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<p>UNICE CHALLENGES THE COMMISSION ON A MAJOR REFORM OF EU CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW ON COMMERCIAL PRACTICES</p>

UNICE has participated in a two-day workshop organised by the Commission on 22 and 23 January in Brussels in the presence of Commissioner Byrne. The event brought together all interested stakeholders to discuss main issues of the debate on the reform of EU consumer protection.

Erik Jonnaert, chairman of UNICE's "Consumer/Marketing" working group, spoke on behalf of European business: *"we all seem aligned on what we want to achieve: an internal market for both business and consumers under simplified rules with proper and better coordinated enforcement; however we are not aligned on how and when to achieve it".*

The data shared by the Commission and especially the latest impact assessment report published are not convincing enough to build the case for a major regulatory reform. *"We do not believe that the proposed new framework directive on commercial practices will help to promote cross-border shopping or sales. Nor we believe that new rules will create more price convergence for consumers"* Erik Jonnaert said.

Most of the rules needed to create harmonisation of marketing practices in Europe with more respect for the consumer are already in place. What is needed is a review to see whether they still meet the needs of business and consumers, not a fundamental shift.

Erik Jonnaert voiced one of UNICE's major concerns that the current proposal would only add another layer of rules on top of what is already in place, thereby adding complexity without simplification, contrary to the spirit behind the governance and better regulation initiatives launched by the European Commission. Uniform interpretation and proper enforcement were also cited as crucial aspects.

UNICE Secretary General, Philippe de Buck commented afterwards that more emphasis should be placed on ensuring that what is already in place is properly implemented and enforced across the EU. This approach will allow us to create a solid basis for building consumer protection across all EU member states with special consideration for the candidate countries that are in the process of adjusting their legislation to the EU acquis.