



10th Consumer Markets Scoreboard

The Consumer Markets Scoreboard is a screening tool that detects underperforming markets and indicates to EU and national policymakers where further analysis should focus. The Consumer Scoreboard data provide important insights into how the markets are functioning from the consumers' perspective.

We measure performance of 52 consumer markets, based on consumer evaluations on: trust in business, comparability of offers, overall satisfaction and the incidence of complaints and problems. The Scoreboard also looks at consumer choice and switching of tariffs/providers, the country and socio-demographic differences in market assessment, the link between market evaluations and economic indicators and the penetration of different markets (proportion of consumers with recent purchasing experience in a given market).

The data comes from the fourth wave of a large-scale, EU-wide consumer survey, allowing for comparison of markets

performance over time. In addition to survey data, the Scoreboard analyses price dispersion across EU countries, complaints collected by national complaint handling bodies and available safety data.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2014 SCOREBOARD

• Market performance is improving

The overall assessment of market performance, across all markets and all countries, has improved slightly between 2012 and 2013, continuing the positive trend observed since 2010. However, the situation differs considerably from market to market and from country to country. As in previous years, goods markets appear to be working considerably better than services markets, although the gap between them has been narrowing.

• Some remarkable changes since 2012

Compared with 2012, some of the worst performing markets, such as **vehicle fuels** and **train services**, have improved the most. The largest drop in performance has been noted in the **meat market**.

- **Some key services sectors continue to fail consumers**

Some key services sectors – such as **banking, telecoms** and **energy** – continue to fail consumers. EU initiatives to improve consumer conditions in these sectors include the forthcoming legislation on payment accounts and retail investment products; the Connected Continent legislative proposal; and the efforts to increase the transparency of energy offers and bills.

- **Taking a closer look at low-performing goods markets**

Poor results for markets for **second-hand cars** and **vehicle fuels** continue to be marked. An EU in-depth study into the market for vehicle fuels has just been finalised and a study on second-hand cars is ongoing in order to gain a better insight into the problems and identify possible solutions.

- **Comparing offers is more difficult in services markets**

Services markets are more problematic for consumers than goods markets across all the indicators studied. The gap between the two market groups is most pronounced with regard to comparability of offers, which may reflect the inherent complexity of some services markets but also deliberate marketing strategies hampering consumers' ability to choose the best deal.

- **Asymmetry of information creates lower trust**

Overall, consumers' trust in businesses to respect consumer protection rules is the lowest in those markets where the asymmetry of information between the trader and the consumer is the most acute. For example, the second-hand cars market, where the quality of the product can differ largely and cannot be assessed easily by the average consumer, has the lowest score on trust.

- **Most problems and complaints are found in the telecom sector**

There are considerable differences in the number of reported problems and related complaints in different markets, with the worst situation in the telecom sector.

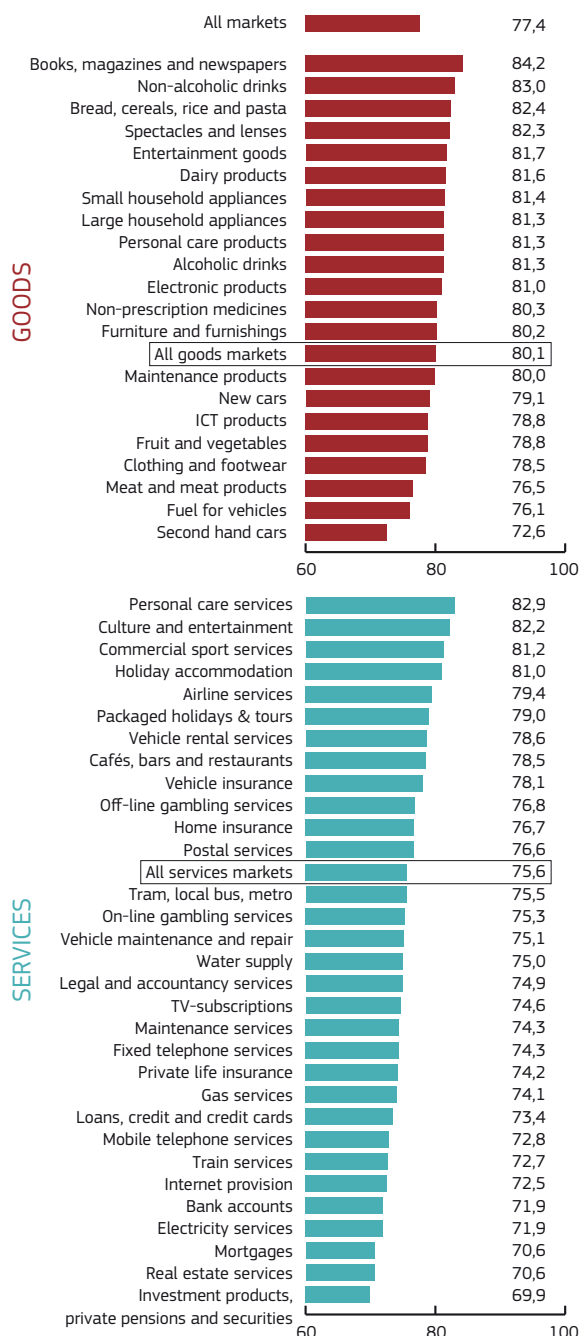
- **Evaluation of market performance differs between socio-demographic groups**

Markets are assessed differently by different socio-demographic groups. Commission's ongoing study on consumer vulnerability across key markets will help understand why.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the findings of this Scoreboard, the Commission services will launch two in-depth market studies: a market study on retail electricity and a behavioural study to enhance the reading and understanding, by consumers, of terms and conditions.

EU28 - MARKET PERFORMANCE INDICATOR



More information : http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_evidence/consumer_scoreboards/10_edition/index_en.htm