



Consumer-business dialogue: why, how and when

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Carlos Almaraz (UNICE)

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What is UNICE?

Active in European affairs since 1958, it represents:

- more than 20 million small, medium, and large companies and
- 36 central national industrial and employers federations from 30 countries in Europe

Mission: to enhance growth and competitiveness in Europe

Dialogue is helpful: advantages

UNICE remains a key player in promotion of a culture of consumer/business dialogue

Advantages:

- Mutual understanding and productive debate
- Reflection and substantiation of views, reducing confrontation
- Sharing of expertise and information
- Identification of priorities and problems
- Space and conditions for further dialogue
- Increase consumer trust in the market
- Help public decision-making

Steps for a successful dialogue: I

1. Dialogue must remain voluntary and informal:
parties must have the right to initiate as well as the autonomy to participate in dialogue

2. Representative parties

- Democratic legitimacy
- Representativeness
- Accountability
- Independence
- Transparency
- Adequate material resources and expertise

Steps for a successful dialogue: II

- 3. Objectives, criteria for participation and procedural conditions of the dialogue should be clear from the outset*
- 4. Ad hoc dialogue focused on selected issues of common concern*
- 5. Role and, if appropriate, type of endorsement by the Commission/public authorities should be clearly determined*
- 6. Transparency throughout the process is essential*

The way forward: some ideas

Aim: *Promotion of further dialogue between consumers and business*

By whom?

- *collective task*
- *by public authorities, consumer and business organisations*
- *at EU and national (local and regional) level*

How to articulate this dialogue?

1. **Organisation of seminars, roundtables, working sessions, conferences**
2. **Involvement of business in existing consumer fora (e.g. General Assembly of Consumer Associations, EP Consumer Forum Intergroup, European Consumer Consultative Group)**
3. **Participation in multi-stakeholder projects**
4. **Regular dialogue between representative organisations (UNICE, BEUC, Consumers International, etc.)**

Succes stories:

☺ *UNICE-BEUC joint input in the Commission's "econfidence" initiative*

☺ *EU-wide guide to corrective action including recalls*

Areas for possible future dialogue:

- *consumer information and education*
- *market safety and enforcement*

Further information on UNICE's recommendations:



www.unice.org