

The Consumer Voice in Europe

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05 December 2023

Subject: BEUC concerns about restructuring EP - Committees

Dear Mr Lange,

We are writing to you as the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs in view of the decision that the committee will take this week for restructuring the European Parliament's Committees. As you know, BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation, works on all European policies that affect consumers and thus we are in touch with a several Committees in the European Parliament, providing input and expertise on how laws and policies should be designed to protect and empower consumers in Europe.

While there is always scope for improvement, we consider that some of the plans related to restructuring these Committees, that have been reported about in the media, are very worrying and would risk to negatively impact the way the European Parliament currently deals with consumer related topics.

Firstly, we consider that the mandate and the workstreams of well-established Committees such as ENVI, IMCO and ECON should not be subject to fragmentation, compartmentalisation or on the other hand be weakened by merging them into a broad mishmash of policies via new horizontal Committee structures. Such changes could dilute their specialisation, effectiveness, coherence and consistency of the European Parliament's approach to policy workstreams that affect and/or are directed to European consumers.

Because the interests of European consumers are a diffuse competence expressed in a horizontal obligation of the EU to take them into account in all relevant policies (see Article 12 TFEU), it is essential that consumer interests are well embedded and concentrated in key Committees, which are sufficiently broad to gather the necessary expertise on how consumer issues are regulated both in horizontal and in sector-specific legislation. so that they can have a better overview of what is needed to adequately protect consumers.

It is also essential to avoid that consumer interests are turned into a marginal element of policymakers' and committees' concerns.

In a [joint statement](#) together with Business Europe, we expressed our concerns regarding the idea to abolish the IMCO Committee, which we are very much against, as this Committee currently works well for the benefit of businesses and consumers. Consumer policy cannot be seen in isolation and thus should not be annexed to a Committee mainly dealing with a narrow mandate of certain legal aspects of EU law or horizontal legal affairs, as this would risk losing an encompassing, economic and societal approach to consumer policy.

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Likewise, we are worried that current discussions around re-organising the ENVI Committee to separate food and/or health policies could be disadvantageous to Europe's green transition policy work in which consumers must play a central role. In times of multiple and permanent crises, Europe must retain an integrated approach of health, food and the environment which also keeps the consumer needs at its center. We would be especially concerned if food policies would be merged with the agriculture portfolio, considering the low priority given to food safety, public health and consumer interests in the latter.

Furthermore, merging the ECON Committee into a larger committee risks diluting their role in protecting consumers and retail investors in financial services and financial markets.

While we understand that some structural adaptations might be necessary, we hope that better co-operation and reduction of overlap of topics between Committees would be addressed by reforming the Rules of Procedure rather than disassembling Committees that have been proven to be ever more relevant in our fast changing world and policy environment and that continue to deliver well to consumers and citizens.

We hope that you and the Committee of Chairs will take our considerations into account when recommending any re-structuring of the Committees to the President and thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Goyens
Director General

Ursula Pachtl
Deputy Director General

Cc:

Mrs Anna Cavazzini, Chair IMCO

Mr Pascal Canvin, Chair ENVI

Mrs Irene Tinagli, Chair ECON

Mr Manfred Weber, Chair of the Group of the European People's Party

Mrs Roberta Metsola, Member of the European People's Party

Mrs Iratxe Garcia Perez, Chair of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the EP

Mr Stéphane Séjourné, Chair of Renew Europe Group

Mr Philippe Lamberts, Co-chairs of the Greens / European Free Alliance

Mrs Terry Reintke, Co-chairs of the Greens / European Free Alliance