

LUNCH DEBATE

Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Competitiveness (Internal Market and Industry), 3 February 2026

Towards 2030: A Stronger, Fairer, and Safer Single Market for European Consumers

The 450 million consumers in the Single Market constitute a fundamental pillar of the European economy, contributing to 51% of the EU's GDP. Without consumers, the Single Market itself would cease to exist. It is therefore imperative to ensure a high level of consumer protection, as this directly strengthens public trust in the internal market and boosts its competitiveness. At the same time, an adequate legislative framework, combined with an effective enforcement mechanism, safeguards businesses that operate lawfully and in good faith within the rules, protecting them from traders who seek to gain an unfair competitive advantage through illicit practices.

As new commercial practices continue to emerge, and consumer habits evolve rapidly—driven in part by accelerated technological advances and shifting geopolitical conditions—the **continuous adaptation of the regulatory framework is essential** in order to guarantee effective consumer protection for the years to come.

Moreover, despite the significant benefits that the Single Market offers to consumers, **barriers that limit its full potential continue to exist, particularly in cross-border transactions**. Legal and administrative divergences, as well as practices that hinder consumers' access to goods and services across the Union, prevent them from fully reaping the benefits that the Single Market has to offer.

In this context, **on 19 November 2025, the European Commission adopted the 2030 Consumer Agenda, which will serve as the strategic plan guiding the European consumer policy until 2030** across the following key priority areas:

1. Completing the Single Market for consumers.
2. Digital fairness and consumer protection online.
3. Sustainable consumption.
4. Effective enforcement and redress.

As part of this plan, the European Commission has also announced its intention to put forward two major legislative initiatives in 2026. More specifically, the upcoming **Digital Fairness Act** is expected to strengthen the protection of consumers, including minors, in the digital environment against practices such as dark patterns, problematic practices by influencers, addictive design features, unfair personalisation that takes advantage of consumers' vulnerabilities and problematic features in digital products such as social media, video games and e-commerce. Furthermore, the Commission intends to revise the **Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation** to strengthen enforcement, protect

consumers from market players who do not respect EU rules, and shield compliant businesses from unfair competition.

Against this background, the Presidency encourages Member States to reflect on the following questions:

1. *Which remaining barriers that prevent consumers from reaping the full benefits of the Single Market do you consider to be the most crucial to address?*
2. *Regarding consumer protection in the digital environment, what areas identified in the Digital Fairness Fitness Check or elsewhere do you consider require the most immediate legislative action to better protect consumers, particularly children, from harmful practices?*

