

# [Bridging the gap between policies and reality: FRA's Fundamental Rights Report 2017](#)

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## [Digital Single Market: EU negotiators agree on the WiFi4EU initiative](#)

The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission reached tonight a political agreement on the WiFi4EU initiative and its funding which supports installing free public Wi-Fi hotspots in local communities across the EU: in public squares, piazzas, parks, hospitals and other public spaces.

As [stated by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker](#), the [WiFi4EU](#) initiative will contribute to the vision of having *“every European village and every city with free wireless internet access around the main centres of public life by 2020.”*

Vice-President in charge of the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** welcomed tonight's agreement and said: “The Digital Single Market strategy aims to build a fully connected Europe where everyone has access to high-quality digital networks. The WiFi4EU initiative will improve connectivity in particular where access to the internet is limited. WiFi4EU is a welcome first step, but much more needs to be done to achieve high-speed connectivity across the whole EU territory – such as improving Europe-wide coordination of spectrum *and stimulating investments in the high-capacity networks that Europe needs.*”

The political agreement includes a commitment by the three institutions to ensure that an overall amount of €120 million shall be assigned to fund equipment for public free Wi-Fi services in 6,000 to 8,000 municipalities in

all Member States. The specific sources of the funding will be finalised in the ongoing legislative discussions on the review of the current Multiannual Financial Framework programme. Local authorities will be able to apply for funding once the system is set up.

In practice, local public authorities (municipalities or groups of municipalities) wishing to offer Wi-Fi in areas where a similar public or private offer does not yet exist will be able to apply for funding via a simple and non-bureaucratic process. A grant allocated in the form of vouchers will be used to purchase and install state-of-the-art equipment, i.e. local wireless access points, while the public authority will cover the running costs of the connection itself.

## **Background**

The Commission reviewed recently its [Digital Single Market strategy](#) – one of the top priorities of the Juncker Commission – taking stock of the progress made, but also calling on co-legislators to swiftly act on all proposals already presented. The EU has been quick to achieve important agreements on the [end of roaming charges](#) on 15 June 2017 for all travellers in the EU, on the [portability of content](#) which will allow as of early 2018 Europeans to travel with the films, the music, the video games or the e-books they have subscribed to at home or on the [release of the 700 MHz band](#) for the development of 5G and new online services. On remaining proposals, the final outcome is now negotiated in the European Parliament and the Council.

## **For More Information**

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# **High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini visits Arg**

Bilateral political and economic relations, as well as support to regional integration and to multilateralism were at the core of the High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini's second visit to Argentina, which took place today. HR/VP Mogherini met in Buenos Aires with President Mauricio Macri and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Susanna Malcorra.

The European Union and Argentina are strong partners in promoting

multilateralism in the current international context, a rules-based world order, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the implementation of the Paris agreement on climate change, as well as free and fair trade. The meetings reconfirmed their shared commitment to the UN system to ensure peace, security and sustainable development.

Mogherini stressed with both interlocutors that Argentina can count on the European Union's support during its G20 presidency and in preparation of the WTO ministerial meeting in December.

During the meetings, developments in Latin America were addressed. On Venezuela, Mogherini reaffirmed the EU's support to regional initiatives and appreciated Argentina's engagement to stop the violence, foster political dialogue and promote reconciliation among Venezuelans, in compliance with the constitutional norms and democratic procedures.

Mogherini praised Argentina as the *pro tempore* Mercosur presidency, in particular in advancing negotiations on a new EU-Mercosur trade agreement. Rapid and good progress has been made so far, and both sides agreed to maintain their focus on shared objectives so as to overcome any remaining obstacles and to reach a deal by the end of the year.

Mogherini used the opportunity to congratulate Minister for Foreign Affairs Malcorra on her new position and thanked her for her personal friendship and excellent cooperation since December 2015, which has boosted both bilateral and inter-regional relations with the EU. The EU congratulates newly nominated Foreign Minister of Argentina, Jorge Faurie and looks forward to continuing our close partnership.

The High Representative/Vice-President also had informal exchanges with Senate Provisional President, Federico Pinedo, Vice Foreign Minister, Pedro Villagra and members of the Argentinean Foreign Policy think tank CARI, presided by former Foreign Minister Adalberto Rodriguez Giavarini.

Before leaving for Chile, Mogherini had a meeting with EU Member States ambassadors' at the EU Delegation.

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**European Commission lays the ground  
work for future action in EU consumer**

# Law

The results show that while European consumers already benefit from strong consumer rights, there is room for improvement for instance when it comes to enforcing these rights or making them fit for the digital age. An update of the rules should also ensure more legal clarity for businesses operating cross-border.

Věra **Jourová**, EU Commissioner for Justice and Consumers said: *“European consumers are amongst the best protected in the world. They benefit from strong consumer rights whether they buy in their own country or cross-border. We need to make sure that these rights can also be properly enforced and are brought up-to-speed with the digital age. With the upcoming proposals we will make sure these rights become a reality online and offline. ”*

EU consumer rules have contributed to improving consumer confidence: in 2016, nearly 6 in 10 consumers (58%) felt they are well protected when buying something online from another Member State, compared to only one in ten (10%) in 2003. 7 in 10 people reported that they have benefitted from the right to a free-of-charge minimum two year guarantee for goods.

## **Issues identified**

The Commission analysis identifies the following issues that should be addressed:

- **Limited redress possibilities:** Few countries offer consumers an efficient civil law remedy in case they were victims of unfair commercial practices. In some countries, business and consumer organisations cannot bring injunctions to signal a wrongdoing. Member States continue to have diverse approaches on collective redress.
- **Diverging enforcement across Member States:** The level of sanctions for the infringement of EU consumer law by a company varies significantly between Member States, resulting in different levels of consumer protection and a lack of level playing field for businesses.
- **Rights not fully adapted to the digital world:** When signing up to non-paying online services (e.g. cloud services, social media), consumers don't benefit from the same pre-contractual information rights or the right of withdrawal from the contract, as they would when paying for such services. Consumers also experience a lack of transparency of online intermediaries, which makes it difficult for consumers to claim their rights.
- **Low awareness of consumer rights:** Only four in ten people (41%) knew they have the right to a free repair or replacement if their goods are defective and only one third (33%) knew that they do not need to pay for or return products they did not ask for.

## **How will the Commission take this forward?**

The Commission will examine how to follow up in the following areas of EU

Consumer rules:

- **granting victims of unfair commercial practices the right to contractual and/or extra-contractual remedies** (such as right to terminate the contract and to receive a refund of the price paid);
- **extending protection under the Consumer Rights Directive** (e.g. pre-contractual information and right of withdrawal) to online services for which the consumers pay with their data;
- making sure that consumers **using online platforms** (marketplaces) are informed whether they are buying from a professional trader or another consumer and whether they benefit from consumer protection rules;
- strengthening and better harmonising the **level of sanctions** for breaches to consumer law;
- **improving the injunctions procedure** for the protection of consumers;
- Analysing the results of the ongoing assessment of **collective redress** across the EU.

## Next steps

To examine the opportunity for possible changes in legislation, the Commission will in 2017:

- publish an “Inception Impact Assessment” outlining the scope and options for future legislative action;
- hold an online public consultation;
- prepare an impact assessment, and, based on its findings, present a legislative proposal.

## Ongoing Commission action

The Commission is already working on updating some of the Consumer rules:

The Commission updated its [guidance on the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive](#), which is the legal basis for many coordinated consumer rights enforcement actions at EU level.

The Commission proposed modern digital contract rules ([IP/15/6264](#)), which, once adopted, will provide clear rules to better protect consumer when they buy digital content. It will also align the common rules regarding remedies.

Regarding better enforcement, the Commission made a proposal to strengthen the cooperation between national consumer protection bodies (CPC) and the Commission ([IP/16/1887](#)).

## Background

As part of the Commission’s [Regulatory Fitness and Performance \(REFIT\)](#) programme, the Commission regularly reviews EU laws to identify excessive regulatory burdens, overlaps, gaps, inconsistencies and/or obsolete measures which may have appeared over time.

In this framework, the Commission assessed six horizontal consumer and marketing directives: the [Unfair Commercial Practices Directive](#) (UCPD), the

[Sales and Guarantees Directive](#), the [Unfair Contract Terms Directive](#), the [Price Indication Directive](#), the [Misleading and Comparative Advertising Directive](#), the [Injunctions Directive](#). The analysis consisted of a survey of more than 23 000 consumers from across the EU, mystery shopping exercises, interviews with national consumer bodies (organisations, business associations, authorities, ministries) and behavioural experiments

In parallel and linked to the Fitness Check, the Commission carried out an evaluation of the [Consumer Rights Directive](#) as required by its Article 30.

#### **For more information**

[Factsheet](#): EU consumer law

Executive summary of the [Fitness Check report](#)

Executive summary of the [evaluation of the Consumer Rights Directive](#)

The full reports and the supporting external studies published today are available [here](#)

[EU consumer rights and law](#)

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## **Zusammenschlüsse: Kommission genehmigt die Übernahme des Reaktorgeschäfts der Areva-Gruppe durch EDF**

27/05/2017 – Enlargement, external relations and trade / Institutional affairs / Security and defence

On 26 and 27 May 2017, Italy hosted the meeting of the G7 leaders. The summit focused on foreign policy, the global economy and the reduction of inequalities, and the migration crisis.