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PRESS RELEASE

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Consumer Rights: Improvement of Single Market is important – but has its price!

More clarity and high quality of the Consumer Rights Directive is needed, agreed representatives of the European Parliament, European business and consumer associations and Czech Permanent Representation on 11 November. There should be no hurry. It is worth to dedicate more time to negotiations and examine all the details of the proposal to avoid further recasts and unnecessary burden for traders. The proposal needs to ensure proper functioning of the business-to-consumer (B2C) Internal Market striking the right balance between a high level of consumer protection and the competitiveness of enterprises. The full harmonisation proposed is one of the tools how to achieve it.



Edvard KOŽUŠNÍK, Member of IMCO Committee, opened the floor and stressed the recent trade evolution calls for a change. He supports the principle of full harmonization and elimination of national exceptions in the field of consumer rights in order to remove certain barriers in the cross-border e-business.

According to **Monique GOYENS** of BEUC, the proposal will help more traders than consumers. She would rather see combination of the minimum and full harmonisation. *“The discussion should reflect the fact 99% of all sales are neither on-line nor cross boarder,”* GOYENS said. **Věra KNOBLOCHOVÁ** from the Czech Representation to the EU mentioned that the proposal is a complex piece of legislation. *“The Member States in the Council have been discussing it intensively for a year now,”* she said. There is a need to examine the draft thoroughly, look at the scope of contracts which will be covered by the proposal and ensure its compatibility with other EU legislation like the Services Directive. Full harmonisation should enhance functioning of the Internal Market for both consumers’ and traders’ interests.

“Fragmentation of national consumer rights regulations is one of the remaining obstacles to the Single Market,” reminded **Carlos ALMARAZ** of BUSINESSEUROPE. He asked for a clear, good quality Directive without unnecessary burden on traders. **Patrice PELLEGRINO** of EUROCOMMERCE said only full harmonization can bring more clarity in consumer rights across Europe. *“There is enough time for the EP to discuss the method proposed by the directive as well,”* added PELLEGRINO. **Vincent TILMAN** of EUROCHAMBRES stressed the directive should be clear and of good quality to ensure there will be no need to change it in a short period. *“The EP should consider requesting a new impact assessment,”* he added. The proposal is drafted more for big companies than SMEs as some provisions do not sufficiently cover domestic sales, local craftsmen, nursing, etc. There is also a need for good education of consumers. According to the SME representatives the directive is not well-balanced. *“In the B2C relations the consumer is always perceived as weaker compared to the SME, but that is not always the case”,* highlighted **Luc HENDRICKX** of UEAPME. *“The directive should be brought more in line with the everyday reality in which SMEs operate.”*

The Policy Cafe was organised by CEBRE – Czech Businesses Representation to the EU, Edvard KOŽUŠNÍK, MEP, and eStat.cz on 11 November 2009. For further details contact Michal Kadera, Director of CEBRE at Michal.Kadera@cebre.cz or visit: <http://www.cebre.cz/cz/docs/consumers>