

# euroconsumers forum 2021

## consumers in the air

Responsible and Sustainable Innovation in the post-Covid Economy

2 December 2021

Good afternoon, good morning in Brazil, ladies and gentlemen. It is my pleasure to welcome you at the 3rd edition of Euroconsumers' Annual International Forum.

I had looked forward to welcoming you in person here in Brussels. But unfortunately Covid decided otherwise. The deteriorating situation in Belgium forced us to go fully digital in Europe. As safety always comes first.

But this will not prevent us from flying high today. Thanks to an innovative piece of live streaming technology, we are fully on air.

We are connected today with our Brazilian colleagues of Proteste who luckily can still meet in person and are broadcasting live from the Casa Petra theater in Sao Paulo. A warm welcome to Brazil and the Mercosur countries!

I also want to greet the colleagues from Altroconsumo in Italy, Deco Proteste in Portugal, OCU in Spain and Test-Achats in Belgium. They are connected remotely - you have just seen their Country Managers - very much alive and kicking.

If I would need to capture this year's Euroconsumers Forum in one single word, it would be DIALOGUE:

A dialogue between digital and physical, leading up to this hybrid event. A dialogue between all kinds of stakeholders hosted here today.

But above all we at Euroconsumers consider dialogue as the KEY ingredient to be able to rebuild a healthy post-Covid market.

We aim for a deep, serious, but also inspiring and innovative dialogue.

Many people claim to dialogue. Political and business leaders connect with their stakeholders, voters, clients, supporters and opponents. The same can be said for consumer organizations, like ours, when bridging between consumers, regulators, and market players. But are we really listening to each other? With the real intention of working together and creating solutions?

Covid-19 confronted us with new enigmas to the global economy. It also revealed the fragility of some business models and outdated economic and political arrangements.

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Global value chains have been turned upside down, consumer behaviors and expectations have changed, and companies worldwide need to adapt quickly to different market realities.

There's no denying we need to explore new forms and formats to improve consumption relations. And it's clear we will not reach these new standards if we just go back to the usual, with the same pre-covid approach and attitude.

What we need is responsible and sustainable innovation. However, this is not something you can just create in a lab or with product design hubs. It starts within our own mindset.

I am convinced that to improve the game, consumer organizations must be part of it. Indeed we denounce and claim, but we can also support and collaborate. That is why we as Euroconsumers are reaching out to collaborate and co-create together with leading companies.

Some call this bold and daring. And it is!

Because first of all there is no well-established tradition, there is no culture of stable trust between companies and consumer organizations.

Some might perceive this as if we were betraying our roots. However I would like to remind that at the very roots of the consumer movement lies exactly the willingness and absolute dedication to improve the lives of all consumers as much as possible.

Does this mean we forget about legislation? No. We keep pushing for trustworthy and future-proof legal frameworks.

Does this mean we abandon going to court? No. We do and we will whenever dialogue and co-creation fail to deliver.

But we are convinced that we can deliver even more value to consumers when in parallel we can build solutions together with market players. In a frank, open and respectful dialogue. Leading up to initiatives that are consumer-friendly by design.

That's exactly why we are here today. That's why I am so proud to welcome many outstanding leaders and key stakeholders from Europe and South America.

Yes, this is an open invitation, both courageous and ambitious: "let's work together". Let's not wait for the next pandemic to build a fair and more resilient economy. Let's push for responsible and sustainable innovation. Together.

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Thank you very much, enjoy the day, enjoy the journey!

And I hand over to Katrina.

Ivo Mechels

CEO of Euroconsumers

