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G20 Consumer Summit takes on lack of consumer trust in the digital world

New research shows worldwide need for action to protect consumers' rights online.

As part of Germany's G20 Presidency, around 300 representatives of government, oversight authorities and international organisations, as well as from the consumer movement, industry and academia, will be attending today's G20 Consumer Summit. With "Building a digital world consumers can trust" as their slogan, those attending the conference will discuss how consumer protection currently fares in the digital age and how it can be improved. The G20 Consumer Summit – the first of its kind in the history of the G20 – is jointly organised by the German Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection (BMJV), Consumers International (CI) and the German Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv).

A new study commissioned by the vzbv and released today shows that almost half of people (46 %) asked in six G20 countries don't trust their governments to protect their rights online. 72 % of consumers are concerned that too much of their data is being collected online. A similar number (68%) are worried their digital payments are unsafe. The survey also revealed almost two thirds (59%) of people are concerned new digital products such as smart homes or driverless cars are unsafe.

As the internet fast becomes one of the main ways we do business, shop and spend time socially, the consumer movement is concerned legislation and people's understanding of their rights hasn't kept pace.

“The G20 countries need to provide a reliable framework to foster consumers trust. Consumers need to be able to rely on the safety and protection of their data”, says Klaus Müller, Executive Director of the Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv).

Amanda Long, Consumers International (CI), Director General, says: “It’s consumers who will drive the growth of the digital economy and that growth could easily stall if they don’t trust the products and services they are being offered. Both governments and businesses have a crucial role in making this happen.”

"When we talk of digital transformation, we mean both the opportunities and the enormous challenges that this brings. Industry and political actors must keep pace with the latest developments. However, this does not mean that they should hinder progress; rather, they must ensure Internet access for everybody and guarantee the safety and security of the people in the digital world. This can only be achieved through cooperation, trust and the common goal of shaping the digital revolution to the benefit of the population at all times. With the G20 Consumer Summit in Berlin we are firing the starting shot for a successful process, bringing together policy makers, industry and civil society worldwide," reports Gerd Billen, State Secretary to the German Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection.

CI and vzbv have identified ten areas where action is needed to improve consumers’ rights online. These recommendations will be handed over to the G20 at a press conference during the Summit.

The recommendations focus on key areas of digital consumer rights such as access to the internet, security and transparency in terms and conditions and data protection by design.

These recommendations include:

- Everybody should have the opportunity to get connected to an open internet through an affordable high quality connectivity. Therefore a concerted and coordinated effort by governments, regulators and business is needed.
- Clear and accessible information about digital products and services should be provided to consumers by all companies.
- International standards should be developed to ensure companies provide essential security updates for all digital products for a specified and reasonable period after sale.

Fifteenth of March is World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD), an annual occasion for celebration, impact and global solidarity within the international consumer movement. Each year consumer organisations mark WCRD by joining together to highlight and raise awareness of an issue that is important to consumers around the world. This year, consumer rights organi-

sations across the globe will be calling on governments and businesses to come together to build a digital world that consumers can trust.

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Notes for Editors:

- Consumers International brings together over 200 member organisations in more than 100 countries to empower and champion the rights of consumers everywhere. It is their voice in international policy-making forums and the global marketplace to ensure they are treated safely, fairly and honestly.
- The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv) represents the interests of more than 80 million consumers in Germany. The vzbv acts as the umbrella organisation for 40 German consumer associations: the consumer centres of each of Germany's 16 federal states and 24 consumer policy organisations. The vzbv fights for fair markets, safe products and clear information.
- World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) is celebrated annually on 15 March. It marks the anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's address to the US congress on 15th of March 1962, in which he formally addressed the issue of consumer rights. He was the first world leader to do so.
- Research conducted by ConPolicy, commissioned by vzbv. A total of 6,607 respondents were surveyed in six G20 member states, in particular Argentina, France, Germany, China, South Africa and the USA. The data was collected either via country-specific omnibus online panels or as an individual online survey between 16th and 31st of December 2016. The samples represent the online population in the respective countries based on age, gender and region.