

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA
STANDING COMMITTEE
OF THE EFTA STATES

4/CR/W/017
3 July 2003
Brussels

WORKING GROUP ON CONSUMER PROTECTION

**EEA EFTA COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A DECISION OF THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING A
GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR FINANCING COMMUNITY ACTIONS IN
SUPPORT OF CONSUMER POLICY FOR THE YEARS 2004 TO 2007**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EEA EFTA States welcome the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a general framework for financing Community actions in support of consumer policy for the years 2004 to 2007. After having participated in the first legal framework for Community activities in favour of consumers 1999-2003 (Decision 283/1999/EC), the EEA EFTA States support the new elements introduced in the second framework and believe that this will increase the effectiveness and impact of the projects funded under the programme. The EEA EFTA States are pleased to note the mentioning of the EEA EFTA States in the preamble of the proposal and believe that participation in the programme should further strengthen and broaden co-operation within the framework of the Community's activities in the field of consumer protection. The EEA EFTA States are undertaking the necessary preparations to participate in the programme and urge the actors concerned to adopt it as soon as possible in order to ensure timely incorporation into the EEA Agreement.

1. The Commission adopted a proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a general framework for financing Community actions in support of consumer policy for the years 2004 to 2007 (COM (2003) 44 final on 31 January 2003). This proposal is the second legal framework for expenditure on activities in several areas of health and consumer protection. The EEA EFTA States participated in the first legal framework covered by Decision 283/1999/EC establishing a general framework for Community activities in favour of consumers 1999-2003 in accordance with the provisions set out in the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA).

2. The EEA EFTA States welcome in general the proposal for the new programme and believe that it incorporates the relevant elements of the experiences made in the present programme. They support the basic principle of linking it to political objectives

as formulated in the Consumer Policy Strategy 2002 to 2006. In their view, the closer link between policy and spending should result in a more efficient programme.

3. Regarding the projects co-financed under the present Article 2c, the Commission's report on the implementation of actions under the previous programme pointed out that the small size and short duration of the projects often resulted in disproportionately high administrative costs and a limited impact of the projects. The EEA EFTA States fully agree with this view and the amendments proposed to address this discrepancy. They believe that under this proposed programme there will be more flexibility in project financing and that the project cycle will be longer, i.e., every two years. The principle that financial contributions for specific projects will in principle be 50%, and in no case exceed 70%, seems adequate.

Comment [NC1]: I think that I would use "Concerning" or "Regarding" rather than "

4. The EEA EFTA States attach great importance to consumer participation in standardisation, and thus recognise the reasons for allowing contributions of up to 95% for the functioning of the European consumer organisations representing the interests of consumers in standardisation for products and services at Community level.

5. Concerning the contribution to the functioning of European consumer organisations, the EEA EFTA States would underline that the beneficiaries should be independent bodies that have consumer interests as their primary objectives, as set out in the proposed decision and in line with the practice established over the last years under the existing programme. Similarly, and as provided for in the former programme, they believe that the principle that such organisations must have member organisations in at least half of the Member States should be kept.

6. The EEA EFTA States welcome the new budget line for joint actions, in particular in that it prepares a basis for permanent contributions to the important missions carried out by the EEJ-Net and the Euroguichets.

7. The introduction of an annual work programme, which i.a. identifies areas that can be included in calls for tenders for specific projects, is welcomed. Along with other elements of the proposal, the EEA EFTA States consider that this should enable the Advisory Committee to play a more important role in the operation of the programme.