**Law enforcement is key to consumer protection**

The gradual erosion of the purchasing power of all consumers in general has made it necessary to review the standard commercial market practices. Market distortions caused by unfair practices have led to the emergence of consumers trapped by the continued effects of the financial situation they find themselves in, including lack of freedom of choice to prevent them falling victims of exclusion.

There is a need for a high level of consumer protection. A lot depends on the empowerment of the consumer and to what extent an organisation representing consumer interests can act on behalf of consumers. The rate of effectiveness depends on:

* the strength of implementation and enforcement measures and
* the ease of access to redress and
* how far the consumer is in a position to go to Court if negotiations with seller fail

Measures should be adopted in the areas of prevention protection, mitigation and recovery from the effects of market distortions caused by unfair practices.

**At EU level** the European Institutions should ensure:

* more effective implementation of the single market rules, especially concerning product safety and market surveillance
* support, supplement and supervise Member State polices in the area of consumer protection
* monitor new barriers that have emerged such as consumers falling victim to economic violence when concluding contracts

**At national level Member states** should

* Provide consumer associations with adequate financial support, enabling them to carry out their duty to protect the rights of all consumers
* Adopt measures within their social protection systems to prevent social exclusion of consumers and of all citizens

***See EESC opinion: INT 732 Consumer vulnerability in Business practices***