

Contact: John Phelan: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
Date: 11/01/2012
Reference: PR 2012/001

EU's Digital Single Market blueprint released

A European 'Digital Single Market' was brought a step closer today by the European Commission's eCommerce Communication. Consumers in the EU can see this as welcome progress in tackling 5 major obstacles to cross-border online trade, namely:

- Poor supply of legal online content (software, music, video etc.)
- Restrictions on payment means and delivery of goods
- Consumer Dispute Resolution
- Information protection for internet users
- Modernising the EU network infrastructure to achieve high-speed telecommunications

Crucially, the current unwillingness of businesses to trade across borders and limited means of redress when needed, hamper Europe's digital economy. Recent efforts by the Commission to increase online cross-border shopping by proposing an optional European Sales Law are misguided. So BEUC is glad that today they have put their focus on the correct targets.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"We're very hopeful that this is a stride towards a more competitive and future-proof European digital economy. But such EU efforts will stand or fall based on whether they adequately consolidate consumers' basic rights and tackle their concerns.

"The 'Notice and Action' procedure for illegal content must be very carefully framed. We have seen that efforts to criminalise consumers are a waste of time. Europeans have clearly shown that more legal choice with the chance to confidently and safely pay is where the future lies.

"We also need a clampdown on existing and emerging unfair commercial practices on the internet. Only in doing so will the EU boost consumer confidence in shopping across national borders so that we can enjoy a more vibrant digital single marketplace. Just yesterday the Commission investigation found that 70% of consumer credit websites host misleading information. This Action Plan helps us to rebuild confidence from the bottom up."

ENDS