



Press Release

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The brainwashing of greenwashing

“Consumers are confused by the number of environmental claims that can be found on the EU market, as well as about their reliability and clarity”, said ANEC Secretary-General, Stephen Russell, on the occasion of the European Consumer Summit 2012. The Summit includes consideration of misleading environmental claims. He added, “However, there exist several claims that are trusted due to their simplicity, clarity, credibility and usability. In particular, instruments such as the Ecolabel and Energy Label should be developed further”.

Mr Russell continued, “In the ANEC position on the new European Consumer Strategy, unveiled today, we stress there is need for an understanding of consumers as they are, not as policy makers wish them to be. It implies the importance of a better understanding of consumers in general: connecting with their concerns and desires; the rationales for their behaviours and purchasing decisions. Reliable information about green products can help consumers make the right choices for the environment. However, a mix of instruments is needed, including appropriate regulation of products and services, and the provision of incentives to manufacturers to produce genuinely environmentally-friendly products, and to consumers to buy those products. We must avoid consumers finding ‘green’ products unattractive, as happened to some degree with energy efficient light bulbs”.

ANEC believes the European Commission’s Environmental Footprint (PEF) Methodology should not be linked to labelling schemes or to marketing information. We have serious doubts as to the value of the PEF Methodology in its present form.

Moreover, ANEC believes that the European Commission should revise its December 2000 guidelines on the assessment of environmental claims. More importantly, the Commission should consider alternatives to ensure effective prevention and better control of misleading green claims. An option could be to modify the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD) so as to address misleading green claims. Examples of ‘bad claims’ could be added to the list of claims defined as misleading. Fines should also be levied on companies that use misleading claims.

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ANEC in brief

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, representing and defending consumer interests in the process of standardisation and certification. ANEC was set up in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and represents consumer organisations from the 27 EU Member States and 3 EFTA countries and Croatia. ANEC is funded by the European Union and the EFTA Secretariat, while national consumer organisations contribute in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.

More information:

<http://www.anec.eu/anec.asp?p=position-papers&ref=03-01.01-01>

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