

Consumer programme 2014-20

The consumer programme finances actions in the area of EU consumer policy. These aim to create the conditions necessary for EU citizens to participate fully in the single market. The programme for 2014-20 aims to build on the achievements of the previous programme (2007-13).

Empowering consumers

With consumer spending accounting for 56% of EU GDP, European shoppers have a crucial role to play in stimulating economic growth. However, in an increasingly complex marketplace, consumers do not always know how to identify the best offers, or what to do when things go wrong. According to a 2011 [Eurobarometer](#) survey, [less than 50%](#) of citizens polled felt confident, knowledgeable and protected as consumers. In 2012, the European Commission (EC) adopted a [Communication](#), "A European Consumer Agenda - Boosting confidence and growth", which laid out a new strategy to maximise consumer participation and trust in the European single market.

Funding for 2014-20 policy actions

In November 2011, the Commission adopted its [proposal](#) for a Regulation on a consumer programme 2014-20 to fund consumer policy activities. This seeks to support four objectives: strengthening product safety, increasing consumer knowledge and confidence through education and information initiatives, enhancing consumer rights and access to redress, and supporting enforcement of consumer rights cross-border. These aim to contribute to the [EU's growth strategy](#) and target Europe 2020 concerns such as the [digital agenda](#), [sustainable growth](#), smart regulation and social inclusion (in particular inclusion of vulnerable consumers and the ageing population). The focus for action is on three areas: existing legal obligations placed on the EU and Member States (MS) concerning consumer protection (e.g. financing the running of [RAPEX](#), the EU rapid alert system for dangerous non-food goods); EU-level action such as assistance on cross-border issues (e.g. financing the development of an EU-wide online dispute resolution system); and complementing activities at national level (e.g. financial support for the training of national consumer organisations). Falling under the "security and citizenship" heading of the recently adopted Multiannual Financial Framework ([MFF](#)), the programme will have total funding of [€188.8 million](#), representing a reduction of just over 4% from the original proposal of [€197 million](#) (both figures in current prices).

Reaction from stakeholders

The European Consumer Organisation ([BEUC](#)) expressed concern at the size of the (proposed) budget, saying this amount was "the minimum to ensure a visible and efficient EU policy". [ANEC](#), which represents consumers on standardisation issues, supports BEUC's call for an overview of all EU programmes promoting consumer interests.

European Parliament

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (rapporteur Robert Rochefort, ALDE, France) adopted a [report](#) on the proposal in June 2012 which highlighted the importance of vulnerable consumers and reaffirmed the role of consumer organisations. The most important issue in trilogue negotiations (in addition to the financial envelope which was tied to the MFF negotiations) related to the annual work programme. The political agreement, reached in October 2013, limited the scope of EC implementing acts under the annual work plan. It kept several key elements in the legislative act itself, where the EP is necessarily involved. The agreement would also ensure a timely mid-term review. The plenary is due to [vote](#) on the compromise on the proposed Regulation.

Author: Jenny Avery, Members' Research Service

European Parliamentary Research Service

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