



Adversary or Advocate

ICPHSO ROUNDTABLE ON THE ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSUMERS


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Involving Consumers The Benefits

“Makes process more democratic, improves relevance and quality of analysis and increases the legitimacy and public acceptance of resulting Decisions” - OECD

- ⌘ Higher level of trust in Consumers and NGOs**
 - ⌘ Provision of information, analysis, policy alternatives on improving the safety and quality of its products**
 - ⌘ Alternative ways of thinking**
 - ⌘ Improved consumer confidence for regulation, standard or policy**
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Additional Benefits






Barriers to Effective Participation

- ❧ **Value of consumer representation is not recognized**
 - ❧ **Government/business commitment to consultation is cosmetic and relevant consumer groups are excluded**
 - ❧ **Human and financial resources available to consumer organizations particularly at international level**
 - ❧ **Significant imbalance on committees, consultations and working groups**
 - ❧ **Diversity and number of consumer groups – who represents the general public?**
 - ❧ **Antagonistic relationship between civil society and government or business**
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Barriers to Effective Participation

- **Policies which do not encourage consumer participation**
 - **Independence and ability to speak out maybe compromised by dependence on source of funding**
 - **Consumer organizations are not democratically accountable for their activities**
 - **Internationally NGOs concentrated in north and west**
 - **Knowledge about the rules, procedures and norms at the national and international levels**
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Additional Barriers





Potential Role of Consumers

- ⌘ **Proactive role in market surveillance and enforcement**
 - ⌘ **Participation in regulatory/rule making or standard development processes**
 - ⌘ **Participation in promotion and enforcement of product safety codes of good practice or stewardship**
 - ⌘ **Lobbying for effective enforcement of consumer safety legislation**
 - ⌘ **Raising awareness of consumer's rights and assisting in exercising these rights**
 - ⌘ **Evaluating the effectiveness of government and standards policies**
 - ⌘ **Providing information, analysis and policy alternatives**
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Additional Roles





Questions to be Discussed



- ❧ **What are the advantages of including consumer/NGOs in decision making?**
 - ❧ **What are the disadvantages?**
 - ❧ **Should consumers be involved at all?**
 - ❧ **What are the characteristics that make consumer or NGO representatives effective?**
 - ❧ **What characteristics making them ineffective?**
 - ❧ **What tools do consumers need to participate effectively?**
 - ❧ **How can they be made available?**
 - ❧ **What barriers exist?**
 - ❧ **What can be done to overcome the barriers?**
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Conclusions

Questions

