

14 October 2026 | Consumer education in school curricula: Recommendations presented at the European Parliament for youth empowerment and child protection

Bruxelles – 14 October 2026. Embed consumer rights into existing civic education, digital skills, sustainability, and financial literacy programmes; move beyond short-term, ad-hoc projects by securing multi-annual funding and accredited teacher training; establish a common European framework for consumer competences for children and young people, aligned with DigComp and GreenComp; and recognize civic associations – starting with student organizations and consumer groups – as strategic educational partners capable of bringing real-world case studies, continuous updates, and methodological support into classrooms. These are among the main Recommendations presented, on 14 October 2026, at the European Parliament during the event *"Consumer Education in School Curricula: Challenges, Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations"*.

"*The European Union is setting rules and boundaries to protect minors online. However, a shared understanding strongly emerged during the conference: while regulations, bans, and safety-by-design mechanisms are indispensable, they are not enough on their own and risk merely postponing the problem. To foster resilient digital citizens and critical, autonomous consumers, regulation must be paired with ongoing Consumer Literacy education*", stated Cinzia Pollio, Project Coordination for Consumer Policies at Cittadinanzattiva.

The event, organized by Cittadinanzattiva and hosted by MEP Denis Nesci (ECR Group), marked the final milestone of the European project CoRe – Consumer (Re)Generation, co-funded by the European Union through the Single Market Programme, with the unconditional support of iliad, coordinated by Cittadinanzattiva in partnership with consumer associations EEKE (Greece) and InfoCons (Romania).

Main results

During the morning session, the Position Paper "Consumer Education in School Curricula: Challenges, Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations from the CoRe Project" was officially presented—the result of 18 months of work, transnational consultations, and field testing in Italian schools. In particular, data from the Italian pilot – involving 16 schools, 35 classes, 667 students, 36 teachers, and 583 parents across 7 regions – demonstrate the effectiveness of a practical, participatory approach:

- **Increase in skills:** Pre- and post-intervention surveys recorded an increase in knowledge of consumer rights and digital risks of +40.5% among teachers, +41.3% among students, and +32.1% among parents.
- **Intergenerational multiplier effect:** Particularly significant was the confidence reported by students in explaining consumer rights to their friends (+94%) and family members (+84%).
- **Lack of interest is not the issue:** The pilot proved that students and teachers are highly engaged by these topics. The only true obstacles are structural: a lack of dedicated timetable space, scarce updated materials, and rigid school schedules.

Testimonies and perspectives from EU Institutions and the private sector

Testimonies from the school community were particularly meaningful:

"I hope that consumer education becomes a permanent, structured component of school curricula across Europe, so that every student can grow as a responsible, conscious citizen," reported Giovanna Pace, teacher at the Monte San Pietro Comprehensive Institute (province of Bologna, Italy).

"Tackling a topic that directly affects them, such as consumer education, allowed for active student engagement. They were able to learn not only their rights and duties as consumers, but also the deeper meaning of active citizenship: the daily ability to seek information, make choices, and act as responsible citizens," continued Federica Altamura, a teacher at the Highlands Institute in Rome.

Enthusiastic comments were also shared by the students involved in the project, who recounted their experience during the event: *"During the project, I discovered many things about being a consumer, and this changed how I behave when I buy something or use a product or service. For instance, I didn't know there were so many rights protecting consumers,"* said Roberta from the Highlands Institute in Rome. It was a journey that helped them understand that *"being a responsible consumer doesn't just mean knowing your rights, but also making conscious decisions,"* added her schoolmate Chiara.

"It was a very interesting and engaging experience because it allowed us to gain a better understanding of consumer rights through a journey that accompanied us for several months last school year. It is important to introduce greater conscious consumer education in schools, and we thank Cittadinanzattiva for giving us the opportunity to address such an important and timely topic", concluded Giorgia from IC Monte San Pietro.

These insights prompted an active response from representatives of the European Commission (DG CNECT and DG JUST), the European Consumer Union (ECU), and the communications sector.

In particular, Emmanuel Olivieri, Public Affairs Manager at iliad, emphasized that for iliad it is essential to invest in skills: *"A commitment that translates into a concrete desire to contribute to the education of new generations, equipping them with the necessary tools to make informed and conscious choices, thereby helping to build a more inclusive digital future accessible to all"*.

For their part, representatives of the European Commission reiterated the key role of new European regulatory initiatives on online child safety and digital market transparency, while highlighting that digital literacy and skills represent an indispensable pillar to ensure effective protection for young consumers. Education is therefore complementary to regulations, because for a regulatory framework to produce results, it must be known. It was also highlighted that such educational projects work well when tailored to specific needs, in line with the CoRe approach, which began precisely with an analysis of the needs and requirements of teachers and students to better define activities and tools. From their perspective, it is also relevant to implement and enhance the visibility of platforms hosting materials and activities carried out across different countries, facilitating the exchange of best practices that can adapt to contexts beyond those in which they were originally conceived.

This perspective was fully shared by Carmelo Benenti, President of the umbrella organization European Consumer Union (ECU), who advocated for *"considering consumer associations not as occasional guests, but as long-term educational partners. The key point*

is how to transform this choice into a structural European policy. Today, the priority is to fund programmes like this: the future Single Market and Customs Programme 2028–2034, on which this Parliament is called to decide, can include a stable funding line for consumer education".

To download and consult the Position Paper and CoRe project materials, please see here.