

Consumer protection: indication of prices of products offered to consumers

1995/0148(COD) - 12/07/1995 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: to adopt new arrangements for improving consumer information and simplifying existing law to allow the Community to propose a standard level of price information for consumers, based on national policies. **COMMUNITY MEASURE:** proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive on consumer protection in the indication of the prices of products offered to consumers. **SUBSTANCE:** the proposal contains simplified arrangements to replace the mechanism for the indication of product prices established by Directive 79/581/EEC and 88/314/EEC for foodstuffs and non-food products respectively, application of which has proved very complex for many Member States. The transitional period for implementation has just been extended by two years by means of a postponement directive. - The proposal for a Directive enshrines the general consumer information principle of indicating the selling price and unit price of both foodstuffs and non-food products. - The obligation to display prices is incumbent on sellers offering wares to the public, in other words the final consumer, a natural person who is not purchasing in the course of business. The rules on price indication do not apply to dealings between suppliers and retailers. - For bulk products, only the unit price has to be indicated. - The selling price and unit price must be unambiguous, easily identifiable and clearly legible. They must relate to the final price of the product. - Member States must lay down practical procedures for marking and labelling. - The Directive stipulates the role of Member States in making exemptions for certain products where indication of the unit price would not be meaningful in terms of consumer information (e.g. non-food products). - The obligation to indicate the unit price applies from 7 July 1997. Member States may extend, by a maximum of four years, the period of adaptation to the new mechanism for certain small retail businesses. - Member States must lay down penalties for infringements of national provisions adopted in application of the Directive. These penalties must be effective, proportionate and dissuasive. - Member States will submit details of any exemptions they adopt. - The Commission will submit a report to the European Parliament and Council no later than four years after the final date for transposition. This will be preceded, after two years, by an interim report relating to small retail businesses.