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Date: 05/06/2025

Reference: BEUC-PR-2025-023

Consumer groups file complaint against SHEIN for dark patterns fuelling over-consumption

BEUC – together with 25 members from 21 countries¹ – filed a complaint today with the European Commission and [European consumer protection authorities](#) against SHEIN for its use of deceptive techniques ('dark patterns'). These push consumers into purchasing more than originally intended and fuel the environmental and societal problems caused by the fast fashion industry.

Based on new [research](#), including studies by BEUC members across Europe, consumer groups reveal how these illegal practices trigger unwilling spending and economic losses for consumers, fuel the circulation of unsafe clothing items across Europe, and disempower consumers in their efforts towards the green transition.

In February 2025, the Commission announced its own [investigation](#) into SHEIN's compliance with EU consumer law and in May [urged SHEIN](#) to respect EU consumer law and to stop using dark patterns like fake discount and pressure selling e.g. false purchase deadlines. The complaint filed today complements the Commission and consumer authorities' own investigation and brings additional evidence on dark patterns to the attention of authorities.

The complaint calls on the Commission and European consumer protection authorities to request SHEIN to:

- **Stop using deceptive techniques** such as 'confirm-shaming,' toying with consumers' emotions, use of infinite scroll and 'nagging,' which according to our assessment constitute unfair commercial practices (according to the EU's Unfair Commercial Practices Directive).
- **Provide substantiating evidence** showing that customer testimonials or messages like 'low stock' that are repeatedly displayed to consumers are genuine. If not, request SHEIN to stop using these practices.

¹ Altroconsumo (Italy), Arbeiterkammer (Austria), Bulgarian National Consumers Association - BNAAC (Bulgaria), ASUFIN, CECU and OCU (Spain), CLCV and UFC-Que Choisir (France), Consumentenbond (the Netherlands), DECO (Portugal), dTest (Czech Republic), EKPIZO and KEPKA (Greece), Federacja Konsumentów - FK (Poland), Forbrukerrådet (Norway), Forbrugerrådet Tænk (Denmark), Fédération romande des consommateurs - FRC (Switzerland), TVE (Hungary), Sveriges Konsumenter (Sweden), Spoločnosť ochrany spotrebiteľov - SOS (Slovakia), Testachats/Testaankoop (Belgium), ULC (Luxembourg), vzbv (Germany), ZPS (Slovenia) and Kypriakos Syndesmos Katanaloton – CCA (Cyprus).

If SHEIN does not take corrective action, authorities should intervene to prevent the risk of serious harm to consumers until it complies with EU consumer law.

According to consumer groups' [research](#), dark patterns in fast fashion are an industry-wide problem, so we also call on authorities to look into other traders using similar unfair practices.

BEUC Director General Agustín Reyna commented: “SHEIN’s use of dark patterns is a well-documented reality, which has been going on for several years now as BEUC members’ research reveals. They make consumers spend ever more money on fast fashion products, that are harmful to themselves, the environment and the people that produce them.

“This ultra-fast fashion model is fuelled by manipulative practices that pressure consumers into buying ever more. SHEIN is designed to be addictive: it is driven by powerful algorithms to maximise consumer engagement and over-spending. We expect a strong and swift response from authorities to put an end to SHEIN’s manipulative practices and to begin an industry-wide investigation”.

Background:

This complaint focuses on the use of dark patterns that fuel over-consumption of environmentally harmful products. SHEIN exposes consumers to many different dark patterns, including low-stock messages (e.g. “Only xx left”), countdown timers (e.g. “Flash sale”), peer pressure through testimonials and confirm-shaming (e.g. “You are eligible for promotions now! Are you sure you want to leave?”) Our [investigation](#) revealed that these practices are pushed to consumers repeatedly, both on the website and the app (via multiple and repeated notifications).

Textiles rank top in the list of sectors responsible for climate change just after food, housing and transport according to the [European Environment Agency \(EEA\)](#). Ultra-fast fashion has led to the significant over-production and consumption of clothes, creating a subsequent textile waste issue. With its use of fertilisers and pesticides for the cultivation of cotton, the extraction of fossil fuels and chemical feedstock to produce synthetic fibres, the industry also relies heavily on toxic chemicals for clothes that are often produced in poor working conditions.

Read more:

[Report](#) – ‘How fast fashion giant SHEIN uses dark patterns to push over-consumption’

[Factsheet](#) – BEUC members’ evidence on the issues with SHEIN and the fast fashion industry.

BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation

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Co-funded by the European Union