

Euroconsumers Forum 2021 Executive Summary

This year's Forum took place in person in Brazil and online in Europe, with proceedings in both parts of the world broadcasting simultaneously. More than 400 participants gathered online to listen and interact with the 69 distinguished speakers from two continents. Such scale allowed us to capture and convey the breadth of consumer experiences, and ideas for the future, with viewers able to switch between European and Brazilian channels.

Euroconsumers believe the power of dialogue between all stakeholders is vital to meet the challenges of today, and tomorrow. There was no shortage of dialogue and ideas at this year's Forum, alongside the partnerships of some of the greatest global market players, like Google, Amazon and Meta, and the local partnerships of Mercado Livre, from Brazil and Visa, from Spain, the Forum received the patronage of both the European Commissioner for Justice and Consumers and the Parliament of Mercosur, a welcomed recognition of the hard and professional work of the many people from two continents, who made this event once again possible.

The three main trends which we have consistently reported in the debates are the following a) Euroconsumers is growing with determination its relevance in the global markets to contribute to rebuild a more balanced and sustainable economy, in order to deliver locally added value to the consumers, b) we believe that consumer protection cannot be limited to safeguarding what already exists but that - especially at this stage - we need to dream of a better future and help to build it, together with responsible market players,) we claim that consumer protection should also be a lever for innovation. There is indeed no real innovation if part of the added value is not passed on to as many consumers as possible.

Last year, despite the COVID-19 crisis, we enlarged the event and developed a brand-new format allowing the audience to keep track of 5 different activities displayed in distinct channels that were simultaneously visible in a very original streaming platform. For 2021 we had planned to present a hybrid format and have both a physical audience in Brussels and São Paulo and transmit over the internet too. Once again, COVID-19 prevented the Belgian public from attending in person, but once more we found a way of innovating, by connecting 3 more countries from the Mercosur with Brazil (Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay), dividing the Forum into 2 hubs with 4 simultaneous channels. We must confess now that reshaping in a few days a big event designed to be in person in Brussels into a fully digital event, was not exactly a walk in the park. But we did not want to give up in the face of the challenge. We need to keep on innovating, even in the middle of this crisis and renewed restrictions. While we apologized for not optimal technological conditions that did not always allow participants to enjoy the best experience we wanted to offer on the chosen platform, we are now happy to have made the contents [fully available online](#).

Although the EC Forum is a global initiative, it takes into account the specific issues of the countries where Euroconsumers has physical headquarters: Belgium, Italy, Spain,

Portugal and Brazil. This rich geographical diversity contributes to the Forum's program, but not only that. Euroconsumers is made of the strengths of its 5 national organizations and vice versa, all together we constitute a unique organization; a leader in our sector. We are indeed different from the umbrella organizations we are proudly part of (BEUC and Consumers International), exactly because we are not an umbrella network, but a tight international organization, with a unique mission, internal economies of scale and exactly the same vision in terms of open dialogue with market players.

The Euroconsumers International Forum, held annually, embodies the Euroconsumers vision of a shift from consumers being viewed as weak subjects needing protection, to consumers driving development and their future in the great time of change we live through. International consumer organizations should move beyond the idea of entrepreneurial freedom and consumer rights locked in opposition, to consumer rights and consumerism being an engine of innovation, business, and trade as we undergo the green and digital transitions.

Consumer organizations are indeed important pillars of our society and our biggest challenge should be to ensure that an increasingly large number of consumers and citizens in the next 5 years can truly benefit from the spread of digital technology. This can be achieved by maximizing our power of dialogue with institutions and market players, and this will lead us towards a better society and a more balanced and sustainable market.