



Raising standards for consumers

POSITION PAPER

ANEC contribution to the Consumer Agenda 2025-2030 and action plan on consumers in the Single Market

Call for evidence and public consultation



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Summary

ANEC, the European consumer voice in standardisation, strongly supports the aims of the European Commission's Consumer Agenda 2025-2030 and the need for an action plan on consumers in the Single Market. ANEC views the Consumer Agenda as a key tool to empower and protect consumers through safe, sustainable, accessible and fair products and services, with standards delivering real impact.

ANEC calls for a renewed vision of the role of consumers and of consumer policy in the Single Market, one that fully embeds consumer interests in all relevant policy areas, including those often overlooked. This is crucial, as ANEC's work spans sectors that go beyond the traditional boundaries of consumer policy.

In recent EU policies and legislation, standards are increasingly used for protecting consumers not only in general product safety, but also in areas such as specific product legislation, accessibility, environmental sustainability, services, and digital products and services.

To ensure standards truly reflect the needs of all consumers, political and financial support is needed for a more inclusive standardisation system - one that guarantees strong, meaningful, and sustained consumer participation.

ANEC's Recommendations

1. No Compromise on Safety

ANEC stresses the need for effective product safety rules to address the risks posed by new technological developments to consumers.

We also call for the establishment of a European legal framework on the safety of services, supported by robust and fit-for-purpose standards.

2. Better Enforcement—Again and Again

Laws and standards are effective only if properly enforced. Ideally, market surveillance would become a European competence. In the absence of such a change, improved coordination among national market surveillance authorities is essential, backed by EU-level support and joint enforcement actions.

Cross-border and international collaboration must also be enhanced to tackle global market challenges and dangerous imports. Standardisation can support this by providing clear benchmarks for compliance and enforcement.

3. Consumers at the heart of the digital transition

To build consumer trust in the digital age, urgent action is needed to safeguard the privacy and security of personal data.

Digital technologies challenge the assumption that informed consumers always make optimal choices, particularly in an era of information asymmetry and cognitive overload. Consumer protection must be embedded by design into products and services, using standards as a tool to ensure privacy, accessibility, and fairness are built-in from the outset.

Consumers must have the right to choose between digital and non-digital communications, with the EU Consumer Agenda 2025–2030 there is an opportunity to ensure inclusion, informed consent and trust, so that digital progress never comes at the expense of autonomy, safety, or secure access to essential information. Accessible digital options can and should coexist with secure non-digital alternatives.

4. Consumers driving sustainable consumption

Under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), the scope of Ecodesign will expand to cover more product categories, with a stronger focus on waste prevention and circularity. Swift implementation, alongside the enforcement and promotion of successful schemes such as the Ecolabel, will be key to realise tangible environmental and consumer benefits.

These measures are to be seen as part of a broader package of recently-adopted EU environmental legislation on product design, consumer information, repair services, and consumer rights. The ESPR complements new rules on the Right to Repair, on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition, and the pending Directive on Substantiating Green Claims. Together, they will play a crucial role in ensuring more sustainable products by design, while giving consumers the tools and trustworthy information they need to make informed choices.

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To further strengthen consumer trust in sustainable products, the EU Consumer Agenda could provide clear guidance on the quality, safety, and liability of refurbished and remanufactured products.

Clear, reliable, and easy-to-use labels are essential to overcome greenwashing, with the EU Ecolabel serving as a gold standard for independently verified environmental excellence.

5. Tackling Consumer Vulnerabilities: From Recognition to Action

Consumer protection must address vulnerabilities proactively - not just reactively - especially for groups often excluded or discriminated against, such as children, persons with disabilities, and older people.

New and emerging vulnerabilities must be identified and addressed through inclusive policies and default protections. This includes rethinking how consumer policy is shaped at the EU level in terms of information provision and product design.

6. Supporting the coordination of consumer voices in standardisation

Empowering individual consumers must go hand-in-hand with strengthening the institutions and organisations that protect them. National consumer organisations are well-placed to offer insight and experience, but they need help, recognition, and a structure for coordinating their meaningful involvement.

ANEC needs more resources to support their greater engagement, as few Member States offer a legal or financial framework for improved inclusiveness, regardless of whether it be for the participation of consumers or broader societal interests. Hence the role of ANEC remains key in ensuring there is a collective consumer voice heard in standardisation.

Conclusions

ANEC sees the Consumer Agenda as a crucial roadmap for advancing consumer protection in a competitive Single Market. By aligning standardisation with consumer needs and EU policy goals, ANEC aims to ensure that standards work for people, not only markets.

In 2023, household expenditure contributed to 52.1% of EU GDP, reinforcing a powerful truth: consumers are the backbone of Europe's economy. Their spending drives prosperity, and their confidence fuels growth. This places a responsibility on the framework of legislation and standardisation in Europe to reflect their needs and safeguard their rights, ensuring that no one is excluded or left behind.

Enrico Letta's report "Much More Than a Market" emphasized that consumers should be at the forefront of the Single Market and need to be empowered and protected to drive economic growth, innovation and sustainability.

The consumer movement is facing structural challenges and there is a need to adapt the governance structures of EU consumer policy to address these. The objective must be a fully functioning Single Market, evidence-informed EU policymaking, and effective cooperation among all relevant stakeholders in the EU and internationally.

By strengthening consumer protection, contributing to consumers' well-being and supporting an ever-more inclusive standardisation system, ANEC counts on the support of the Consumer Agenda to reinforce key EU objectives, enhancing competitiveness and fostering sustainable growth. A Single Market where consumers buy unsafe (even dangerous) products, and use unsecure digital services and applications, is a market where citizens are not able to face the challenges and uncertainties that lie ahead of us, not to mention a market which does not lead to prosperity and resilience.

ENDS.



ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and the use of standards, as well as related legislation and public policies.

ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and is open to the representation of national consumer organisations in 34 countries.

ANEC is funded by the European Union and EFTA, with national consumer organisations contributing in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.



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