



COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

I M C O Newsletter



AT A GLANCE

This issue anticipates the main items on the Committee meeting agenda for 29-30 November and 9 December: the consideration of the amendments tabled on the consumer rights directive and the debate on the draft reports on the implementation of the Services directive and the revision of the General product safety directive.

Members will also discuss the Commission communication on "Trade, growth and world affairs" with Commissioner De Gucht and will examine the main achievements of the Belgian Presidency with the Minister for Enterprise.

Finally, a first exchange of views on the Single Market Act will take place. To this regard, this issue addresses also the outcomes of the Single Market Forum which took place on 9 November

Inside you will also find the major outcomes reported from the Committee meetings held on 8, 18 and 22 November, namely on the debate and vote on a regulation on construction products, the vote on a report on advertising and also the debate with Vice President Tajani on the Commission work programme.

SELECTED NEWS

Europeans could save €13 billion in electricity bills

A European Commission study on the EU retail electricity markets published on 15 November 2010 shows that EU consumers could save about €13 billion in total if they switched to the cheapest electricity tariff they could find.

Some shoppers involved in conducting the study have been able to find a less expensive tariff in 62% of the cases. Individually, consumers could save about €100 if they switched to the cheapest offer, but the study also shows that consumers are not making full use of the savings opportunities that market liberalisation has created. Very few consumers switch electricity suppliers, only 32% have compared offers from different suppliers and 41% do not know if they can find a cheaper tariff.

[Web-site](#) of the retail electricity study

Moreover, less than half of EU consumers (47%) know how much electricity they consume, while complaint handling in retail electricity needs to be improved: only 28% of EU consumers were satisfied with the way their complaint was dealt with.

The study recommends to raise consumer awareness on alternative suppliers, on the benefits from switching to the cheapest tariff and on third party organisations assisting consumers with problems and, finally, to provide the consumers with information about suppliers and tariffs more proactively. The study is a follow-up to the findings of the 2009 Consumer Markets Scoreboard which found the retail electricity market to be among the worst performing markets for consumers.

[Web-site](#) of the Consumer Market Scoreboard

LOOKING AHEAD

The European week of international product safety

The 2010 edition of the European Week of International Product Safety, hosted by the European Commission, will take place from 1 to 3 December in Brussels.

This event consists in a series of meetings bringing together a broad range of (non-food) consumer product safety professionals from around the world, representing regulators, businesses, consumer organisations, standard makers and test laboratories, academics and experts.

[Web-site](#) of the event

The programme includes a conference on the revision of the EU General Product Safety Directive, a meeting organised by the OECD on Consumer Product Safety and an International Risk Assessment Seminar. IMCO is currently working on a report on the revision of the General Product Safety Directive (Rapporteur: C. Schaldemose).



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NEXT COMMITTEE MEETINGS (29-30 NOVEMBER AND 9 DECEMBER 2010)

[Watch the committee meeting live](#)

[Agenda and meeting documents](#)

First exchange of views on the Single Market Act

On 9 December, the Committee will hold an exchange of views on the three coordinated reports that IMCO will draw up as the first political response to the Single Market Act, the communication adopted at the end of October by the Commission with the aim to relaunch the Single Market.

The reports address the following issues: "Governance and partnership in the Single Market", "The Single Market Act for Europeans" and "The Single Market Act for enterprises and growth". IMCO held its first Single Market Forum on 9 November (see the "Events" section).

A new directive on consumer rights

On 29 November the Committee will proceed to a new consideration of the 1,559 amendments tabled by the rapporteur and the members on the proposed directive which merges four existing directives and aims to update the EU rules on consumer rights.

During the meeting held on 18 November, the discussion showed that the most contentious issues remain the extent of harmonisation and, closely related, the proposed merger of Chapters II and III, the hierarchy of remedies (Article 26), and the time limits and burden of proof in case of lack of conformity (Article 28).

At the same meeting, a representative of the Commission presented an impact assessment of the rapporteur's amendments concluding that they aim at introducing minimum harmonisation in several areas, yet keep full harmonisation for

The implementation of the Services directive



On 30 November members will consider a draft report on the implementation of the Services Directive.

As the Commission is due to present a summary report in 2011 (where appropriate accompanied with new initiatives), the Parliament is to assess the state-of-play of the implementation of the Directive and give political guidance for future actions.

Towards a revision of the General product safety directive

A proposal on the revision of the General Product Safety Directive is planned by the Commission for spring 2011. To this regard, the own initiative report analyses the current issues regarding the directive and develops strategic input to shape the forthcoming legislation. The general focus within the draft report is the alignment with the New Legislative Framework,

RAPPOREUR: Christel Schaldemose (S&D, DK) - [Dossier](#)

SHADOWS: E-R. Korhola (EPP), J. Creutzmann (ALDE), H. Rühle (Greens/EFA), A. Fox (ECR), K. Triantaphyllides (GUE/NGL), M. Salvini (EFD).

Commissioner De Gucht before IMCO

On 29 November the Committee will welcome Commissioner De Gucht, responsible for trade, who will present the recent communication on "Trade, Growth and World Affairs and a role for standardisation to translate this vision into tangible benefits.

He will also give an overview of what is already being done or needs to be done with large trading partners (US, Asia) to ensure better regulatory/standards convergence.



the aspects most important for the internal market. Moreover, they would increase consumer protection in several respects, and lead to higher compliance costs for business - which might in turn, however, be countered by the effects of higher consumer confidence.

At the meeting on 9 December, two briefing papers will be presented to members: on the relation between the Consumer rights directive and the area of financial services and on information requirements in EU legislation.

RAPPOREUR: Andreas Schwab (EPP, DE) - [Subject file](#)

SHADOWS: E. Gebhardt (S&D); R. Rochefort (ALDE); E. Turunen (Greens/EFA); A. Bielan (ECR); K. Triantaphyllides (GUE/NGL); M. Salvini (EFD).

VOTE IN IMCO: 26 January 2011

The draft report focuses on the evaluation process and stresses that accessibility, conviviality and efficiency of the Points of Single Contact (PSC) must be improved and content should be available in various languages. Administrative cooperation is a key point of success and thus the training of civil servants should be reinforced.

Finally, further measures should be taken in accordance with the discussions raised by the Single Market Act.

RAPPOREUR: Evelyne Gebhardt (S&D, DE) - [Dossier](#)

SHADOWS: M. Handzlik (EPP), M. Løkkegaard (ALDE), P. Canfin (Greens/EFA), M. Harbour (ECR), E-B. Svensson (GUE/NGL), M. Salvini (EFD).

DEADLINE FOR AMENDMENTS: 7 December 2010 @ 12.00

addressing issues such as the market surveillance, the traceability and the possibility to efficiently and quickly withdraw or recall products posing serious risks permanently from the market, the improvement of RAPEX and the revision of guidelines to the standardisation procedures. The rapporteur will present her draft on 30 November.

TIMETABLE:

Deadline for amendments: 14 December 2010 @ 16.00
Vote in IMCO: 26 January 2011

Review of the Belgian Presidency

On 9 December, Federal Minister of the Economy, Vincent Van Quickenborne, will present the main achievements of the Belgian Presidency in the field of internal market.



Impact assessments on new type-approval rules

On 30 November the Commission will present to IMCO members two impact assessments followed by an exchange of views on two legislative proposals on the approval and market surveillance of two-or-three wheel vehicles and quadricycles (such as tricycles, on-road quads and mini-cars) and on the approval of agricultural and forestry vehicles (tractors, trailers and towed equipment). The aim is harmonise rules for the approval of these vehicles, with a view to ensuring the functioning of the internal market, simplify the legal framework, increase safety and strengthen market surveillance. Procedure files - [2-3 wheel vehicles](#) and [Tractors](#)

Repeal of 8 directives on Metrology

On 30 November, the Committee is to endorse the outcome of the negotiations with the Council concerning the proposal of repealing 8 Directives in the field of Metrology, dating back to the 70s, as they are hardly used anymore.

However to avoid legal uncertainty, the Commission will have to assess whether the measuring instruments falling within the scope of the repealed directives need to be included in the scope of the general Measurements Instruments Directive 2004/22/EC.

One Directive, on the calibration of ship tanks, will be repealed with effect from 1 July 2011. The other seven Directives - covering for instance cold water meters, alcohol meters, certain weights and tyre pressure gauges - will be repealed with effect from 1 December 2015.

RAPPORTEUR: Anja Weisgerber (EPP, DE) – [Procedure file](#)

EVENTS

A Forum to relaunch the single market

The "Single Market Forum" was intended to kick off the debate on the Single Market Act adopted by the Commission on 27 October – a communication addressing the concerns of businesses, citizens/consumers and governance issues on the EU market.

Commissioner Barnier outlined the three parts of the Single Market Act: Strong, sustainable and equitable growth for business; European citizens at the heart of the single market, regaining and building trust; and Dialogue, governance and the single market. The Commission proposes 50 actions to be implemented before the end of 2012.

Minister Van Quickenborne stressed that making the single market work is a moral obligation towards citizens wishing to extend their freedoms across Europe.

Other items on the agenda

On 29-30 November, Members will vote on the opinion on "Guaranteeing independent impact assessments" (Rapp. B. Weiler). In addition, the following opinions will be considered: "Reducing Health inequalities in the EU" (E. McClarkin), "An industrial policy for the globalised era" (J. Creutzmann) and "Towards adequate, sustainable and safe European pension systems" (D. De Jong). An exchange of views will be held on the opinions on "The future for social services of general interest" (D. Abad) and on "A new political framework for tourism in Europe" (J. Creutzmann).

Draft opinion [dossiers](#)



Just like the MEPs, Professor Monti also welcomed the Act and stressed that the internal market requires urgent political action. He called for more ambition in the area of tax coordination, warned against "overprotection" of the rights of creators, and welcomed the Presidency's stress on competition policy.

State secretary Chastel underlined the importance of the single market for a successful EU 2020 strategy. The Competitiveness Council will draw conclusions on the Act on 10 December. Provisionally he endorsed the idea to hold an annual Single Market Forum.

Fabian Zuleeg, of the European Policy Centre, Monique Goyens, BEUC, and Mr Philippe de Buck, BusinessEurope contributed to the debates.

Single Market Forum - [Presentations](#)
Single Market Act [web-site](#)

FROM THE LAST MEETINGS (8, 18 AND 22 NOVEMBER 2010)

Vice-President Tajani presents Commission's priorities



On 18 November, Vice President Tajani confirmed that Market surveillance and the free movement of goods remain important priorities for the Commission and announced initiatives in this field.

He also stressed the importance of the CE marking for the correct functioning of the internal market and reiterated his commitment to a large information campaign targeting consumers and economic operators.

On textile labelling, the Commissioner supported again Parliament's position on the indication of the country of origin. On construction products, he expressed his support to the majority of the amendments proposed by the Rapporteur.

[Web-site](#) of VP Antonio Tajani

New legislation for construction products

By 36 votes in favour and 1 against, the IMCO committee adopted on 22 November its draft recommendation on the proposed regulation aimed to overcome the current barriers that impede the free circulation of construction products across the EU. More than 80 amendments have been adopted, 8 of which were the result of wide compromises.

Members agreed to make a cross reference to the hazardous substances covered by the REACH regulation in order to take into account the need to ensure a high level of protection of the health and safety of the workers using construction products and of users of construction works. In addition, the Commission will draw up a report assessing the specific needs for information on these substances in construction products.

The recommendation backs the establishment of simplified procedures aimed to reduce red tape, especially for micro-enterprises, and also set a derogation from drawing up a declaration of performance for construction products manufactured in a traditional manner or in a manner appropriate to heritage conservation and in a non industrial process. It also states that recourse to harmonised standards for construction products should be increased.



RAPPOREUR: Catherine Stihler (S&D, UK) – [Dossier](#)
SHADOWS: H.P. Mayer (EPP); C. Buşoi (ALDE); H. Rühle (Greens/EFA); E. McClarkin (ECR); M. Salvini (EFD).

Advertising: tackle the challenge of new technologies



By 30 in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions the Committee adopted a report on the impact of advertising on consumer behaviour. The report deals with the role of advertising, the implementation of the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive and with self-regulation aspects.

Members focused on the implications of the development of "hidden" and behavioural internet advertising: consumers must be informed when they are subject to this kind of practice and shall receive clear information on how their data are being collected and used. To improve safety and transparency, an EU web site labelling system certifying a site's standard of data protection should be developed. Special attention shall also be paid to vulnerable groups, such as children.

RAPPOREUR: Philippe Juvin (EPP, FR) - [Dossier](#)
PLENARY VOTE: December

Competition Policy in 2009

On 22 November IMCO adopted - by 21 votes in favour, 14 against and 1 abstention – an opinion on the report on competition policy 2009.

The Opinion focuses on fair competition within the Internal Market, addressing state aid for the financial and the automobile sector and lack of competition in the energy, pharmaceutical, health, food and telecom sectors. Furthermore it firmly supports the creation of an EU patent. Synergies between competition and consumer protection policies should be developed further, including a European form of collective redress.

RAPPOREUR: Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE, RO) - [Dossier](#)
SHADOWS: A. Schwab (EPP); C. Stihler (S&D); H. Rühle (Greens/EFA); A. Bielan (ECR); C. de Jong (GUE/NGL); M. Salvini (EFD).



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