

Some history

European Consumer Day

At the initiative of its president, Ms Rangoni Machiavelli, the European Economic and Social Committee organised the first European Consumer Day on 15 March 1999. This initiative was extremely successful and received the immediate support of the European Commission and successive EU presidencies.

As a result, since the first three events held in Brussels, during which issues such as food security and safe use of the Internet were debated, the European Consumer Day has often been held in the country holding the EU presidency.

The EESC is a bridge between Europe and organised civil society. In this context, the European Consumer Day provides a forum where representatives of government, EU institutions and civil society organisations can exchange their views on various problems related to consumer affairs. Every year the event gathers high-level participants to discuss topical issues, whether focusing on the ongoing Commission initiatives or signaling problems that require more attention.

International Consumer Rights Day

On 15 March 1962, President John Kennedy made a declaration before Congress, during which he called for consumer rights to be defended and set out four fundamental rights:



- > the right to safety;
- > the right to be informed;
- > the right to choose;
- > the right to be heard.

President Kennedy's words have lost none of their relevance in today's world:
"Consumers, by definition, include us all. They are the largest economic group in the economy, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Two-thirds of all spending in the economy is by consumers. But they are the only important group in the economy which is not effectively organized, and whose views are often not heard..."

The European Union has been developing a consumer protection policy since 1973. The European Economic and Social Committee has supported it since the first action programme was adopted in 1975.



European Economic and Social Committee

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European Economic and Social Committee

1999 – Brussels – European Consumer Day

Ms Emma Bonino *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection*
Mr Ulf Boge *Representing the German Presidency of the EU*
Mr Phillip Whitehead *Member of the European Parliament*
Presidency of the EESC Ms Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli

2000 – Brussels – Consumer and Consumption

Mr Armando Vara *Minister attached to the Portuguese Prime Minister – Acting President of the Consumers Council*
Mr David Byrne *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection*
Presidency of the EESC Ms Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli

2001 – Brussels – Food Quality in Europe

Ms Magda Aelvoet *Belgian Minister for Consumer Affairs, Public Health and the Environment*
Mr Axel Edling *Director-General for Consumer Affairs at the Swedish Ministry of Justice, Chairman of the Council's Consumer Affairs Group*
Ms Caroline F. Jackson *Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, European Parliament*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Göke Frerichs

2002 – Madrid – Consumer Representation

Mr Luis Blázquez Torres *Economic and Technological Innovation Regional Minister of the Community of Madrid*
Mr Julio Sánchez Fierro *Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs. President of the National Consumers' Institute*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Göke Frerichs

2003 – Thessaloniki – Consumers and the enlargement of the EU

Mr Andreas Kintis *President of the Greek Economic and Social Council*
Mr Akis Tsohatzopoulos *Greek Minister for Development*
Mr Ioannis Koukiadis *Member of the European Parliament*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Roger Briesch

2004 – Dublin – Building Consumer Confidence in the European Online Marketplace

Mr David Byrne *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection*
Mr Brian Lenihan *Irish Minister of State with responsibility for Children*
Ms Diana Wallis *Member of the European Parliament*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Roger Briesch

2005 – Brussels – Sustainable Consumption

Mr Markos Kyprianou *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection*
Mr Phillip Whitehead *Chairman of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, European Parliament*
Presidency of the EESC Ms Anne-Marie Sigmund

2006 – Vienna – Consumer Education

Ms Ursula Haubner *Austrian Federal Minister for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection*
Mr Markos Kyprianou *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection*
Presidency of the EESC Ms Anne-Marie Sigmund

2007 – Berlin – Financial Services in the European Union

Mr Walter Momper *President of the Berlin House of Representatives*
Ms Brigitte Zypries *German Minister of Justice*
Ms Meglena Kuneva *European Commissioner for Consumer Protection*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Dimitris Dimitriadis

2008 – Brussels – Consumer Redress

Mr Andrej Vizjak *Slovenian Minister of Economy*
Ms Meglena Kuneva *European Commissioner for Consumer Protection*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Dimitris Dimitriadis

2009 – Brussels – Consumer rights

Ms Meglena Kuneva *European Commissioner for Consumer Protection*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Mario Sepi

2010 – Madrid – Enforcement of consumer rights

Mr John Dalli *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy*
Ms Viviane Reding *European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship*
Mr F. M. Zapatero *Secretary General of Social Policy and Consumption, Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy*
Mr Malcolm Harbour *Chairman of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, European Parliament*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Mario Sepi

2011 – Budapest – Consumption without borders

Mr Kristóf Szatmáry *State Secretary, Ministry for National Economy*
Mr John Dalli *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy (video speech)*
Ms Viviane Reding *European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship (video speech)*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Staffan Nilsson

2012 – Copenhagen – Sustainable consumption

Ms Connie Hedegaard *European Commissioner for Climate Change (video speech)*
Mr Martin Lidegaard *Danish Minister for Climate, Energy and Building*
Mr Ole Sohn *Danish Minister for Business and Growth*
Mr Malcolm Harbour *Chairman of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, European Parliament*
Ms Jacqueline McGlade *Executive Director, European Environment Agency*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Staffan Nilsson

2013 – Brussels – Product safety and market surveillance

Mr Tonio Borg *European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy*
Mr Kieran Grace *Director for Consumer Affairs and Competition, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Government of Ireland*
Mr Malcolm Harbour *Chairman of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, European Parliament*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Staffan Nilsson

2014 – Thessaloniki – Consumer protection and social inclusion in times of crisis

Mr Yiannis Boutaris *Mayor of Thessaloniki*
Mr Nicolaos Tsemperlidis *President of the Consumers Protection Centre (KEPKA)*
Mr Theodoros Karaoglou *Minister for Macedonia and Thrace, Greece*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Henri Malosse

2015 – Brussels – New trends in consumption

Ms Věra Jourová *European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality*
Mr Pascal Durand *Member of Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, European Parliament*
Ms Zaiga Liepina *Deputy State Secretary of Ministry of Economics, Latvia*
Presidency of the EESC Mr Henri Malosse

2016 – Brussels – Better regulation for consumers?

The 18th edition of the European Consumer Day will be held in Brussels on 10 March 2016.

The objective of the conference is to analyze whether and how the Commission's intention to "better regulate" will affect consumer policy. What should be taken into account by the Commission and other institutions in implementing this new strategy? How to make sure that the consumers will not lose?