Commission’s expert groups

The BEUC experience

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About BEUC

- European Federation of Consumer Organisations
- Founded in 1962
- Currently 44 members from 31 European countries
- Objective to promote consumer interests in EU policies
- Currently member of 48 expert groups, working groups, consultative groups, stakeholder groups, observatories, platforms, High level groups, etc., ranging from EMA patients and consumers working group to SEPA Council
- Our motto: better absent than irrelevant.
No Vision

- No common approach towards experts groups within the Commission
  - Composition
  - Mandate
  - Working methods
  - Funding of participation
  - Outcome expected
  - Effective use of results of works of expert groups
  - Possibility to express minority position
  - Genuine wish to hear a divergent view
Our (good) reasons to be frustrated

- A lot of pressure put on us to participate
- Selection of experts not representative of the best consumer experts
- Late notice of meetings, agenda and documents: no consultation of members possible, availability of experts not guaranteed
- Excessive formalism in terms of participation: substitutes/observers not allowed to speak
- Mission costs for non-Brussels experts are not funded systematically
Our (good) reasons to be frustrated

- Time spent on work not remunerated
- EU push for consensus: pressure on us to accept and compromise
- Minority position not made available in final report
- Results not used by the EU when not appropriate with policy
- Chair from industry
Some reasons to be despaired

✔ European Consumer Consultative Group (DG SANCO)
  • Only one way information
  • No consultation in some major files
  • No account taken of opinions
  • Very bad way of spending public money

✔ Stakeholder groups of the European Financial Supervision Authorities (EBA, EIOPA and ESMA)

✔ Stakeholders’ dialogue on illegal up- and down-loading (DG MARKT)
Lessons we learnt: better absent than irrelevant

- More influence being out than in: better absent than irrelevant

- Criteria for participation set and to be ticked off before participating
  - Chair must be the Commission or another EU authority
  - Balanced participation
  - Travel costs reimbursed
  - Minority opinion expressable
Some reasons for hope

- DG MARKT: Simplification and rebalancing of expert groups working on financial services since arrival of Commissioner Barnier
- EC/ECB: SEPA Council
- EC/BEUC/EBIC work on transparency of bank fees (for working method, not for outcomes)
- EU Ecodesign Consultation Forum
- The European Medicines Agency: the Patients' and Consumers' Working Party
- DG INFSO: Internet of Things Expert Group
BEUC Requests

- Less expert groups (see DG MARKT initiative in the Financial Services area) and maybe smaller expert groups
- Rebalancing composition of expert groups
- Strict criteria to be appointed in a ‘personal capacity’
- Adopting a very good policy on conflict of interest
- Allocating financial compensation for the participation of some NGOs’ representatives (see: FSUG, Patients' and Consumers' Working Party and EU Ecodesign Consultation Forum)
- Improving rules of procedure: clear and not biased mandate, appointment of the chair, negotiated agenda, expression of minority voices
- More transparency: membership information, agendas, minutes, participants’ submissions and temporary reports should be available on-line
www.beuc.eu

EC register for interest representatives:
identification number 9505781573-45