

The consumer representation and protection work has been evolving, over the last 20 years, in many aspects: listening, observing, detecting and understanding the needs and expectations of the citizens, but also proposing solutions, dialoguing and bringing back consumer problems to the political level, is a commitment that requires continuously changing approaches. We carry out this job, at individual and collective protection level, with the same responsibility as always, but we must use different tools and strategies, in a flexible and adaptive manner.

The challenges for the consumer movement are increasingly influenced by the Digital Market, the transition to the Green Economy, the Globalization: such new trends call for a new legislative framework, as well as for a new development model, more sustainable, more inclusive, and also fairer. A global change in consumers' mindset and in companies' governance is needed.

As for consumers, we work for supporting the uptake of the Agenda 2030 and its principles in the everyday life: more than 20 years ago we started talking not only about rights, but also about duties and responsibility (thus shaping the critical and socially responsible consumption): consumer choices and behaviours strongly impact the market dynamics and the environment (the latter in terms of resources and energy consumption, CO2 emissions, waste production, polluting by-products).

As for companies, we've been asking for a larger attitude to dialogue and collaboration, and we can say we did it successfully, since the consumer movement is becoming a key stakeholder for those carrying out corporate social responsibility practices.

The most vulnerable groups of the population are suffering new forms of poverty and exclusion, e.g. the digital divide and the energy poverty, but also unhealthy feeding habits and lifestyles. We should do any possible effort to stem the worsening inequalities that hinder the real progress of our society, by providing devoted assistance services, education projects, support measures.

Besides, of course, continuing to provide the households with free services of complaint assistance against traders, we delivered a large amount of information and education on the web site and social media, also with innovative tools such as webinars, video-lessons and educational videos or tutorials, safety tips, thematic guides and brochures, news and newsletters, a monthly magazine.

We also negotiated additional commitment by companies, going further than law compliance, in terms of transparency, consumer information, contract fairness, and alternative dispute resolution by conciliation agreements (97% of disputes settled by bi-lateral conciliation procedures are in favour of complaining consumers). We encouraged companies to uptake sustainability best practices and to inform consumers with true, verifiable and accurate information about this (against green washing) and we participate in evaluation and assessment initiatives with big umbrella organisations gathering civil society members. Finally, we support the valorisation of high quality made in Italy productions, we are very active in campaigning against counterfeit products and piracy, we promote green mobility (electric vehicles) and the right to repair for domestic appliances.

Even before the Ukraine war and the current energy crisis, we carried out many projects to promote renewable energy sources, energy communities, energy efficiency measures and support actions against energy poverty.

We've always been paying attention to the digital transition and its implications for consumers' and citizens' rights, towards the public Administration and the economic operators: in this framework, we promoted privacy protection, a fair data driven economy, well-conceived and watched AI algorithms, equal access to services, etc.

We produced dozens of position papers, to ask the Government or sector Authorities to set up policies addressing every kind of inequalities and lack of equal opportunities, thus favoring the most disadvantaged social classes in the distribution of bonuses and incentives.

We carried out many social research programmes, law impact evaluations, lobbying initiatives and social education projects; we cooperated with Universities and research centres, we are member of several international organisations and participate in many Committees and Work Groups both at national and EU level.

We run the European Consumer Centre Network ECC Italy since 2006, to protect and to assist consumers in cross-border purchases, thus contributing to build confidence in the EU Single Market and in the European Union in general.

Such a big effort is achieving good results, thanks to the commitment of hundreds of operators and volunteers, working in the central and local offices of the Association. We hope to keep on growing and strengthening our reputation, enlarging the fields we deal with and fostering areal consumer-centric economic and social system.

*The President Adiconsum  
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