



BEUC The European
Consumer
Organisation

The Consumer Voice in Europe

UNWRAPPED

What **consumers** say about safe and sustainable food packaging

Christiane Seidel (vzbv) and Pelle Moos (BEUC)

28 April 2023 – Working Group on Food Contact Materials



BEUC IS PROUD OF ITS MEMBERS





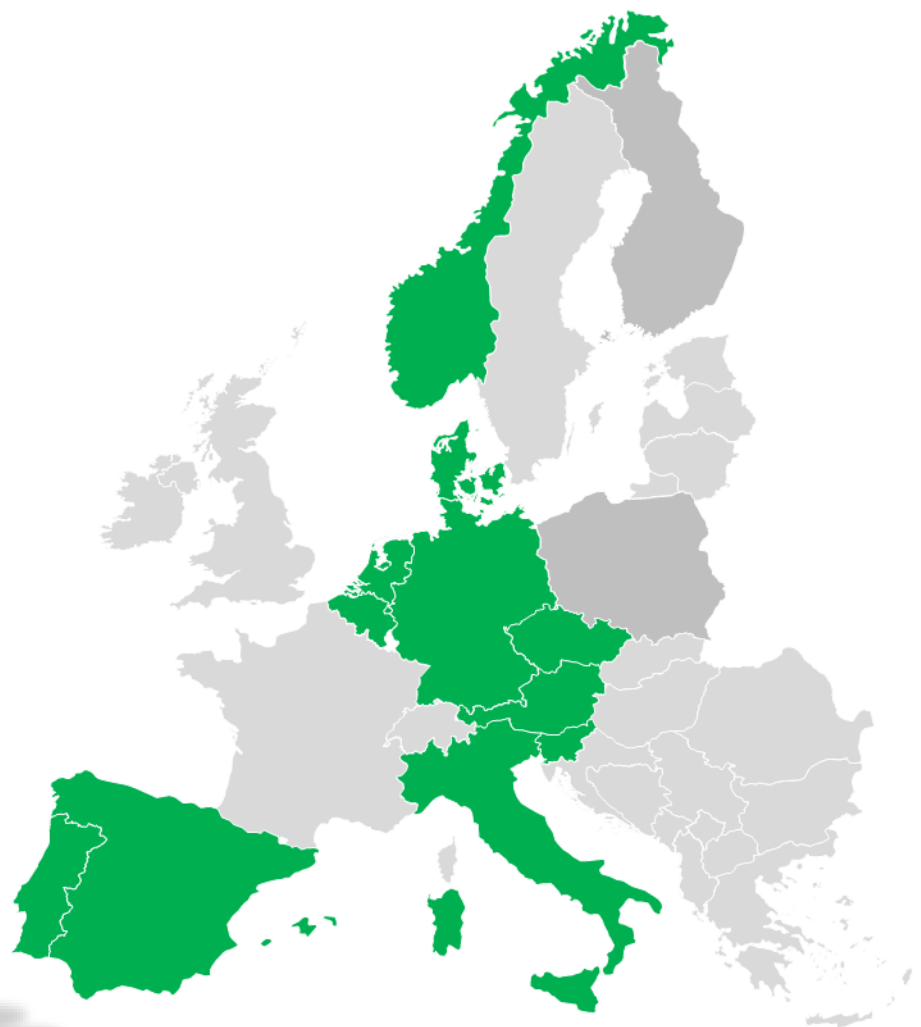
To generate evidence on **consumer**

- attitudes
- needs
- behaviours and experiences
- awareness of food-related risks

→ Support EU rules that better correspond to consumer **needs** and **behaviours**, as well as meet their **expectations**



HOW WE DID IT?



ICRT

euroconsumers

ALTROCONSUMO
Il tuo punto di forza

**Consumenten
bond**

DECO

**d
Test**

FORBRUGERRÅDET
tænk

FORBRUKERRÅDET

OCU
La fuerza de tus decisiones

testachats
testaankoop

verbraucherzentrale
Bundesverband

Konsument.at
VKI

ZPS
ZVEZA POTROŠNIKOV SLOVENIJE

11 country online survey

11,232 consumers responded

Representative sample

WHAT WE FOUND?

- Notable concerns about the negative impact food packaging could have on **health** (70%) and the **environment** (80%)
- Significant support for **protective EU action**, e.g.
 - **9 in 10** consumers support EU rules to reduce the use of hazardous chemicals in food packaging
 - **4 in 5** (strongly) agree that the EU should require producers to only use reusable and recyclable packaging materials
 - **9 in 10** (strongly) agree that green claims should be strictly regulated

WHAT WE FOUND, CONT'D?

- Consumers do not feel sufficiently informed, e.g.
 - 1 in 4 consumers feel **poorly informed** vs. less than 10% feel **well-informed**
 - 2 in 5 find it **unclear** which food containers and packaging are **safe to use**
 - 1 in 3 feel **little or not at all informed about symbols** on food containers (recognising them, knowing their meaning)

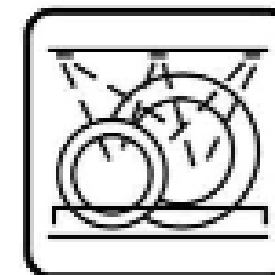
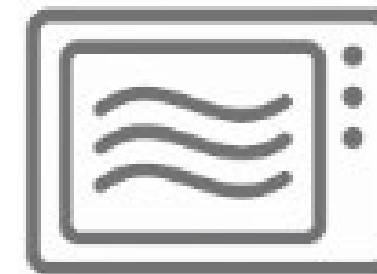


WHAT WE FOUND, CONT'D?

- **3 in 4** consumers experience at least occasionally that essential information is missing or unclear, e.g.
 - 2 in 3 experience at least sometimes that **safe use instructions** are missing
 - 69% have experienced that information is **only present on product packaging or on a sticker** that disappears during use
 - A majority has experienced symbols that are either **not clear (67%)** or **not visible / poorly readable (63%)**
- **9 in 10** (strongly) agree that all food packaging and kitchenware should have an **easy-to-understand instruction for use**

WHAT WE FOUND, CONT'D?

- Around **3 in 4** consumers recognise the Glass and Fork symbol – but only a minority (**29%**) knows what it means
- Other symbols are better understood, e.g.
 - Suitable for microwave: **70%**
 - Suitable for dishwasher: **73%**
 - Suitable for freezing: **86%**



WHAT WE FOUND, CONT'D?

- (fairly) **high awareness** that FCMs can contribute to food-related risks, e.g. when
 - storing food in packaging and containers: **61%**
 - storing acidic or fatty foods: **67%**
 - storing hot food: **71%**
 - heating food: **70%**



WHAT WE FOUND, CONT'D?

- Signs that consumers use FCMs in ways that could **increase their exposure to food-related risks**, e.g.
 - 50% keep using (for some time) **worn or damaged** food containers and kitchenware
 - Around **1 in 5 reuse** take-away plastic containers for hot food-to-go / reuse hard plastic containers to store hot food/drink



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

FCM revision and beyond | **recommendations**

- Reinforce the rules regulating **what information – and how** – producers and retailers must communicate to consumers
- Strengthen the obligation to ensure that FCMs are safe under **all foreseeable conditions of use**
- Introduce stronger safeguards against misleading and unsubstantiated (green) claims



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE, CONT'D

FCM revision and beyond | **recommendations**

- Adopt a **preventive approach** to chemicals present in FCMs, cf. the Farm-to-Fork strategy / Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability
- Regulate **reusable, recyclable, and renewable materials** to prevent exposure to chemical contaminants / to promote consumer trust



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE, CONT'D

FCM revision and beyond | **recommendations**

- Official controls to target FCMs with **insufficient, ambiguous, or missing labelling** to ensure that consumer always receive the information they are entitled to
- Invest in (coordinated) **awareness-raising campaigns** to educate consumers about how to avoid food-related risks when using – and reusing – food containers and packaging





BEUC The European
Consumer
Organisation

The Consumer Voice in Europe

Thank you for your attention

www.beuc.eu
[@beuc](#)



Co-funded by the European Union

