

## Public Consultations and Feedback

### Consumer Agenda 2025-2030 and action plan on consumers in the Single Market

**Commercial impact on consumers:** Commercial determinants of health are strategies used by businesses and marketing operators to promote products and choices that are mainly detrimental to health and refer largely to food, alcohol and tobacco companies.

It's a myth that consumers decide freely on their dietary choices. What people choose to eat is heavily influenced by food marketing, product placement, price and availability. The food on offer, combined with intense marketing of unhealthy foods & drinks, and the cheap prices of these products have led to steep increases in the consumption of unhealthy food products on a daily basis.

Tobacco and nicotine consumption have grown exponentially with new, online marketing techniques targeted to lure children and adolescents into consuming novel tobacco and nicotine products (vapes, e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches). These tactics are leading to an unprecedented rise in addiction, particularly in this vulnerable age group. (more info: [this WHO Europe report](#)).

Similar marketing techniques are used by alcohol companies: drinks with low alcohol content are massively marketed towards a young audience, thus attracting (and addicting) people from a very young age to these products.

Policy makers need to protect consumers from these extremely harmful marketing techniques and ensure that consumers can live in environments that contribute positively to their health, so that the onset of avoidable and premature NCDs in general, and CVDs in particular can be prevented.

**Sustainable food environments:** The EU needs an integrated food systems approach involving the entire food chain from production to consumption. All stakeholders - including commercial actors (traders, processors, retailers) – have to be held accountable to ensure a fair and effective transition to sustainable food environments. The current Agriculture & Food Vision focuses on the supply side and overlooks the crucial role of demand-side policies, essential for making sustainable and healthy food available, affordable, attractive, and easily recognisable to all consumers.

**Access to medical devices and medicines:** Consumer protection policies must ensure that cost does not become a barrier to accessing effective prevention and treatment tools for cardiovascular health. Digital health tools (wearables and smartwatches for CVD monitoring) are increasingly common and should be subject to robust safety and quality standards. It is vital that health data collected by such devices is handled securely, with consumer rights prevailing over privacy and data use.

**Cross border health care:** Consumer protection rules should safeguard patients' rights under the EU Cross-Border Healthcare Directive, ensuring clear information, fair costs, and support

for navigating administrative processes. Access to safe, high-quality cardiovascular care across borders is essential to reduce health inequalities and protect consumers' health outcomes.

**Digitalisation & AI transparency:** Digital health tools and AI-driven applications influence consumer health decisions and need to be transparent, evidence-based, and accountable. Consumers must be protected from opaque algorithms, biased outputs, and commercial exploitation of personal data – especially for health-related topics. Clear standards and oversight are needed to ensure digital tools support – rather than undermine – public health. Consumers are frequently exposed to misleading health information and/or recommendations, and pseudo-scientific advice, which can delay proper prevention or treatment of CVD. The EU must protect consumers against false health-related messages and ensure they receive accurate, science-based information, which supports informed choices.

*Feedback from: [European Heart Network](#)*

*The **European Heart Network** (EHN's) mission is to play a leading role in promoting cardiovascular health and preventing and reducing CVD to ensure it is no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe. Info on [www.ehnheart.org](http://www.ehnheart.org)*



**European Heart Network**  
Fighting heart disease and stroke