

## Position paper

# Better EU laws for simpler cross-border consumer lives

## Why it matters to consumers

EU laws are too often not strong enough on consumer protection and often unclear, which makes them difficult to apply. Making EU rules simpler to benefit citizens is an important EU objective which BEUC supports. Yet, simplification cannot be seen in isolation. It must be combined with a high level of consumer protection, so consumers trust the Single Market and the European project.

**Published** | 15 June 2026

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**Reference** | BEUC-X-2026-062

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The European Consumer Organisation ([BEUC](#)) is the largest organisation promoting the general interests of Europe's consumers. Founded in 1962, it proudly represents more than 40 independent national consumer organisations from over 30 European countries. Together with [our members](#), we inform EU policies to improve people's lives in a sustainable and fair economy and society.

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*Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EISMEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.*

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## Summary

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BEUC welcomes the opportunity to provide suggestions to the European Commission's upcoming Citizens Omnibus, which aims to simplify EU rules so this process improves citizen's lives concretely when dealing with cross-border situations.

The EU's simplification agenda is an opportunity to streamline processes, improve the application and enforcement of rules and make it easier for consumers to exercise their rights. However, **simplification should not be mistaken for deregulation**. A simplification agenda that delivers for consumers means that rules not only need to be clarified but also that common EU rules are needed in specific additional areas to create a level playing field for the EU Single Market.

Moreover, **any proposed changes should follow a proper procedure abiding by the Better Regulation principle**. This means adequate justification and evidence, following inclusive consultations of stakeholders and a dedicated impact assessment.

In this document, BEUC focuses mainly on **improving the consumer experience in EU cross-border situations**. For more recommendations about how the EU can continue improving consumer lives across Member States, BEUC's view on the Consumer Agenda 2025-2030 is available [here](#).

## BEUC MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

### Make cross-border shopping simpler

- 1** The Citizens Omnibus should make it easier for consumers shopping in other EU countries to enforce their legal guarantee rights by making both the producer and the seller liable for non-conforming products.

### Improve cross-border delivery for consumers

- 2** The Citizens Omnibus should improve price transparency, delivery quality, and accessible complaint and compensation mechanisms to ensure that cross-border delivery services are reliable, affordable and consumer-friendly.

### Make the telecoms market simpler and seamless

- 3** Consumers should benefit from transparent, affordable and predictable conditions when making calls, sending messages or using mobile data across borders. The Citizens Omnibus should review the Roaming regulation to

remove Fair Use Policies, lower wholesale price caps, and remove all surcharges on EU communications for consumers.

### No more geo-blocking

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The Commission should remove geoblocking practices in the audiovisual sector to strengthen the Digital Single Market. The Citizens Omnibus should support greater cross-border access to audiovisual content and services, improve consumer choice, and ensure that consumers can benefit from the same opportunities online as they do in the physical Single Market.

### Simplify cross-border enforcement of consumer law

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The existing EU private international law framework should be adapted to the reality of cross-border mass harm situations, by including rules to identify the competent jurisdiction. This should preferably be the court of the domicile of the represented consumers.

### Simplify cross-border EV charging

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The Citizens Omnibus should improve the consumer experience for public charging of electric vehicles by allowing for greater price transparency, easy payment methods and mandatory roaming possibilities. Credit and debit cards are a trusted means of payment when crossing borders and should therefore be widespread on all charging stations.

### Harmonise passenger reduced rates categories across the EU

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The Commission should harmonise passenger categories benefitting from reduced rates via a new legislative initiative. Such initiative would make cross-border rail travel more attractive to consumers, while contributing to the EU's climate objectives.

## 1. Simplifying consistently, not in silos

Simplification measures which have been proposed since the beginning of 2025 have mainly benefitted the industry with little room for proper impact assessments, public debate and scrutiny. The Commission should consider simplification in the future as an integrated process where consumer needs and interests are considered in every measure.

The EU Treaties require horizontal integration of consumer protection into all policies, programmes and EU legislation. If citizens' lives are to be made simpler, it means someone else - like companies and authorities - must provide them simplicity. This requires consistent and coherent enforceable rules rather than just slashing red tape for industry in isolated measures.

For example, suppressing paper package leaflets for medicines may save the industry money but will be burdensome for consumers who need information essential for their health and cannot go digital. Furthermore, re-allowing banned harmful chemicals in consumer products such as cosmetics requires people to watch out for themselves rather than being protected by the legislator. This raises serious questions on the overall approach.

Consumer policy and environmental protection are a pivotal precondition for consumers' trust in markets and thereby for economic prosperity in the EU. They must be considered together with industrial, trade and Single Market policies.

For this reason, one can raise questions about the usefulness and success of the simplification approach so far which from a consumer perspective has not brought about tangible benefits.

### Recommendation

Instead of coming forward with separate omnibus measures which either benefit the industry or consumers, the Commission should ensure that consumer needs and interests are considered in every Omnibus measure horizontally.

## 2. Making cross-border shopping simpler

Cross-border shopping has become increasingly widespread as consumers combine shopping with travel, enjoying a wider choice of products and often more competitive prices. However, when products purchased abroad turn out to be defective or stop functioning, consumers frequently struggle exercising their rights under the legal guarantee.

The current EU framework places liability for non-conforming goods primarily on the seller, reflecting traditional contractual principles. Yet this approach no longer aligns with the realities of cross-border commerce. A seller located abroad may be difficult to contact, particularly where language barriers, distance, or lack of responsiveness come into play. As a result, consumers may struggle to enforce their rights effectively.

Introducing joint and several liability between sellers and producers into the Sales of Goods Directive would significantly simplify the consumer experience in cross-border transactions. By allowing consumers to turn either to the seller or directly to the producer, the process of claiming remedies in cross-border situations would become clearer, more accessible, and less burdensome.

Furthermore, extending liability to producers would strengthen incentives to improve product quality, durability, and reparability, as responsibility would also rest with the actors directly involved in design and manufacturing.

### Recommendation

Make it easier for consumers shopping in other EU countries to enforce their legal guarantee rights by introducing joint seller-producer liability for non-conforming products.

## 3. Improving cross-border delivery for consumers

Reliable and consumer-friendly delivery is a crucial element of cross-border shopping, yet significant shortcomings persist across the EU. Consumers frequently encounter problems when receiving goods from other Member States, including delays, lost or damaged parcels, lack of tracking, and high or unclear delivery costs. These issues are compounded by fragmented systems and uneven service quality between delivery operators, which continue to hinder the full potential of cross-border e-commerce.

A key structural problem is that recipients - unlike senders - have little control over the delivery service chosen and are often not even in a contractual relationship with the delivery operator. As a result, when something goes wrong, consumers may struggle to identify whom to contact or how to effectively pursue a complaint. Existing complaint-handling mechanisms are often inadequate, overly automated, or difficult to access, particularly in cross-border situations.

To address these barriers, stronger and harmonised consumer rights for cross-border deliveries should be established. This should include mandatory and accessible complaint handling procedures, including the possibility to directly contact delivery operators and receive a timely response. It should also ensure transparency, requiring traders to inform consumers in advance about the delivery provider, and introduce EU-wide minimum standards on tracking services, reliability, and delivery quality.

To build consumer trust, clear and harmonised compensation and redress mechanisms for lost, delayed, or damaged parcels are essential. Consumers should have access to

simple and effective dispute resolution tools, including alternative dispute resolution schemes, when problems cannot be resolved directly.

Finally, delivery services should better reflect consumers' expectations by ensuring affordable prices, sufficient delivery attempts, and convenient delivery options, including home delivery and accessible pick-up points. Strengthening these elements would reduce friction in cross-border transactions and ensure that delivery supports rather than undermines confidence in the Single Market.

### Recommendation

Ensure that cross-border delivery services are reliable, affordable and consumer-friendly by improving the price transparency, delivery quality, and accessible complaint and compensation mechanisms.

## 4. Making the telecoms market simpler and seamless

The abolition of retail roaming surcharges has been one of the most tangible consumer achievements of the Digital Single Market. Likewise, price caps for intra-EU calls and SMS have helped reduce the cost of cross-border communications within the Union.

However, consumers still face challenges when communicating across borders. Many consumers are confused between roaming and intra-EU communications, and consequently about applicable charges. At the same time, differences in retail offers, fair use policies<sup>1</sup>, quality of service and pricing structures can make it difficult for consumers to understand, use and compare the costs of cross-border communications.

Consumers should be able to communicate across the EU without facing unnecessary complexity, unexpected charges or artificial distinctions between domestic and cross-border communications. Reviewing current rules would enable to further simplify the framework and make cross-border communications more transparent, affordable and consumer-friendly.

At the same time, simplification should support the objectives of the Single Market. Consumers increasingly live, work, study and maintain personal relationships across borders. Regulatory barriers and divergent pricing practices should not undermine these

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<sup>1</sup> A fair use policy for roaming allows mobile operators to set limits on how much data, calls, and texts you can use while traveling abroad without incurring extra charges. This policy is designed to prevent abuse of roaming services, but cases abound of consumers being charged excessive bills despite filling all legal requirements (e.g. Erasmus students, cross-border workers, residents in border areas). For example, in Portugal, residents in certain border towns are still caught in inadvertent roaming and suffer bill shocks, as operators consider them residing in Spain.

cross-border activities or limit consumers' ability to benefit from the freedoms of the European Union.

EU legislators should maintain existing safeguards on price transparency, bill shock prevention, quality of service, fair use policies and access to emergency services. They should pay attention to vulnerable consumers and frequent cross-border users who may be disproportionately affected by complex structures.

### Recommendation

Consumers should benefit from transparent, affordable and predictable conditions when making calls, sending messages or using mobile data across borders. The Citizens Omnibus should review the Roaming regulation to remove Fair Use Policies, lower wholesale price caps, and fully integrate rules on intra-EU calls to remove all surcharges on EU communications for consumers.

## 5. No more geoblocking

Consumers continue to be blocked from audiovisual content across the European Union. While they can freely purchase goods and access many digital services across borders, films, television programmes and other audiovisual content remain subject to extensive territorial restrictions.

The Citizens Omnibus is an opportunity to reassess the justification for geoblocking practices in the audiovisual sector. While recognising the importance of financing European cultural and creative works, the current framework disproportionately prioritises market segmentation over consumer access and choice. Consumers who are willing to pay for legal content should not be prevented from accessing services solely because they reside in, or travel to, another Member State.

Greater cross-border availability of audiovisual services would strengthen competition, increase consumer choice and improve access to cultural content throughout the Union.

### Recommendation

BEUC calls on the EU to remove geoblocking practices in the audiovisual sector to strengthen the Digital Single Market. The Citizens Omnibus should support greater cross-border access to audiovisual content and services, improve consumer choice, and ensure that consumers can benefit from the same opportunities online as they do in the physical Single Market.

## 6. Simplifying cross-border enforcement of consumer law

Consumers experiencing cross-border problems still face many challenges to enforce their rights. That is because laws may differ significantly among countries, or because traders located abroad are unresponsive or unwilling to address problems.

Consumers have several enforcement pathways to claim their rights: through court actions, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and/or via complaints to authorities. These pathways have all shown limitations. While ADR and the public enforcement framework (CPC Regulation) are being renewed, the collective redress framework still has several loopholes and is still not adapted to cross-border contexts. Questions regarding in which country consumers can claim their rights, and which law will apply significantly matter in those circumstances. Often the liable enterprise and consumers are domiciled in different countries and/or products may have been purchased abroad. This triggers legal uncertainty for all parties and significantly increases the costs and length of procedures. The Representative Actions Directive (RAD) did not harmonise nor adapt the EU private international law provisions to suit representative actions.

### Recommendation

- The existing EU private international law framework should be adapted to the reality of cross-border mass harm situations, by including rules to identify the competent jurisdiction. This should preferably be the court of the domicile of the represented consumers.

## 7. A seamless cross-border charging experience

Public charging for electric vehicles has become unnecessarily complex, especially when compared to refuelling a petrol car.<sup>2</sup> Consumers travelling cross-border with an electric car must juggle different apps, charging cards, and payment methods with no clue about the best possible price. This makes their journey a daunting planning exercise. That is because numerous actors (such as charging operators, mobility service providers) have developed their own ecosystem and tariffs, with very limited interoperability. And where such interoperability exists, it often leads to high, unjustified costs for consumers.

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<sup>2</sup> BEUC members repeatedly highlighted the headache consumers face when charging their electric vehicles on public charging stations. See for example recent evidence from BEUC member [Que Choisir Ensemble](#).

Travelling with an electric vehicle across the EU should be a seamless experience. The EU should therefore take inspiration from “Roam like at home”, one of the EU’s greatest success stories for consumers making phone calls across the continent without extra costs, and with clear pricing. Moreover, consumers should access ad hoc payment means. Credit and debit cards are a trusted means of payment when crossing borders and should therefore be widespread on all charging stations.

## 8. An EU-wide recognition of passengers' tariffs

Consumers often rely on discounts and reduced fares to travel with public transport or long-distance rail services. Families, young and older people, passengers with disabilities or frequent travellers often benefit from these preferential tariffs.

However, the definition of passenger categories varies across Europe. Similarly, it is not always possible for consumers to book cross-border tickets in one go while applying their discounts (e.g. Interrail pass, monthly subscription or frequent traveller rate) on a booking platform. The application of discounts is often a make-or-break element for people to choose rail over car. An EU-wide recognition of categories benefitting from reduced rates (with a harmonisation to the most favourable conditions) or the interoperability of these reduced rates would go a long way to make cross-border rail travel more attractive to consumers, while contributing to the EU’s climate objectives.

### Recommendations

- The Citizens Omnibus should improve the consumer experience for public charging of electric vehicles by allowing for greater price transparency, easy payment methods and mandatory roaming possibilities. To this end, the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR) should mandate transparent pricing in price/kWh and payment by credit/debit card at all charging stations. Roaming agreements should be made mandatory to simplify consumers’ life. Data sharing obligations should become a reality so that consumers can compare prices at all charging stations.
- The Commission should harmonise passenger categories benefitting from reduced rates via a new legislative initiative.

ENDS.