with the BEUC/Test-Achats Conference on collective consumer redress. Commissioner Barnier in charge of Internal Market and Services shared with us his views on the Single Market Act and European Parliament member and IMCO chair Malcolm Harbour engaged in a discussion on future consumer policy in the EU.

New members welcomed

At the Brussels General Assembly in November, we welcomed our 44th member, Consumatori Italiani per l'Europa, with the status of temporary affiliate. CIE is a consortium of three consumer organisations: Casa del Consumatore, Associazione Consumatori Utenti and Centro per i Diritti del Cittadino.

The consumer movement in the new Member States

Following the 2009 evaluation on the difficulties faced by consumer organisations in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe (CESEE), e.g. lack of resources, expertise, limited involvement in policy making, we identified follow-up actions based on several bilateral meetings with members from CESEE and with experts who have been working with consumer organisations in CESEE for many years. BEUC appointed two consultants to carry out field visits in selected countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania and Romania) to acquire a detailed insight into the state of consumer policy in these countries and fine-tune the actions which need to be undertaken to enhance the influence of the consumer movement on policy making.

The secretariat

At the end of 2010, the BEUC secretariat consisted of 32 staff members working in 5 different departments and 8 teams. With the engagement of a legal officer from Lithuania and a junior economic officer from Czech Republic, BEUC more accurately reflects the cultural multitude of the European consumer landscape.

Who's who at BEUC in 2011

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BEUC members in 2010

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