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No REFIT on consumers' right to know!

The European Commission's Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) programme is meant "to make EU law simpler and to reduce regulatory costs", making sure that EU legislation remains fit for purpose and delivers the results intended by EU law-makers. In short, this means cutting red tape and costs without compromising policy objectives.

But what you see may not be what you get. The REFIT report from S&D MEP Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann voted today by the European Parliament contains a textbook example of the kind of 'red tape removal' that Europe absolutely does not need. Paragraph 47 of the report calls for an elimination of rules on nutrient profiles that determine whether a product can bear a nutritional or health claim, stating that this information is covered in fact by a different piece of legislation on the broader issue of providing food information to consumers. The Greens/EFA group considers the scope of this second Regulation to be too restrictive with regards to nutrient profiles, potentially opening the door for products that are high in salt, sugar or saturated fat to be advertised as beneficial to health provided for example that some vitamins are added.

"Consumers have the right to know what they are eating and the right to not be misled. If nutrient profiles are sacrificed for the sake of the so-called regulatory simplification, it is a clear signal that for the Commission, the interests of the industry overrule the interests of consumers," said **Heidi Hautala**, a Finnish MEP who follows the REFIT report for the Greens/EFA group.

"Those voting in favour of the paragraph 47 are giving a clear signal that, in their view, regulation intended to protect the consumers is what they call an 'unnecessary regulatory burden'."

An amendment to paragraph 47 tabled by the Greens/EFA group designed to ensure that consumers' rights are protected was not adopted by the Parliament.

The Greens/EFA group is also concerned that an excessive push for regulatory simplification may result in lowering standards for both health and environmental protection through focusing not on reducing administrative burdens but rather perceived regulatory burdens. This calls into question the very existence of the laws and the protection they provide, and as a result the Greens/EFA group voted against the report as a whole.

"If this is what REFIT really means, we cannot accept it. If this is 'better regulation' we are better off without it," **Heidi Hautala** added.

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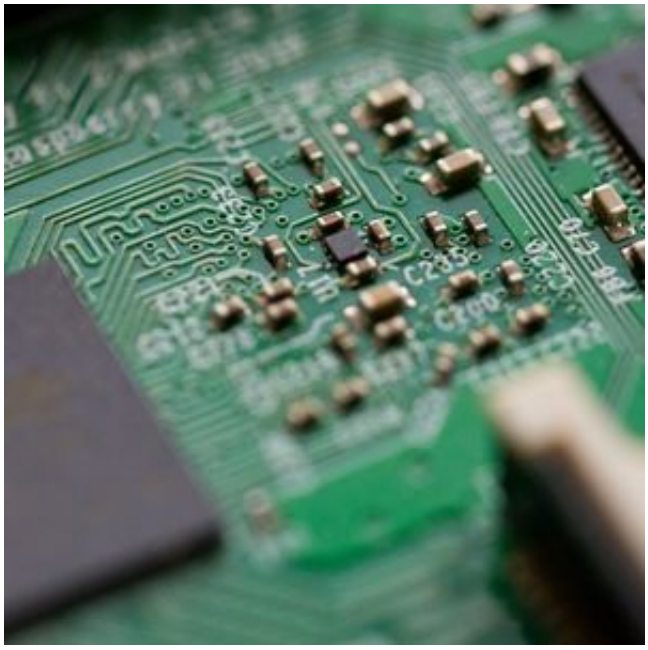


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Responsible MEPs



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