



Volkswagen and Facebook class-actions under the spotlight: Euroconsumers' national organisations strengthen their coordinated approach at a meeting in Spain

Seville, 10th of December 2019. Euroconsumers' national organisations (OCU, Test Achats, Altroconsumo and DecoProteste) meet today in Seville to strengthen their coordinated response to the Facebook and Volkswagen scandals. The meeting will be an opportunity to reflect on the different strategies currently being implemented at a national level. From there, the member organisations will discuss potential synergies that Euroconsumers could capitalise on, through a unified voice. The ultimate goal of the meeting will be to agree on the next steps of their coordinated approach

The aforementioned national organisations are already carrying out legal proceedings in their respective countries. With regards to the Volkswagen case, member organisations are demanding a fair compensation for those affected by the German car manufacturer's diesel cheating scheme. The courts of Italy, Portugal, Belgium and Spain have all admitted the case through civil procedure. Currently, over 95,000 consumers are participating, to varying degrees, in the legal proceedings.

Nevertheless, the situation is different in every country. In Spain, OCU represents 7,200 individual consumers. In Belgium, Test Achat has successfully begun the proceedings of a class action representing, in the regime of opt out, all Belgian consumers affected. Additionally, the Belgian organisation also represents 4,000 individual consumers who purchased their vehicles before 2014. The situation is similar in Portugal, where Deco represents in the class action all the Portuguese consumers and we have more than 5000 consumers registered. In Italy, in addition to the ongoing legal proceedings joined by 78.000 consumers, Altroconsumo's actions have pressured the Italian competition authorities to levy a €5 million fine on Volkswagen.

Four years after the scandal was revealed, Euroconsumers has persevered in its defence of the victims of Dieselgate. Euroconsumers will not give up until all of the affected consumers receive fair compensation. Meanwhile, in an open letter to Ursula von der Leyen, Euroconsumers has asked the new Commission President to defend the European consumers affected by Dieselgate and to pressure the Volkswagen group to finally pay back what it owes to the European people.

In the Facebook case, the surfacing of the Cambridge Analytica scandal in the spring of 2018 led Euroconsumers' national organisations to begin the proceedings of four class actions in Belgium, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Euroconsumers is demanding that Facebook pay €200 to every user whose data was mismanaged. Up until this point, over 250,000 consumers have signed up to our class actions. Euroconsumers' organisations believe that consumers deserve a far greater level of respect and acknowledgement given their central role in the data economy; consumers that are lied to must be compensated. The class action has been accepted by the Spanish courts, while the case is pending in the other countries.

For Ileana Izverniceanu, Communications director at OCU "it is an honour for our organisation to be part of the Euroconsumers group. Sharing our experiences as member organisations allows us to take advantage of the synergies produced by our common work. All of this makes us much stronger in our duties and enables us to better serve consumers at a local level, in this case, in Seville." For OCU, says Ileana Izverniceanu "achieving a close relationship between members is a priority, hence the meeting in Seville".

Euroconsumers, the world's leading consumer cluster in terms of innovative information, personalised services and defence of consumer's rights, represent over 1 million families across Europe. Marco Pierani director of Public Affairs and Media Relations at Euroconsumers says that "Modern and pragmatic consumers organisations such as Euroconsumers always look beyond the defence of the status quo for consumers; thus, we interpret our mission from a dynamic point of view. We understand that protecting the economic interests of consumers in the market is a task that must be approached from a new perspective, which places consumers at the centre of growth and development. Even though we do not hesitate to intervene in cases of clear and unacceptable violation, as was the case in our class action lawsuits against Facebook and Volkswagen, we also strive to work with the world's largest brands to help them elevate the level of consumer protection, especially in the digital economy; improve the design of their goods and services and strengthen consumer empowerment."

In order to discuss the findings of the Euroconsumers gathering, OCU has organised a public meeting at "La Buhaira" civic centre, in Seville, in which representatives of the City and Region administrations, other consumer-related entities and OCU's local members will participate.