

**TRUST IN TRUSTMARKS: BREAKTHROUGH AGREEMENT BETWEEN
INDUSTRY AND CONSUMERS**

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BEUC¹ and UNICE² are pleased to announce that they have reached an agreement on a European framework for e-commerce trustmark schemes. BEUC and UNICE hope the scheme will help establish a EU-wide framework for trustmarks with the support of the European Commission. . The BEUC-UNICE agreement has been presented as joint input to the European Commission in order to feed into the Commission's developing policy on e-commerce and e-confidence. In the on-line environment, companies that want to promote consumer confidence often subscribe to trustmark schemes. Reliable trustmark schemes can help to identify enterprises that have agreed to meet certain standards or guidelines when doing business online. However, the proliferation and variety of trustmarks across Europe may confuse consumers.

The "e-Confidence initiative" launched by Commissioner Byrne in May 2000 brought together a wide group of stakeholders to seek how to stimulate consumer confidence in ecommerce. Following these discussions, BEUC and UNICE agreed to work jointly to find common ground to enhance consumer confidence in trustmark schemes across Europe.

After several months of intensive negotiations, BEUC and UNICE have agreed on a common proposal for a European framework for trustmarks schemes. The proposal comprises a set of requirements for trustmark schemes complemented by a detailed system for approval and monitoring based on the assessment by an independent third party.

According to Jim Murray, BEUC director, "the proposed scheme should enable consumers to identify more easily which websites they can trust".

Daniela Israelachwili, Acting Secretary General of UNICE believes that, "this agreement supports the desire of businesses to gain consumers' confidence online."

Both organisations believe this is a good example of dialogue between industry and consumers which could, in appropriate cases, pave the way for further cooperation in the future.

The full text of the agreement can be downloaded from the BEUC and UNICE websites, <http://www.beuc.org> and <http://www.unice.org>

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¹ The European Consumers Organisation

² Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederation of Europe, "The Voice of Business in Europe"