

# Commission's expert groups

## The BEUC experience

Anne FILY  
Head of Economic and Legal Department



European  
Parliament

Brussels

6 December 2011

# 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](http://www.beuc.eu)

EC register for interest representatives :  
identification number 9505781573-45

