

Consumer policy: Community action programme 2007-2013

2005/0042B(COD) - 24/05/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to establish a programme of Community action in the field of consumer protection policy (2007-2013) following the agreement of 17 May 2006 on the Financial Framework 2007-2013.

PROPOSED ACT : Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTEXT : on 6 April 2005, the Commission proposed a wide-ranging and ambitious health and consumer protection programme 2007-2013 based on the assumption of a **EUR 1 203 million** budget (out of which **EUR 234 million** was for the consumer protection policy).

On 16 March 2006, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for indicative financial framework for the implementation of the consumer programme to be set at **EUR 233 460 million**.

The new consumer proposal, in line with the outcome of the Financial Perspectives negotiations, is for **EUR 156.8 million** (current prices), including the consumer contribution towards the running of the executive agency.

In order to take into account the substantial shortfall in the programme budget, as well as the formal views expressed by the European Parliament, the Commission has decided to introduce substantial modifications to its original proposal and to submit two separate proposals for a public health programme and a consumer policy programme. These are tailored to the reduced budget.

CONTENT : this proposal establishes a programme of Community action in the field of consumer protection. References to public health and a joint approach between public health and consumer protection policies have been removed accordingly. However, important elements of the common approach, such as improved communication with citizens, integration of consumer concerns into other policies, and international cooperation have been incorporated in the new proposal. The extension of the mandate of the Public Health Executive Agency to consumer policy is also maintained.

The consumer objectives have been defined more tightly around two new objectives:

- 1) To ensure a high level of consumer protection, notably through improved evidence, better consultation and better representation of consumers' interests.**
- 2) To ensure the effective application of consumer protection rules notably through enforcement cooperation, information, education and redress.**

The number of consumer actions has been reduced from 20 to 11. The main changes can be summarised as follows:

- several actions -e.g. on data collection and assessment, effective application, monitoring of transposition and implementation, information and redress, and education have been merged for the sake of coherence and to reflect the more limited possibilities.

- actions on specific projects in favour of consumer organisations have been deleted, but capacity building to consumer organisations through training has been reinforced.

- there is no longer a reference to representation of consumer interests in international standardisation bodies. This will still be supported through the work programme of European standardisation organisations. Actions for enforcement cooperation with third countries are also foreseen.

- some of the common health and consumer actions provided for in the original proposal, e.g. on information, have been taken up in the consumer programme.

This programme provides for a list of actions from which specific actions will be selected annually in the work programme.

Provisions on Community financial contributions, notably ceilings and beneficiaries, have been reformulated in line with the European Parliament's opinion and the existing consumer programme (Decision 20/2004/EC) and take into account the changes in some of the actions (deletion of specific projects and addition of new actions).

As is the case at present, the measures necessary for the implementation of the following measures shall be adopted in accordance with the advisory procedure: annual work programme and, arrangements for implementing joint actions with Member States, and expenditure for the functioning of European consumer organisations and European standardisation organisations.

Particular attention is given to Member States which have acceded on 1st May 2004, as well as to future Member States, in order to better take into account their shorter tradition of consumer policy. A specific reference to actions benefiting consumers of these countries has been added (concept of exceptional utility), in line with the wishes of the European Parliament.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.