

## EEB submission to the call for evidence on Consumer Agenda 2025-2023 and action plan on consumers in the Single Market.

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) welcomes the opportunity to submit input to the consultation on the upcoming communication on the Consumer Agenda 2025-2030 and action plan on consumers in the Single Market. We have identified three priority areas: addressing online sales, improving information flows, and fighting (involuntary) overconsumption.

### Close legal loopholes and make online trade a safer place

Online marketplaces play a significant role in fuelling consumption growth. There has been a massive [surge](#) of direct imports of low-value products, which brings with it an unmanageable volume of items (and associated waste). Some of these products become waste even before they are used, and many others are used only for a very short period. The volume brings with it a difficult-to-control and growing number of products that do not comply with EU safety and environmental legislation, but that are nevertheless easily accessible through online marketplaces.

Legal loopholes and ineffective enforcement related to e-commerce negatively impact product safety, the environment, and fair competition, as highlighted in this [joint statement](#) signed by 59 organisations, including NGOs and European industry. The number of safety alerts continues to rise. In 2024, cosmetics and toys were among the most notified [under the EU Safety Gate](#), which is alarming as these are more likely to affect vulnerable groups such as women, youth and children. [Consumer groups, environmental NGOs and industry consistently find evidence of unsafe products on online shops](#), and alarming examples abound. The EEB has for instance continuously [warned](#) that skin-lightening products purchased online still today contain high levels of mercury. Toys Industries of Europe reported that [95% of toys bought from online platform TEMU break EU safety rules](#).

Beyond safety concerns, products coming in through those channels frequently do not fulfil ecodesign or product-specific requirements. [LightingEurope's Online Mystery Shopper Exercise from 2023](#) showed that 95% of products delivered and physically inspected were missing CE and WEEE marking, ecodesign and safety information requirements, which, in turn, poses a serious challenge to any attempts at circularity including reuse, remanufacture or recycling of materials.

Online shopping makes it easy to buy more, and from anywhere. Market surveillance authorities will never have enough resources to control the problem, relative to the scale of the issue. A key issue repeatedly identified is that online marketplaces are not currently recognised as economic operators under EU law. This exempts them from proactive legal due diligence responsibility to verify the compliance of products sold through their platforms. They only need to act if they are informed of any potential non-compliance. Holding platforms accountable as economic operators, for example through amendment of the Digital Services Act, would be a good starting point. Unfortunately, online marketplaces are not the only problem, as direct-to-consumer sellers on social media platforms such as Instagram, Youtube, and Tiktok are also growing in presence and volume of products sold ([statistics](#) predict that social networks could make up 17% of total online sales in 2025).

Even though the European Parliament acknowledged the issue in its [own initiative report on non-EU imports](#) and the European Commission published a [comprehensive EU toolbox for safe and](#)

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*International non-profit association • Association internationale sans but lucratif (AISBL) • EC register for interest representatives:  
ID number: 06798511314-27 • BCE ID number: 0415.814.848 • RPM Tribunal de l'entreprise francophone de Bruxelles*

[sustainable e-commerce](#) in February 2025, policymakers have failed to find credible solutions, leaving the environment, EU consumers, and European businesses unprotected.

This is why the Consumer Agenda and action plan must prioritise:

- Reducing the volume of products entering the EU through online shopping,
- Assigning responsibility to online platforms,
- Closing legal loopholes in the regulations that tackle trade via online marketplaces and social media.

### Guarantee transparency and trustworthy information on sustainable products

As the call for evidence points out, stronger EU rules aimed at facilitating consumers' choice towards truly sustainable, safer and healthier products are needed.

According to the [EU Commission](#), 53% of green claims give vague, misleading or unfounded information and 40% of claims have no supporting evidence. At the same time, most consumers want to take action to reduce their environmental footprint and look out for reliable information. However, they end up frustrated with the confusing, never-ending sea of green labels and claims, as shown in [BEUC's 2023 survey](#). Moreover, a [recent poll ClientEarth commissioned](#) on public perceptions of recycling claims in France, Germany, Great Britain and Poland showed that most people believe that plastic products and packaging are a rather negative choice for the environment. However, when marked with green logos, the majority perceive them as an environmentally positive choice.

The past New Consumer Agenda therefore rightfully committed to providing more reliable and trustworthy sustainability information to consumers, with the Green Claims Directive and the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive as major milestones. But the work is not done yet and the fight against greenwashing should remain a priority in the next Agenda.

The adoption of an effective Green Claims Directive – with a meaningful, yet proportionate verification procedure and clear rules on environmental claims and labels – is crucial and will be key to protecting consumers and rebuilding trust while reducing uncertainty and restoring fair competition for businesses. Yet it would not unduly increase the administrative burden since EU businesses are already required under the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD) to substantiate their claims and many already use third-party verified labels as highlighted in this [open letter to the current Presidency](#).

The Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive (ECGT) was adopted and will enter into force in September 2026. It will be important to ensure proper enforcement of the new rules on greenwashing and providing durability/reparability information at the point of sale. The Consumer Agenda should support market surveillance authorities in the EU to apply the ECGT provisions and identify cases of non-compliance, thereby encouraging all traders to follow the new rules. Yet more can be done to go further in limiting misinformation and false needs. According to a [survey](#) in France, 71% of people believe that the use of the words « innovation » or « progress » should be controlled in advertising, to avoid fuelling marketing obsolescence – creating a need for new products just because a new version came out, when what is sold as innovation/progress does not improve performance in any significant way (and something that the consumer already has performs in much the same way).

Besides acting against greenwashing, it is alarming that the first sustainability “Omnibus Package” aims to weaken the requirements of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Such a relaxation would limit the availability of relevant and comparable company information. In addition to having accurate information on the products they buy, businesses and people deserve to have comparable information on companies’ progress, their transition plans and commitments in order to make conscious, sustainable purchasing or financial investment decisions. We therefore urge the Commission to include a commitment to the original CSRD in the Agenda without further weakening it.

The Commission should also continue to promote and improve the EU Ecolabel, which rewards frontrunner companies and provides guidance to consumers who want to easily identify the most environmentally friendly options. The scheme should be expanded to more product groups and services to increase its overall relevance on the EU market. The portfolio should develop into sectors with high relevance for a circular economy, such as sharing services. The Commission should also keep allocating resources to raising awareness for the EU Ecolabel’s benefits towards different target audiences.

This is why the Consumer Agenda and action plan must prioritise:

- Adopting ambitious verification of green claims,
- Supporting market surveillance authorities in applying existing information rules, and further extending these provisions to tackle marketing obsolescence,
- Committing to the original CSRD,
- Promoting and improving the EU ecolabel (and other trustworthy labels).

### Address drivers of overconsumption and align with EU’s goal to transition to a circular economy

With ever-evolving technologies, deceptive techniques are being used to push consumers to purchase more products. Dark patterns, monetised trade-ins, misleading promotions, buy more to receive discounts – these patterns not only undermine rational decision-making, but also impact consumers negatively with excessive spending (even debt). It goes without saying that the combined pattern of overconsumption has severe consequences for the environment through increased resource use, waste generation and pollution.

Risks towards over-spending and over-indebtedness are even more accentuated by the growing availability of price incentives and “[Buy Now Pay Later](#)” products, which allow consumers to split or delay payments. Practices such as personalised advertising or [pricing techniques](#) use consumers’ personal data to adjust the price and optimise the exact time that they are shown a product. This problem exists both online and offline, with online marketing creating “needs” that consumers are compelled to fulfil next time they enter a (physical or virtual) shop, as well as offline product placement strategies, influencer marketing and discount models that encourage more, not smarter, consumption.

The exploitation of consumer vulnerabilities through aggressive commercial practices is well-documented. In the case of one particularly egregious example, BEUC in June filed a [complaint](#) with the European Commission and [European consumer protection authorities](#) against SHEIN for its use of deceptive techniques (‘dark patterns’).

These illegal or unfair practices disempower consumers, and current regulation has too many ambiguities and loopholes. The issues identified in section 4.1 of the questionnaire (protecting children and young people, dark patterns, influencer marketing, addictive design features, unfair personalisation practices, subscription management, in-app/game purchases, pricing practices, safety risks and online fraud) are *all* crucial drivers and should all be addressed in some form. Therefore, it will be important to:

- Address the current gaps and legal uncertainties, notably through the development of a strong Digital Fairness Act,
- Further adjust the Payment Services Directive,
- Re-assess the AI act and GDPR with overconsumption in mind,
- Review unfair pricing [legislation](#) with a wider overconsumption perspective, beyond the current minimum safeguards,
- Ensure that endeavours towards simplification should raise, not harm, environmental ambitions, and consumer protection.

Further to this, EU's efforts to transition to a circular economy are being seriously undermined by other types of practices that do not only reduce the durability of products but also encourage waste. This is the case with early obsolescence, which voluntarily limits products' lifespan below what would be technically possible. Repairing broken devices saves precious resources and cuts environmental impacts, but it is too often more expensive to repair rather than to replace. While the Right to Repair directive was a step in the right direction, its effective implementation has not yet been facilitated – and the number of product groups to which it applies is limited.

This is why the Agenda must prioritise:

- Promoting an open repair market,
- Introducing binding rules addressing the price of spare parts and banning all forms of early obsolescence,
- Fully implementing the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), extending it to more product groups (including a ban on the destruction of *any* unsold goods),
- Reviewing the potential of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes across categories to optimise active financial disincentives for overconsumption and destructive models.

For circular EU businesses to thrive and for consumers to access and retain safe, healthy, high-quality and durable products, the Agenda and action plan should address the drivers of overconsumption by anchoring the principle of sufficiency, considering the true need and well-being of people while living within planetary boundaries.