

# BELGIUM

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# 1. Consumer policy institutions

## 1.1. PUBLIC SERVICES RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSUMER POLICY

The federal authorities are responsible for consumer protection in general.

In Belgium, the authority responsible for consumer policy is the *Service Public Fédéral (SPF) de l'Economie, des PME, des Classes moyennes et de l'Energie* (Federal Public Service (FPS) for the Economy, SMEs, the Self-Employed and Energy).

Three Directorates-General of the FPS Economy are mainly involved:

- the *Direction générale Réglementation économique* (Directorate-General for Economic Regulation) is mainly responsible for drafting, developing and coordinating consumer policy.
- the *Direction générale Inspection économique* (Directorate-General for Economic Inspection) ensures the proper functioning of the market by checking that the economic regulations are being applied.
- the *Direction générale Qualité et Sécurité* (Directorate-General for Quality and Safety) ensures that goods and services placed on the market comply with safety requirements and is committed to guaranteeing the quality of measures implemented relating to commercial transactions (development and application of the regulations).

### Contact:

*Address:* Rue du Progrès 50, B-1210 Bruxelles

*Contact Centre:* 0800 120 33

*Website:* <https://economie.fgov.be/fr>

Contact point for consumers and companies: <https://meldpunt.belgie.be/meldpunt/en/welcome>

Other Federal Public Services are also responsible for specific issues, such as:

- consumer health and food safety (*Service public fédéral Santé publique, Sécurité de la chaîne alimentaire et Environnement* (Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment));
- landlords' and tenants' rights (*Service public fédéral Justice* (Federal Public Service for Justice));
- passenger rights (*SPF Mobilité et Transport* (Federal Public Service for Mobility and Transport)).

Directives	Public Enforcement Agencies
Directive 93/13/EEC Directive 98/6/EC Directive 1999/44/EC Directive 2000/31/EC Directive 2002/58/EC Directive 2002/65/EC Directive 2005/29/EC Directive 2006/114/EC Directive 2006/123/EC Directive 2008/48/EC Directive 2008/122/EC Directive 2011/83/EU Directive 2013/11/EU Regulation 524/2013 Directive 2014/17/EU Directive 2014/92/EU Directive 2015/2302 Regulation 2017/1128 Regulation 2018/302	<b>Direction générale de l'Inspection Economique (Directorate-General for Economic Inspection)</b> <i>Address:</i> North Gate III, Boulevard du Roi Albert II 16, B-1000 Bruxelles <i>E-mail:</i> <a href="mailto:eco.inspec.int@economie.fgov.be">eco.inspec.int@economie.fgov.be</a> <i>Website:</i> <a href="https://economie.fgov.be/sites/default/files/Files/About-SPF/064-18-organigramme-N-E7.pdf">https://economie.fgov.be/sites/default/files/Files/About-SPF/064-18-organigramme-N-E7.pdf</a>

As regards consumer protection, the Administration des Douanes et Accises (Customs and Excise Administration) carries out certain checks at the border on behalf of other authorities:

- for the FPS Economy: monitoring licences, product safety, quality labels and counterfeiting;
- for the FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment: monitoring the safety of foodstuffs;
- for the Agence alimentaire (Food Agency): monitoring licences, foodstuffs.

**Contact:**

**SPF Finances, Administration des Douanes et Accises (FPS Finance, Customs and Excise)**

*Address:* Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 33, boîte 37, B-1030 Bruxelles

*E-mail:* [info.douane@minfin.fed.be](mailto:info.douane@minfin.fed.be)

*Website:* <https://finance.belgium.be/en>

**1.2. NATIONAL CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS**

- **Association Belge des Consommateurs - Test-Achats (Belgian Consumer Association - Consumer product tests/reviews)**

*Address:* Rue de Hollande 13, B-1060 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 542 32 55

*Fax:* +32 2 542 35 13

*Website:* <http://www.test-achats.be>

- **De Gezinsbond (Families' Association)**  
*Address:* Troonstraat 125, B-1050 Brussel  
*Tel.:* +32 2 507 88 11  
*Fax:* +32 2 511 90 65  
*E-mail:* [pr@gezinsbond.be](mailto:pr@gezinsbond.be)  
*Website:* <https://www.gezinsbond.be/en>
- **Ligue des Familles (Families' League)**  
*Address:* Avenue Emile de Beco 109, B-1050 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 507 72 11  
*Fax:* +32 2 513 57 33  
*E-mail:* [info@liguedesfamilles.be](mailto:info@liguedesfamilles.be)  
*Website:* <https://www.laligue.be/association>
- **Centrale Générale des Syndicats Libéraux de Belgique - C.G.S.L.B. (Federation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium)**  
*Address:* Avenue Roi Albert 93, B-9000 Gand  
*Tel.:* +32 9 222 57 51  
*Fax:* +32 9 221 04 74  
*E-mail:* [cgslb@cgslb.be](mailto:cgslb@cgslb.be)  
*Website:* <http://www.aclvb.be>
- **Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens de Belgique - C.S.C. (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions of Belgium)**  
*Address:* Chaussée de Haecht 579, B-1031 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 246 31 11  
*Fax:* +32 2 246 30 10  
*E-mail:* [csc@acv-csc.be](mailto:csc@acv-csc.be)  
*Website:* <http://www.acv-csc.be>
- **Femma**  
*Address:* Urbain Britsierslaan 5, B-1030 Brussel  
*Tel.:* +32 2 246 51 11  
*E-mail:* [femma@femma.be](mailto:femma@femma.be)  
*Website:* <https://www.femma.be/en>
- **Verbruikersateljee (Consumer Workshop)**  
*Address:* Agoragalerij, Grasmarkt, 105 bus 51, B-1000 Brussel  
*Tel.:* +32 2 552 02 48  
*Fax:* +32 2 552 02 55  
*E-mail:* [verbruikersateljee@skynet.be](mailto:verbruikersateljee@skynet.be)  
*Website:* <http://www.verbruikersateljee.be>
- **Belgische Federatie van de Sociale en Coöperatieve Economie (Belgian Federation of the Social and Cooperative Economy)**  
*Address:* Timmerhoutkaai 4, B-1000 Brussel  
*Tel.:* +32 2 500 53 08  
*E-mail:* [p.bosmans@febecoop.be](mailto:p.bosmans@febecoop.be)

Website: <https://febecoop.be/fr/>

- **Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique - F.G.T.B. (Belgian General Labour Federation)**

*Address:* Rue Haute 42, B-1000 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 506 82 11

*Fax:* +32 2 506 82 29

*E-mail:* [info@fgtb.be](mailto:info@fgtb.be)

*Website:* <http://www.fgtb.be>

- **Verbraucherschutzbentrale Ostbelgien (East Belgium Consumer Centre)**

*Address:* Neustraße 119, B-4700 Eupen

*Tel.:* +32 87 59 18 50

*Fax:* +32 87 59 18 51

*E-mail:* [info@vsz.be](mailto:info@vsz.be)

*Website:* <http://www.vsz.be>

- **Kristelijke Werknemersbeweging - K.W.B. (Christian Workers' Movement)**

*Address:* Lakensestraat 76, B-1000 Brussel

*Tel.:* +32 2 210 88 11

*Fax:* +32 2 210 88 00

*E-mail:* [kwb@kwb.be](mailto:kwb@kwb.be)

*Website:* <http://www.kwb.be>

- **Union Nationale des Mutualités socialistes (National Union of Socialist Mutual Societies)**

*Address:* Rue St-Jean 32-38, B-1000 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 515 02 11

*Fax:* +32 2 515 02 07

*E-mail:* [info@mutsoc.be](mailto:info@mutsoc.be)

*Website:* [www.mutsoc.be](http://www.mutsoc.be)

- **Alliance Nationale des Mutualités Chrétiennes (National Alliance of Christian Mutual Societies)**

*Address:* Chaussée de Haecht 579/40, B-1031 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 246 41 11

*Fax:* +32 2 246 48 21

*E-mail:* [alliance@mc.be](mailto:alliance@mc.be)

*Website:* [www.mc.be](http://www.mc.be)

- **Syndicat des Mutualités Libérales (Trade Union of Liberal Mutual Societies)**

*Address:* Rue de Livourne 25, B-1050 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 542 86 00

*Fax:* +32 2 542 86 99

*E-mail:* [info@lplus.be](mailto:info@lplus.be)

*Website:* [www.lm.be](http://www.lm.be)

- **Les Équipes populaires** (People's groups)  
*Address:* rue du Lombard, 8/2 B-5000 Namur  
*Tel.:* +32 81 734 08 62  
*E-mail:* [secretariat@equipespopulaires.be](mailto:secretariat@equipespopulaires.be)  
*Website:* [www.equipespopulaires.be](http://www.equipespopulaires.be)
- **Centre d'Appui aux Services de Médiation de Dettes de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale (Debt Mediation Services Support Centre for the Brussels-Capital Region)**  
*Address:* Boulevard du Jubilé 153-155, 1080 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* + 32 2 217 88 05  
*Fax:* + 32 2 217 88 07  
*E-mail:* [info@steunpuntschuldbemiddeling.be](mailto:info@steunpuntschuldbemiddeling.be)  
*Website:* [www.mediationdedettes.be](http://www.mediationdedettes.be)

### 1.3. NATIONAL COUNCILS / ASSEMBLIES OF CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The Commission consultative spéciale (ccs) « Consommation » (Special Consultative Consumer Commission (SCCC)) is the central advisory body for consumer issues. It is composed of 13 members (plus 13 alternates) representing consumer organisations and 13 members (plus 13 alternates) representing production, distribution, SMEs and agriculture. The main task of the SCCC is to issue opinions on consumer protection issues at the request of its parent Minister, but also at the request of other ministers and even the Parliament. It may also issue opinions on its own initiative.

In Belgium, consultations between public authorities and consumer organisations mainly take place within the context of the SCCC. The SCCC has for decades been a place of dialogue and consultation, bringing businesses and consumers together in regulating the market. Beyond its immediate responsibility for issuing opinions, the SCCC is also involved in co-regulating the market through the development of codes of conduct and recommendations which contribute to consumer protection, particularly with regard to advertising. The co-regulation role of the SCCC is enshrined in the Law of 15 May 2007 on consumer agreements.

#### Contact:

##### **Conseil Central de l'Economie (Central Economic Council)**

*Address:* Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée 17-21, 1040 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 233 88 11

*Fax:* +32 2 233 88 12

*E-mail:* [mail@ccecrb.fgov.be](mailto:mail@ccecrb.fgov.be)

*Website:* <https://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/c/fr/22/presentation>

## 1.4. REDRESS BODIES: COURTS AND OTHER DISPUTE RESOLUTION SYSTEMS

- **Courts:**

[http://www.cass.be/pyramide\\_fr.php](http://www.cass.be/pyramide_fr.php)

- **List of entities qualified in alternative dispute resolution:**

Qualified entities are entities that comply with the conditions laid down in Book XVI 'Alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes' of the Belgian Code on Economic Law (which transposes Directive 2013/11/EU on alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes).

1. **Service de Médiation pour les télécommunications (Telecommunications Mediation Service)**

Boulevard du Roi Albert II 8 boîte 3, 1000 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 223 06 06

*Fax:* +32 2 219 77 88

*E-mail:* [plaintes@mediateurtelecom.be](mailto:plaintes@mediateurtelecom.be)

*Website:* <http://www.mediateurtelecom.be>

2. **Ombudsman en conflits financiers (Ombudsfin) (Ombudsman for financial disputes)**

Boulevard du Roi Albert II 8 boîte 2, 1000 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 545 77 70

*Fax:* +32 2 545 77 79

*E-mail:* [Ombudsman@Ombudsfin.be](mailto:Ombudsman@Ombudsfin.be)

*Website:* <http://www.ombudsfin.be>

3. **Ombudsman pour le notariat (Ombudsman for notarial matters)**

Rue des Bouchers 67, 1000 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 801 15 00

*E-mail:* [info@ombudsnot.be](mailto:info@ombudsnot.be)

*Website:* <http://www.ombudsnotaire.be>

4. **Ombudsman des Assurances (Ombudsman for insurance)**

Square de Meeûs 35, 1000 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 547 58 71

*E-mail:* [info@ombudsman.as](mailto:info@ombudsman.as)

*Website:* <http://www.ombudsman.as>

5. **Commission de Conciliation Construction A.S.B.L (Construction Conciliation Commission)**

Espace Jacquemotte, Rue Haute 139, 1000 Bruxelles

*Tel.:* +32 2 504 97 86

*Fax:* +32 2 504 97 84

*E-mail:* [info@constructionconciliation.be](mailto:info@constructionconciliation.be)

*Website:* <http://www.constructionconciliation.be>

6. **Service de Médiation pour le Consommateur (Consumer Mediation Service)**  
North Gate II, Boulevard du Roi Albert II 8 boîte 1, 1000 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 702 52 20  
*Fax:* +32 2 808 71 29  
*E-mail:* [contact@mediationconsommateur.be](mailto:contact@mediationconsommateur.be)  
*Website:* <https://consumerombudsman.be/en>
  
7. **Commission Conciliation Automoto (Motor Vehicle Conciliation Commission)**  
Avenue Jules Bordet 164, 1140 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 778 62 47  
*Fax:* +32 2 778 62 22  
*E-mail:* [info@conciliationautomoto.be](mailto:info@conciliationautomoto.be)  
*Website:* <http://www.conciliationautomoto.be>
  
8. **Service de médiation de l'énergie (Energy Mediation Service)**  
Boulevard du Roi Albert II 8 boîte 6, 1000 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 211 10 60  
*Fax:* +32 2 211 10 69  
*E-mail:* [plainte@mediateurenergie.be](mailto:plainte@mediateurenergie.be)  
*Website:* <http://www.ombudsmanenergie.be>
  
9. **Commission de Litiges Voyages (Travel Disputes Commission)**  
Rue du Progrès 50, 1210 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 277 61 80 – +32 2 277 62 15  
*Fax:* +32 2 277 91 00  
*E-mail:* [litiges-voyages@clv-gr.be](mailto:litiges-voyages@clv-gr.be)  
*Website:* [http://www.clv-gr.be/index\\_fr.html](http://www.clv-gr.be/index_fr.html)
  
10. **Service de médiation pour le secteur postal (Postal Sector Mediation Service)**  
Av. du Roi Albert II 8 boîte 4, 1000 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 221 02 20  
*Fax:* +32 2 221 02 44  
*E-mail:* [info@smspo.be](mailto:info@smspo.be)  
*Website:* <http://www.omps.be>
  
11. **Service de médiation pour les litiges de consommation des avocats (Ordre des barreaux néerlandophones) (Ombudsman Service for Consumer Disputes Relating to the Legal Profession (Dutch-speaking Bar Council))**  
Rue du Moniteur 8, 1000 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 307 72 20  
*E-mail:* [oca@ligeca.be](mailto:oca@ligeca.be)  
*Website:* <http://oca.ligeca.be/en/>
  
12. **Service Ombudsman des avocats de l'Ordre des barreaux francophones et germanophone (Ombudsman Service for lawyers of the French-speaking and German-speaking Bar Councils)**  
Avenue de la Toison d'Or 65, 1060 Bruxelles



*Tel.:* +32 2 648 20 98  
*E-mail:* [ombudsman@avocats.be](mailto:ombudsman@avocats.be)  
*Website:* <http://obfg.ligeca.be/fr>

**13. Ombudsman du Commerce (Ombudsman for trade)**

Avenue Edmond Van Nieuwenhuyse 8, 1160 Bruxelles  
*E-mail:* [info@ombudscom.be](mailto:info@ombudscom.be)  
*Website:* <https://www.ombudsmanforretail.be/en>

**14. Commission d'Arbitrage Consommateurs et Entreprises de l'Entretien du Textile (CACET) (Arbitration Commission for Consumers and Textile-Maintenance Companies)**

Brusselsesteenweg 478, 1731 Zellik (Asse)  
*Tel.:* +32 2 463 19 50  
*Fax:* +32 2 463 17 61  
*E-mail:* [kd@cacet.be](mailto:kd@cacet.be)  
*Website:* <http://www.cacet.be/fr>

**15. Ombudsman des Huissiers de justice (Ombudsman for bailiffs)**

Avenue Henri Jaspar 93, 1060 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 533 97 86  
*E-mail:* [info@ombudshuissier.be](mailto:info@ombudshuissier.be)  
*Website:* [www.ombudshuissier.be](http://www.ombudshuissier.be)

**1.5. EUROPEAN CONSUMER CENTRE**

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/redress\\_cons/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/redress_cons/index_en.htm)

**European Consumer Centre Belgium**

*Address:* Rue de Hollande 13, B-1060 Bruxelles  
*Tel.:* +32 2 542 33 46  
*Fax:* +32 2 542 32 43  
*E-mail:* [info@eccbelgium.be](mailto:info@eccbelgium.be)  
*Website:* <https://www.eccbelgium.be/>

**1.6. SELF-REGULATION OR CO-REGULATION**

Codes of conduct may arise from agreements negotiated between professional organisations and consumer organisations, in particular within the Special Consultative Consumer Commission (SCCC) under the Central Economic Council, and/or public authorities; this is referred to as 'co-regulation'. If the agreements are negotiated only within the sector concerned, this is referred to as 'self-regulation'.

Listed below are the codes, agreements and recommendations which were negotiated between professional organisations and consumer organisations, in particular within the SCCC, and/or public authorities. They can be consulted via [the following links](#):

- *Code de la publicité écologique* (Environmental advertising code)
- *Recommandations du Conseil de la consommation concernant la publicité relative aux fêtes enfantines* (Consumer Council's recommendations on advertising relating to children's celebrations) (Opinion C.C.220 on regulating the duration of advertising campaigns relating to the Easter, Saint-Nicolas and Christmas celebrations - 27 June 2000)
- *Code de conduite concernant la publicité et le marketing à l'égard des jeunes pour les produits et/ou services bancaires ou d'assurance* (Code of conduct for advertising and marketing of banking and insurance products and services aimed at young people)
- *Accord concernant le consommateur dans le marché libéralisé de l'électricité et du gaz* (Agreement on consumer protection in the liberalised electricity and gas market)
- *Accord sur la création d'un service et d'un collège de médiation «banques-créditplacement»* (Agreement on the creation of a 'banking-credit-investment' mediation college and service)
- *Codes de conduite pour la publicité relative aux dépôts d'épargne et aux assurances-vie individuelles* (Codes of conduct for advertising of savings accounts and individual life insurance)
- <https://economie.fgov.be/sites/default/files/Files/Ventes/Code-de-conduite-vente-directe-en-face-a-face.pdf>

Pursuant to Book VI 'Market practices and consumer protection' of the Code on Economic Law, unfair commercial practices are banned. A company's non-compliance with a code of conduct could be considered in some cases as an unfair commercial practice in that it is contrary to the requirements of professional diligence and thus is not in accordance with honest commercial practices.

## 2. Consumer policy

### 2.1. CONSUMER PROTECTION LEGISLATION

In Belgium, the aim of consumer policy is to:

- pursue and develop a consumer protection policy;
- ensure that implemented legislation is applied correctly;
- ensure that consumers are kept well-informed;
- establish rules to ensure healthy competition between traders, which will benefit consumers;
- promote consumer small claims procedures.

The main laws for which the FPS Economy is responsible can be found at <http://economie.fgov.be/>. They all make provisions for criminal penalties in the event of an infringement.

- **Law of 9 March 1993** regulating and controlling the activities of marriage bureaus;
- **Law of 5 July 1998** on the collective settlement of debts and the possibility of privately selling seized property assets;
- **Law of 11 April 1999** on contracts selling rights to use properties on a timeshare basis;
- **Law of 20 December 2002** on the amicable recovery of consumer debts;
- **Law of 10 August 2001** on the Centrale des Crédits aux Particuliers (Individual Credit Federation);
- **Law of 11 June 2004** on fraud relating to vehicle mileage;
- **Law of 1 September 2004** on consumer protection relating to sales of consumer goods;
- Code on Economic Law, in particular:
  - Book VI ‘Market practices’
  - Book VII ‘Payment and credit service’
  - Book IX ‘Product and service safety’
  - Book XII ‘Digital economy law’
  - Book XVI ‘Alternative dispute resolution’
- **Law of 21 November 2017** on the sale of package travel, linked travel arrangements and travel services.

## **2.2. CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS**

In Belgium there is no official definition of or legal criteria for the representiveness of consumer organisations. The organisations designated by the Minister to sit on the Special Consultative Consumer Commission under the Central Economic Council are considered to be legally representative.

The government does not directly subsidise consumer organisations. However, it awards a grant to the Association Belge de Recherche et d’Expertise des Organisations de Consommateurs (Belgian Association of Consumer Organisation Research and Expertise), which was set up and is run by consumer organisations.

**Association Belge de Recherche et d’Expertise des Organisations de Consommateurs (AB-REOC) (Belgian Association of Consumer Organisation Research and Expertise)**

*Address:* Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 1000 Bruxelles

*E-mail:* [leen.decort@oeco.be](mailto:leen.decort@oeco.be)

Website: <https://www.oeco.be/fr>

## 2.3. LAW ENFORCEMENT / APPEALS

### 2.3.1. Law enforcement

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#### **The Directorate-General for Economic Inspection: the authority responsible for checking compliance with economic legislation.**

It contributes to the proper functioning of the goods and services market through its task of checking compliance with economic legislation.

Under the supervision of the principal public prosecutors or the Federal Prosecutor, staff of the DG for Economic Inspection have wide-ranging investigative powers. They can:

- conduct valid investigations independently;
- request any information or document required;
- conduct hearings;
- access all necessary places and access inhabited premises subject to authorisation from the investigating magistrate (visit);
- take samples and have them tested free of charge;
- carry out mystery shopping in specific situations;
- seize goods and documents;
- affix seals;
- issue requisition orders;
- request assistance from experts or the police;
- appear before courts as a witness.

Staff of the DG for Economic Inspection have several options when establishing an infringement. They can issue a warning to the offender and give them a certain amount of time to comply with the rules or they can draw up an official report. Reports drawn up by inspectors are authentic until proven otherwise. The report may be sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office for further action, or a settlement procedure may also be applied. This is an amicable administrative settlement in which the offender is able to pay a sum of money which rules out criminal proceedings.

In the event of refusal to pay, the case is submitted to the Public Prosecutor responsible for legal proceedings. If harm caused to a third party continues, no settlement is proposed. If the settlement is not paid, the case is submitted to Public Prosecutor's Office.

If the report is sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office, directly or following the offender's failure to pay the settlement, the Public Prosecutor can either initiate proceedings before the criminal court to secure conviction of the guilty party, offer the offender an out-of-court settlement, payment of which rules out criminal proceedings, or dismiss the case.

However, under certain laws, the DG for Economic Inspection has the power to propose that the offender pay a sum of money which rules out criminal proceedings.

See: <https://meldpunt.belgie.be/meldpunt/en/welcome>

## **Cross-border cooperation**

Economic fraud and unfair practices do not stop at borders. Cooperation with the inspection authorities of other countries in monitoring the market is therefore essential.

### *At bilateral level*

The DG for Economic Inspection works closely with the bodies of neighbouring countries responsible for similar tasks, on the basis of a cooperation protocol. *In the case of France, there is a cooperation protocol with the DGCCRF (Directorate-General for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Prevention) and its regional liaison office, the DIRECCTE Hauts-de-France (Regional Directorate for Enterprise, Competition, Consumers, Labour and Employment in the Hauts-de-France region) for matters that do not fall within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 referred to below.*

### *At EU level*

Pursuant to [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/2394 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws and repealing Regulation \(EC\) No 2006/2004](#), a European network of inspection authorities was set up providing for compulsory administrative cooperation for intra-Community infringements relating to consumer protection. The DG for Economic Inspection was designated as the sole liaison office and the authority responsible for legislation on consumer protection in Belgium.

### *At international level*

The International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN, [www.icpen.org](http://www.icpen.org)) is a network aimed at making consumers aware of various forms of consumer scams. The ICPEN is a network of governmental organisations responsible for checking compliance with the laws on commercial practices and other activities to protect consumers. In 1992, the DG for Economic Inspection helped to create this network, the main aim of which is to encourage cooperation between different countries and, through this cooperation, protect consumers across borders. In this context, the exchange of information and knowledge plays a key role. The ICPEN is currently made up of 68 different organisations from countries across all five continents.

The DG for Economic Inspection also contributes to the work of the Consumer Defence Committee within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

### 2.3.2. Redress

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The DG for Economic Inspection is also responsible for promoting, providing information about and coordinating aspects of alternative dispute resolution. It is responsible for out-of-court dispute settlements within a commercial context. It hears individuals who consider themselves victims in a civil dispute in order to inform them of their rights and the possible solutions.

Thus the scope of the DG for Economic Inspection is not limited only to repressive measures but also includes preventative and informative measures to help consumers and businesses find ways to settle disputes amicably.

In this context, the FPS Economy developed an online platform which coordinates B2C and B2B commercial disputes. If you would like more information on amicable settlements or wish to find a suitable neutral third party to help you, please consult *Belmed*.

In order to prevent economic disputes, the DG for Economic Inspection helps consumers and businesses in two ways.

It empowers consumers by giving them advice on how to assert their rights on various issues such as warranties, travel, the conclusion of a contract, etc.

It also gives advice to businesses, in the form of guidance, on how to comply with and correctly apply economic regulations.

## 2.4. INFORMATION

Information on and request for alternative dispute resolution:

<https://economie.fgov.be/en/themes/online/belmed-online-mediation>

Information on asserting your rights:

<https://economie.fgov.be/fr/themes/protection-des-consommateurs/empowerment-ou-comment-faire>

Advice/information for companies:

<https://economie.fgov.be/fr/themes/entreprises/guidance>

<https://www.oeco.be/fr>

Informative website on good practices for e-commerce: *Infoshopping*

## 2.5. COLLECTING INFORMATION/RESEARCH

The *Consumer Price Index* (CPI) is a monthly statistic established by *Statistics Belgium* (Statbel). It is an economic indicator that measures price trends based on Belgian consumer habits. It is the main tool for measuring inflation. In Belgium, the ICP forms a direct basis, through the health index and the smoothed index, for the indexation of pensions, social security benefits, tax brackets, rent and certain wages and salaries.

The CPI is calculated on the basis of a basket of household goods and services and is considered to be representative of household consumption behaviour. Given that the supply of goods and services constantly changes, the sample of prices recorded is also regularly updated.

This is monitored through different data sources. Prices are recorded by researchers who visit shops throughout the country. However, prices that carry greater weight are collected in a centralised manner from websites, catalogues, by telephone or from files obtained from regulators or private companies. More recently, more big data sources have also been incorporated into the calculation of the consumer price index, namely *scanner data* from supermarket chains and data from *webscraping*.

In addition to the national Consumer Price Index (CPI), Statbel also calculates the *European Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices* (HICP). However, the results of the CPI and HICP are not identical, mainly because of differences in the weighting and composition of the basket of goods and services which these indices are based on.

- General statistics:

<https://statbel.fgov.be/en>

- There is no organisation in Belgium that continuously monitors consumption. The Belgian Association of Consumer Organisation Research and Expertise, a non-profit organisation subsidised by the Federal Public Service for the Economy and run by consumer organisations, conducts studies and surveys on issues that directly affect consumers. These studies are conducted on behalf of consumer organisations and made available to them. These studies therefore cannot be directly consulted on the website of the Belgian Association of Consumer Organisation Research and Expertise. The National Institute of Statistics also conducts such studies.

### **L'Association Belge de Recherche et d'Expertise des Organisations de Consommateurs (AB-REOC) (Belgian Association of Consumer Organisation Research and Expertise)**

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- ***BANQUE NATIONALE (NATIONAL BANK): Statistics***
- ***BUREAU DU PLAN (PLANNING BUREAU)***