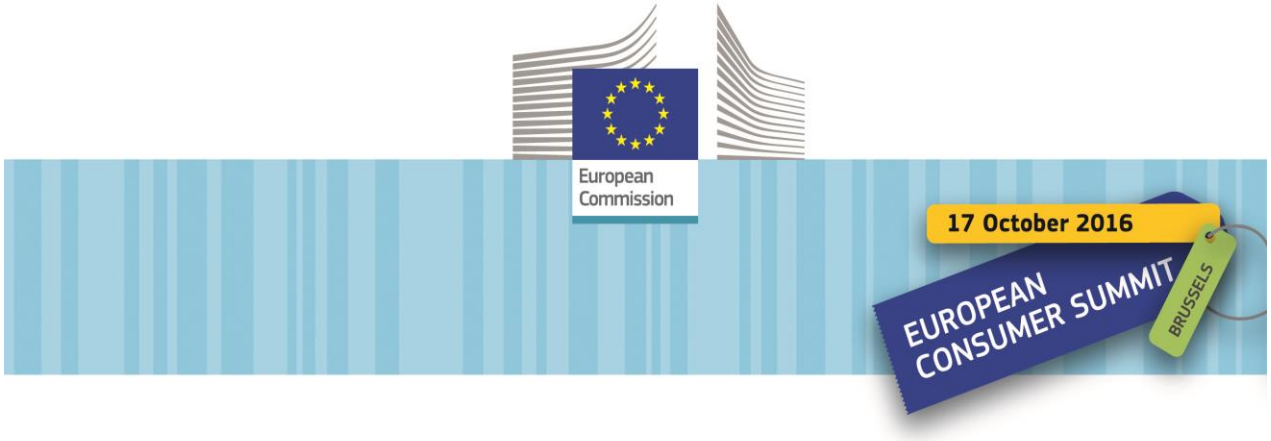

Tiina Astola, Director General, Directorate General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission

Speaking points at the European Consumer Summit (EN)

17 October 2016, Brussels

Justice
and Consumers

Tiina Astola, European Consumer Summit 2016

- Changes of business models and consumer behaviour are taking place in Europe. Markets are changing, driven by technological developments, and by new digital companies that are not necessarily located in Europe and may not even consider the EU as a key market.
- Consumers largely embrace the new developments. Today the EU is the largest e-commerce market in the world. The percentage of individuals aged between 16 and 74 having ordered goods or services over the internet, has continuously grown from 30 % in 2007 to 53 % in 2015.
- The European Commission and the Member States are making great strides in getting Europe ready to benefit from the opportunities that these changes are bringing. Last year's Consumer Summit was focused on the consumer policy of the future, in light of the Digital Single Market. A fully functional Digital Single Market could contribute around €415 billion per year to the European economy, boosting jobs, growth, competition, investment and innovation.
- Since last year's Consumer Summit, several important projects in the Digital Single Market have been brought under way: the digital contracts proposals, the copyright reform, the geoblocking proposal, the European Electronic Communications Code and the proposal for a reform of the Consumer Protection Cooperation regulation to name only a few. VP Ansip will guide you through the achievements of the Digital Market Strategy in his key address this afternoon.

- With the Fitness Check of key consumer and marketing law directives – the topic of today's Consumer Summit - the Commission wants to ensure that all relevant fairness and consumer protection rules remain fully functional, in particular in light of changing business models and consumer behaviour.
- Already, the Consumer Rights Directive of 2011 and the new Package Travel Directive specifically address the new business practices. The recently updated guidance of the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, which is now available in all languages, shows that also this Directive from 2005 remains relevant to most current issues, for example for platforms and the collaborative economy.
- However, parts of the current EU consumer and marketing law rules date back more than 20 years and we need to check what works well and what could work better and if our rules are still fit for purpose. In January we launched a comprehensive assessment of the six key EU consumer and marketing law directives, the so-called Fitness Check.
- Not only the effectiveness, but also the efficiency, coherence, relevance and added value of EU rules will be analysed. Consumer and marketing law aims to protect consumers, and where relevant, businesses, too, by laying down rules meant to ensure fairness in transactions; such regulatory framework must be logical and predictable for all. In particular, businesses should be able to understand the rules, without having to face unnecessary burdens. If they become more compliant, consumers' trust, both nationally and cross-border, will obviously increase.

- The Fitness Check will be concluded around May 2017. However, based on input received to date we are already reflecting on possible follow-up initiatives.
- For example, on the basis of feedback from different stakeholders there may be a need for simplifying the information obligations currently found in several directives.
- Also in line with the European Parliament's call for a fair environment for consumers and SMEs, we need to look at EU-wide remedies for victims of unfair commercial practices and to reinforce the existing rules on misleading advertising in business-to-business relations.
- This European Consumer Summit is a very good opportunity for us to gather further ideas and information.
- We will also share with you the first results of our own research. In each of the workshops later this morning the Commission's external experts will give an overview of their work so far.
- Above all, we are looking forward to your active participation.
- I am sure that you will have a fruitful discussion, and that you will provide food for thoughts for the ongoing assessments.