

Consumer Protection

What do I need to know before I start?

Since the 1970s, a number of laws were adopted by the EU institutions, in agreement and accordance with Member States' national laws, aimed at the protection of consumer rights in the Community. Although the Treaties of Rome introduced as a Community objective the improvement of people's living and working conditions, only limited references were made to consumers and the protection of their rights. Measures towards increasing the protection of consumers began with the Council of Ministers issuing a Resolution of 14 April 1975 on a preliminary program for a common consumer protection and information policy (OJ 1975 C 92/1) in the EEC. The Resolution set out five basic consumer rights; (a) the right to protection of health and safety; (b) the right to protection of economic interests; (c) the right to redress; (d) the right to information and education; and (e) the right of representation, that is, the right to be heard. This program paved the way to the introduction of new directives and regulations in the consumer protection area, based upon Article 100 of the EEC Treaty and requiring unanimous decision among Member States. The first consumer protection directives were adopted in 1985, namely the Directive on Product Liability and that on Doorstep Selling. The Maastricht Treaty (1992; Art. 129a) introduced a specific Community competence in developing common consumer protection policies and proposing new EU legislation in this regard, and a Consumer Policy Directorate was established in 1995 within the European Commission. Today, EU consumer policy aims to protect consumer rights through legislation, to guarantee the safety of products sold within the single market as well as to inform consumers' choices.

Languages: Please be aware that although most documents available in our Archives are in French, English or German, some may be in other EU languages. In order to check the languages used in a fonds, please refer to our holdings page. Additionally, some fonds may contain a few files in a language other than those listed in the description.

What can I find at the HAEU?

Relating specifically to the development of a common consumer policy, the fonds available at the HAEU are:

1) *EU institutions*

[ECSC High Authority](#)

For early initiatives aimed at the protection of consumers in the Community, you may look into the fonds of the ECSC High Authority, which includes a section '[Division Travail et Affaires sociales](#)' concerned with social issues including employment, health and safety.

[Council of Ministers](#)

In the HAEU inventory, matters related to consumer protection policy discussed in the Council of Ministers are assembled in the section '*Activités de la CEE: Politique sociale*' or simply '*Question Sociale*'. The fonds of the Council of Ministers being organized by years, you need to browse the fonds of each separate year to access the specific section pertaining to the Community's social policies (example for the year [1958](#) and [1972](#)).

[Commission](#)

In the Commission's fonds, you will find a specific section for [DGV Affaires sociales](#), which is concerned among others with the development of [consumer protection policies](#) in the Community. In addition, you might want to look into the sections related to the [Secretariat-General](#) and the [Cabinets](#).

[European Parliament](#)

In the European Parliament's fonds, you can find relevant information on the development of common consumer policies in the Community, and on the role played by the Parliament in this context. For the Community's early initiatives in consumer protection policy, you may consult the fonds of the Common Assembly, which includes a section on the [parliamentary commission for social affairs](#). Concerning the early Parliament, you may consult the reports and proceedings of the [parliamentary commission for the environment, public health and consumer protection](#), and that for [health protection](#), closely related to consumer protection. You may also consult the reports and proceedings of the several parliamentary commissions for social affairs and public health ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)). As to the Parliament's [first](#), [second](#) and [third](#) legislature, the fonds of the European Parliament includes the proceedings and reports of the parliamentary commission for the environment, public health and consumer protection (for the [1st](#), [2nd](#), and [3rd](#) legislature). Moreover, many parliamentary questions pertained to the protection of consumers and to their dissatisfaction ([example](#)). It is advisable to search the database directly and filter the results to limit the search to the Parliament's fonds to access relevant parliamentary questions more easily.

[European Court of Auditors](#)

You might find it interesting to consult ECA's [annual reports](#) (1977-1997), [special reports](#) (1978-1991), [opinions](#) (1977-1997), [internal documents](#), including [information documents](#) (1977-1994) and [working documents](#) (1977-1994).

[European Court of Justice](#)

According to the nature of the ECJ, this fonds includes documents dealing with judicial affairs, namely procedure dossiers and sentences. You might find it interesting to consult some of its dossiers dealing with consumer rights and their protection, such as the [affair 29/72](#) related to the fees for sanitary controls and the [affair 39/73](#) concerning phytosanitary control.

[Economic and Social Committee](#)

Similarly to the fonds of the Council of Ministers, the inventory is organized by years, each includes a special section for social affairs ([example](#) for 1962) in which consumer protection issues are discussed. The fonds also includes some [files](#) related to the development of a common information and consumer protection policy in the 1970s.

2) *Corporate bodies*

[European Free Trade Association \(EFTA\)](#)

The fonds of the EFTA includes a file concerning [measures for consumer safety](#), as well as the reports and agendas of meetings of the [Group of Government Experts on Consumer Protection](#), which can be useful to understand the development of common consumer protection policies in Europe also beyond the context of the European Communities.

[GPSE](#), [GRAEL](#), [PPE](#) (Political Groups)

It might prove useful to consult the fonds of these three political groups of the European Parliament to better understand the development of various social policies in the Community including the field of consumer protection, as well as the role of political groups and of the Parliament in this process.

3) *Individuals*

[Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza](#)

Mugnozza's private fonds includes files pertaining to the development of a common policy in the Community to benefit [consumers and guarantee their protection](#) during his time as [Vice-President of the EEC Commission](#).

[Emile Noel](#)

In his private fonds, you can find some files on the work of the [DG services for the Environment and Consumer Protection](#). You may also consult the specific section related to [social affairs](#), as well as his notes on the European Council and Commission's meetings, and documents related to the [work of the different DGs](#) of the Commission, during his time as Secretary-General.

[Mauro Cappelletti](#)

Cappelletti's private fonds comprises various [files](#) on consumer protection, but several of them (example [1](#), [2](#)) are not available for public consultation until January 2035.

[Michel Richonnier](#)

It can be very useful to consult Richonnier's fonds, which includes various files concerned with his work in the [DG for social affairs](#). It is particularly relevant to consult the section pertaining to the promotion of European cooperation in the field of [health](#), which is closely related to consumer safety and protection and includes a [report](#) prepared for the DG for Health and Consumer Protection of the European Commission.

4) *Oral History*

In addition, take a look at the [oral history holdings](#), which comprise numerous interviews of European politicians and officials, including important figures and officials active in the promotion and protection of consumers' rights. Below, you can find a list of persons interviewed who addressed the topic of consumer protection policy developed at the European level.

[Karl-Heinz Narjes](#)

[John Braun](#)

[Ludwig Krämer](#)

[Carmen Díez De Rivera Icaza](#)

[Michel Carpentier](#)

[Peter Stief-Tauch](#)

[Malcolm Harbour](#)

[Stanley Johnson](#)