

HEADING 3: Security and citizenship

Consumer Programme

Lead DG: JUST

I. Overview

What the programme is about?

The Consumer Programme supports the EU consumer policy. It aims to help citizens fully enjoy their consumer rights and actively participate in the Single Market, thus supporting growth, innovation and meeting the objectives of Europe 2020. The Consumer Programme 2014-2020 focuses on four key areas:

- a single market of safe products for the benefit of citizens and as a component of competitive businesses and traders;
- a single market where citizens are well represented by professional consumer organisations whose capacity is built to meet the challenges of today's economic environment;
- a market where citizens are aware and exercise their rights as consumers so that they contribute to the growth of competitive markets; citizens must enjoy access to redress mechanisms in case of problems without needing to resort to court procedures which are lengthy and costly for them and the governments;
- a concrete and effective collaboration between national bodies to support the enforcement of consumer rights, and support the consumers with advice.

EU added value of the programme

The main actions implemented through the Consumer Programme are aimed to supporting the objectives of the EU Consumer protection policy where they cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, in particular due to the cross-border nature of the issues involved. This is achieved by actions in 4 specific objectives:

I. Safety: to consolidate and enhance product safety

Ensuring that products circulating on the internal market, including online, are safe for consumers is a basic objective for EU consumer policy and contributes to the Juncker Commission's priority for a Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base. This objective is supported by EU legislation with general requirements for safe products and for market surveillance by the Member States. Consumers need to be confident that unsafe products have no place on the EU market and that the relevant rules are effectively and efficiently enforced, both domestically and cross-border. This is why EU supports a coordinated and coherent approach to the enforcement of safety and market surveillance rules across the EU.

II. Consumer information and education and support to consumer organisations

Developing modern evidence on how markets work for consumers and businesses – notably through the Consumer Scoreboards – helps Member States to identify areas where the EU is not delivering fully for the internal market, and contributes to better policy-making. Collecting such evidence at EU level ensures methodological consistency and comparability across time and countries, allowing Member States to benchmark the consumer outcomes of their policies.

Enhancing knowledge also entails making sure that consumers are informed of their rights, supporting consumer education, and building the capacity of consumer organisations, especially in Member States with weaker consumer cultures (NB. local courses organised in Member States are given the national language). Both the capacity building and the consumer education actions target EU-wide audiences with a view of sharing best EU wide practice.

III. Rights and redress: to develop and reinforce consumer rights

Enforcement efforts seek to ensure that citizens feel adequately protected from unsafe products and unfair commercial practices, and that businesses and industry can operate in open and fair markets. EU consumer policy also aims to boost consumers and traders trust by giving them access to more efficient and cost-effective means of out of court redress, notably through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and online dispute resolution (ODR) mechanisms.

IV. Enforcement: to support enforcement of consumer rights

Stepping up enforcement of the EU consumer acquis through the revision of the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Regulation is one of the objectives of the Digital Single Market strategy. The CPC network has an important role in this respect as it allows Member State authorities to cooperate and tackle infringements with a cross-border dimension. For widespread infringements such as concerning internet platforms or big market players, it is more efficient and effective to pool resources and coordinate enforcement action at EU level. The Consumer Programme supports these coordinated actions as well as the pre-requisite building of capacity and joint expertise in investigation and enforcement, for instance to raise digital investigations knowledge and standards in Member State authorities to ensure an equal level of enforcement through the Single Market.

The role of the European Consumer Centres (ECCs) is also relevant in this respect; it contributes towards the governance and performance of the Single Market and helps the European consumers to get the redress they deserve when purchasing abroad or while travelling. ECCs act as a consumer rights information service for the citizens and are an important component of the

Consumer Programme. They also play the role of consumers' advocates in trying to get a settlement in cross-border trade issues and contribute to the promotion the use of the Alternative Dispute Resolution. Many ECCs also serve as the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) contact points, and in some instances, Member States conferred on them the power to issue external alerts to consumer protection authorities under Article 27 (1) of the new CPC Regulation as from 17 January 2020.

Implementation mode

Direct management via grants and procurement. Grants are mostly implemented by the Consumer, Health and Food Executive Agency (CHAFEA), implementation of procurement actions is shared between DG Justice and Consumers and CHAFEA, with some limited sub-delegations to DG SANTE, GROW and DIGIT.

II. Programme Implementation Update

Implementation Status (2017-2019)

The implementation of the Consumer Programme 2014 – 2020 is well on track to meet its multiannual objectives. Most of the related performance indicators expected for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 2018 and 2019 have been achieved.

The annual work programmes (commitments):

- 2014 (EUR 21.9 million operational budget) was executed at 98.3 %
- 2015 (EUR 22.5 million) executed at 99 %
- 2016 (EUR 23.7 million) executed at 99 %
- 2017 (EUR 24.7 million) executed at 94,5 %
- 2018 (EUR 25.7 million) executed at 100 %
- 2019 (EUR 27.2 million) executed at 73 % (data from January 2020). Global commitments for the remaining already defined actions (legal commitments to be concluded during the first half of 2020) were done at the end of 2019.

Key achievements

I. Safety: to consolidate and enhance product safety

Product safety in single market is a key concern of the EU and it is one of the main focus of the activities funded by the programme in particular through a EU-wide alert system to notify dangerous product and awareness-raising activities.

Rapid Alert System (RAPEX) becomes Safety Gate

The Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products (RAPEX) underwent in 2019 a revamping of its website, renamed 'Safety Gate'. It has become more user friendly and is available in all EU official languages. The system has continued during the last years to support the exchange of information between Member States and the Commission on measures taken against dangerous products. In 2019 Member States' authorities communicated through the system more than 2.000 notifications of dangerous products.

EU Product Safety Award

In 2019 the Commission launched a new initiative: the EU Product Safety Award to showcase best business practices in consumer protection that can serve as an inspiration for other companies. The winners were announced in September 2019. Winner companies were identified in 2 categories: large companies and SMEs. In total 8 awards (gold, silver and bronze as well as a 'special mention' in each category) were awarded to companies excelling in the safety of childcare products.

II. Consumer information and education and support to consumer organisations

Informed consumers, aware of their rights, are at the centre of EU consumer policy: the programme pursues this objective through targeted information and education campaigns.

Thanks to the success encountered, the SME training pilot project 'Consumer Law Ready' was in 2019 integrated to the Consumer programme. It received new funding and saw its duration extended.

The month of November marked the release of the [2019 edition of the Consumer Conditions Scoreboard](#). It showed among others that over 70 % of EU consumers trust retailers to respect their consumer rights and that more than half of consumers (an increasing proportion) are attentive to product's green claims when shopping.

III. Rights and redress: to develop and reinforce consumer rights

Online Dispute Resolution platform

The Online Dispute Resolution platform became more efficient and user friendly by adding new functionalities, including – a self-assessment for the consumers, a useful tool to help people to find the most appropriate means of redress.

IV. Enforcement: to support enforcement of consumer rights

Having good EU consumer legislation in place is alone not enough: its enforcement remains a key aspect to which the programme

devotes part of the funding each year.

Support for the Consumer Protection Cooperation- EU-wide screening

In 2019 the Consumer programme supported the implementation of an EU-wide screening ('sweep') of 481 e-shops selling clothing and footwear, furniture and household items, and electric appliances was carried out by consumer protection authorities of 27 countries (25 EU countries, Norway and Iceland) under the coordination of the Commission. The findings reveal that two-thirds of the screened websites do not comply with basic EU consumer rights such as:

- Nearly 45 % of all the websites screened did not provide an easily accessible link to the Online Dispute Resolution platform on their website, informing consumers on their possibilities in case of a dispute;
- More than a quarter of the flagged websites did not inform consumers in a clear and comprehensible manner about the conditions and the time limit to withdraw from a contract (14 days of receiving the good without the need to give a justification);
- Nearly half of the flagged websites did not clearly indicate the time-limit to return the item within 14 days from the moment they have notified the trader of their intention to withdraw;
- Over a third of the flagged websites did not remind consumers of the existence of the minimum 2-year legal guarantee to have a good repaired, replaced or reimbursed in case it was faulty at the moment of delivery;
- Over one fifth of the flagged websites did not include delivery, postal or other additional mandatory charges or information about the possibility of such charges in the price initially shown;
- One fifth of the flagged websites did not respect the 'shop like a local principle' as enshrined in the Geo-Blocking Regulation which allows consumers to shop from websites not delivering in their country of residence, provided that traders deliver to an address in the country served by the trader.

Evaluation/studies conducted

The survey on scams and fraud that consumers experience found that 56 % of European Consumers have been exposed to scams and fraud. It also analysed the channels through which consumers are exposed to fraud and the financial and other impacts from this fraud. It came out that fraudsters and scammers are most active online, using email (43 % of cases) and online advertisements. Phone calls (either mobile or fixed line) are also widely used (28 % of cases). People who are less active online are more likely to be targeted in phone-based fraud. Overall the financial loss is estimated at 24 billions over 2 years. The study also confirmed that consumers rarely report fraud. These findings will help to better fight against mass consumer fraud.

Evaluation of the Programme

In November 2019 the Commission published its report on the mid-term evaluation of the Consumer Programme 2014-2020: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/com/2019/0490/COM_COM\(2019\)0490_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/com/2019/0490/COM_COM(2019)0490_EN.pdf). It was prepared following an external study on Ex-post evaluation of the Consumer Programme 2007-13 and mid-term evaluation of the Consumer Programme 2014-2020 launched in October 2017. The study showed that the Consumer Programme 2014 – 2020 achieved progress towards meeting the programme's specific objectives in the areas of safety, consumer information and education, rights and redress and enforcement. The costs are assessed as being proportional to the benefits achieved and the EU added value is considered high. The results of this study show a general satisfaction of the stakeholders in terms of relevance and effectiveness of the activities.

Overall, the objectives and priorities of the Consumer Programme were so far assessed as being still very relevant. The evaluation concludes that in the future, the programme's ability to react to new challenges related to market developments, digitalisation and new policy demands should be strengthened. Additional priorities could be given to sustainable consumption, to activities that contribute to a uniform and high level of consumer protection throughout the EU, and to support to consumer organisations at the Member State level (e.g. jointly with the Member States in their role as consumer watchdogs).

In terms of coherence, there seems to be little overlaps with other programmes, but quite a significant potential for increasing synergies with activities in other areas, for example, it was suggested to involve national consumer organisations into consumer information and education campaigns, to increase synergies between the actions, and at the same time strengthen the capacity of these organisations. Representatives of ECCs suggested increasing the synergy with the CPC Network by increasing the number and scope of joint activities.

In terms of efficiency, there seems to be significant room for improvement regarding administrative burdens related to the programme delivery and scope for simplification as regards grants for joint actions and exchange of officials.

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Forthcoming implementation

Measures to help enforce consumer legislation and consumer rights and measures to enforce product safety will remain the priority, accounting for around 75 % of the operational budget of the Programme.

A high level of consumer product safety will continue to be supported through actions intended to step up enforcement by Member States, with an emphasis on market surveillance concerning products sold online, using as a service contract for market surveillance activities related to General Product Safety Directive and exchanges of enforcement officials aimed at capacity building and best practice sharing.

The functioning of the Safety Gate: the rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products will also receive continued support and will be promoted via communication events such as its annual media event.

Following preparatory work done in 2019, several educational videos for consumers focusing on sustainable consumption, financial literacy, internet safety and data protection issues will be produced in 2020.

In 2020, the Commission plans to launch a new Consumer Education and awareness programme, which will include educational tools for schools, addressing teachers, raising the awareness of consumer policy/law and the importance of consumer education.

The financial support to EU-level consumer organisations will continue to be instrumental to ensure a strong enough consumer voice at EU level. Capacity-building activities for national consumer organisations will continue focusing for instance on the promotion of sustainable consumption, the prevention of vulnerabilities and the preparation to new tasks of consumer organisations in relation to the enforcement of consumer rights.

Within the aim to enhance the circular economy and consumers' more respectful gestures towards environment while shopping or managing their waste, a study on ways to empower consumers to play an active role in the green transition will be carried out.

In 2020, the enforcement of consumer rights will be further strengthened through the support of activities of the Consumer Protection Cooperation network. Activities aiming at building the capacity of national enforcement authorities to conduct online investigations will also take place, in particular through e-learning modules (second phase of the E-enforcement academy project will be launched).

The programme will continue the funding of European Consumer Centres and support to the operation of the Online Dispute Resolution platform.

Outlook for the 2021-2027 period

For the upcoming financial perspectives, it has been proposed to integrate the Consumer Programme to a new Single Market Programme, in the spirit of continuity, flexibility and EU value added. The Single Market Programme is adopting a new and innovative approach towards delivering the Single Market on the ground by improving synergies, achieving better value for money and providing greater visibility for the Single Market. Under the new Consumer Programme, the same priorities and actions in the area of product safety, awareness-raising, EU-level enforcement actions, cooperation of the CPC network and support to ADR bodies will continue to be funded. New priorities are being put forward, including:

- protection of vulnerable consumers will be reinforced, especially in the context of consumer fraud;
- accent will be put on sustainable consumption;
- support to national consumer organisations in their new role of qualified entities will be foreseen;
- cooperation with third countries may be further developed and;
- data on market issues and on impacts of new technologies will be further improved.

In November 2018, the Council reached a partial general approach for all the technical aspects of the regulation except for certain horizontal provisions and the budgetary envelopes. In the EP, IMCO adopted a report in February 2019, Mr Brando Benifei (S&D, IT) is the new rapporteur, the plenary approved the report and adopted its negotiation mandate on 8 October 2019. After a standstill period trilogues restart in February 2020.

III. Programme key facts and performance framework

1. Financial programming

Legal Basis	Period of application	Reference Amount (EUR million)
Regulation (EU) No 254/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on a multiannual consumer programme for the years 2014-20 and repealing Decision No 1926/2006/EC	2014 – 2020	188,8

	Financial Programming (EUR million)							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total Programme
Administrative support	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,0	0,8	0,8	7,2
Operational appropriations	21,3	21,9	23,1	24,1	25,2	26,6	27,0	169,2
Executive Agency	1,7	1,7	1,7	1,7	1,7	1,8	1,8	12,1
Total	24,1	24,7	25,9	26,9	28,0	29,3	29,7	188,4

2. Implementation rates

	2019				2020			
	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate
Voted appropriations	29,255	99,96 %	26,642	97,67 %	29,685	14,19 %	27,685	21,75 %
Authorised appropriations (*)	29,968	99,92 %	28,013	96,64 %	30,413	16,17 %	28,949	23,91 %

(*) Authorised appropriations include voted appropriations, appropriations originating from assigned revenues (internal and external) as well as carried-over and reconstituted appropriations; the execution rate is calculated on 15 April 2020

3. Performance information

Programme performance

The Consumer Programme 2014 – 2020 achieved progress towards meeting the programme’s specific objectives in the areas of safety, consumer information and education, rights and redress and enforcement, with a high EU added value in particular in a highly inter-connected economy.

In the field of product safety, the Commission has promoted and facilitate cooperation among enforcement authorities by financing joint sampling and testing activities on specific products, which eventually feed the Safety Gate: the rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products, as well as knowledge sharing activities on a variety of market surveillance issues.

To ensure a much closer cooperation between the European Commission and Member States market surveillance authorities, the Commission switched from a grant to a tender procedure, signing the first contract in January 2019 and the second in December 2019. The main objective of the CASP 2019 and 2020 projects (Coordinated Activities on the Safety of Products) is to foster cooperation by implementing a package of product specific and horizontal activities with flexibility and efficiency. Since 2019, the exchanges of product safety enforcement officials have also been integrated within this project. The activity is called ‘VisitUs’. During a period of 6 months (October 2019 – March 2020), 26 officials participated to the exchange in this new form.

The exchanges of Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) officials (55 in 2019) continue under the previous scheme (special indemnities).

Cooperation between national authorities through the Safety Gate: the rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products has significantly increased over time, since the system’s creation in 2003. The feedback ratio of reports of other authorities to ‘serious risk’ notifications increased from 0.90 in 2013 to 2.16 in 2019 (these very good statistics can also be explained by the fact that a notification can trigger several reactions from authorities of other Member States). The number of notifications has now stabilised at a regular rate with just over 2 000 per year.

Thanks to an annual operating grant of EUR 2 million, awarded in 2019 in the framework of the Framework Partnership Agreement 20018-2021, the European Consumer Organisation BEUC could carry out various activities in favour of defending the interests of all Europe’s consumers.

The Consumer Programme has funded several communication and information campaigns, to promote consumer rights while travelling and shopping (including online shopping), to promote and inform about the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform, which is today also a modern way to register consumer complaints, replacing other systems such as the European Consumer Complaints Registration system (ECCRS). Since the launch of the ODR platform, almost 130 000 consumers decided to lodge a complaint. On the basis of the available data, it is estimated that about 40 % complaints are resolved, either bilaterally between the consumer and the trader following the contact from the ODR platform, or by ADR bodies accessible via ODR platform. In 2019, the number of cases dealt with by a Union-wide online dispute resolution system reached almost 130.000 and overpassed the target set.

The programme has supported the National Consumer protection cooperation. In 2018 national CPC authorities worked together and with the Commission to address misleading commercial practices of major online operators, namely, Facebook, Airbnb and booking.com. The objective was to improve the transparency of their offers and the fairness of their terms and condition. Furthermore, intense work took place to ensure that national authorities implement efficiently the new CPC Regulation (Regulation 2017/2394, entering into force on 17 January 2020) and have a modern IT system to support their cooperation.

Thanks to the support provided from the Consumer Programme, the second phase of the e-enforcement academy, set up to boost the CPC network and the ability of product safety networks to conduct online investigations, started in 2019. The first phase of the project (2017-18) was successful, providing national CPC and product safety authorities with various deliverables.

The Consumer Programme has provided funding for the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC Net). The ECC-Net which exists since 15 years, helps consumers with cross-border purchases, explaining their rights when shopping internationally and, where necessary, helping them seek redress against a trader in another EU country, Iceland or Norway. In 2014 ECC-Net developed a ‘Travel App’ to help consumers exercise their rights while on holiday abroad. Over 120 000 consumers received assistance in 2019.

General objectives

General Objective 1: to ensure a high level of consumer protection, to empower consumers and to place the consumer at the heart of the internal market, within the framework of an overall strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

Indicator 1: Consumer conditions index								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2014	Milestones foreseen							2020
Knowledge and Trust: 55.06			56.00		58.00			60.00
	Actual results							
	55.06		59.30		55.87			
2014	Milestones foreseen							2020
Compliance and Enforcement: 71.91			73.00		74.00			75.00
	Actual results							
	71.91		74.99		73.81			
2014	Milestones foreseen							2020
Complaints and Dispute Resolution: 58.97			60.00		61.00			63.00
	Actual results							
	58.97		60.34		59.45			

Methodology: Measurement out of 100

Narrative: A possible explanation for a decrease in figures in 2018 is linked to a combination of factors and different hypotheses are quoted. The decline in the UK has been particularly marked, but even the EU27 aggregate (without the UK) shows a sizeable decrease. The decline is mostly due to decreases in some large Western EU Member States (our EU aggregates are weighted by population). As the methodology for the computation of the indicators related to the CCI and its components has been revised in 2016, the 2014 values for the indicators are not directly computable (data between 2014 and 2016 are not directly comparable). Therefore, the values for 2014 have been back-estimated by applying to the 2016 values the changes in percentage points observed between 2016 and 2014 (computed on indicators based on the same methodology). By doing that, the values for 2014 have been slightly revised with respect to the initial baseline.

Comment: Result indicator: ‘pillars’ of the consumer conditions index (data available every two years). This indicator is related to the Specific objective 4.1 ‘Consolidate and improve the rights of consumers when purchasing in the Single Market’, within the General objective ‘A Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base’ as adopted in the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 of DG Justice and Consumers. The Consumer Condition Index provides an overview of the key indicators describing the consumer environment at national level, as measured through surveys of perceptions, attitudes and experiences of consumers and of retailers.

Availability of Data: 2019 results not available: The result for 2018 remains the latest available

Source: Consumer and retailer surveys for the Consumer Conditions Scoreboard (biennial frequency).

Specific objectives

Specific Objective 1: Safety: to consolidate and enhance product safety through effective market surveillance throughout the Union

Performance

The Consumer and retailer surveys for the Consumer Conditions Scoreboard are carried out with biennial frequency.

The Consumer scoreboards provide an overview of how the EU’s single market works for consumers. Published since 2008, the scoreboards monitor consumer outcomes and provide evidence to inform policy. There are 2 types of consumer scoreboards: the markets scoreboard and conditions scoreboard. Published in alternate years, they are based on EU-wide representative surveys.

A decrease in figures in 2018 is linked can be due to a combination of factors and different hypotheses are quoted.

The decline in the UK has been particularly marked, but even the EU27 aggregate (without the UK) shows a sizeable decrease. The decline is mostly due to decreases in some large Western EU Member States (our EU aggregates are weighted by population).

The new edition of the Markets Scoreboard is also under preparation. The Scoreboard was revamped in order to take into account the changes in consumption patterns and to respond better to enforcement and policy priorities.

Progressive increase in cooperation between national authorities through the Safety Gate: the rapid alert system for dangerous non-

food products is mirrored by an increase of the feedback ratio of reports of other authorities to ‘serious risk’ notifications from 0,90 in 2013 to 2,16 in 2019 (these very good statistics can also be explained by the fact that a notification can trigger several reactions from authorities of other Member States). The number of notifications has now stabilised at a regular rate with just over 2.000 per year. Taking into account global trade, further developing online shopping, as well as more and more direct sales to EU consumers from traders of third countries, the European Commission and national authorities collaborating through the Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products are also working closely with large international markets to exchange information and to increase cooperation, including at the level of online platforms.

Indicator 1: % of RAPEX (rapid alert system for dangerous consumers products) notifications entailing at least one reaction (by other Member States)

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
43 %	45 %							48 %
	Actual results							
	42 %	40 %	46 %	46 %	56 %	49 %		

Narrative: Target: Increase of 10 % (to 47.5 %), compared to the 2010 value.

Indicator 2: Ratio number of reactions / number of notifications (serious risks)

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
1.07	1.15							1.23
	Actual results							
	1.28	1.56	1.80	1.66	1.97	2.16		

Narrative: Target: Increase of 15 % compared to 2010 (to 1.23)

Comment: This indicator indicates the ratio number of reactions divided by the number of RAPEX notifications received under Art. 12 of the General Product Safety Directive 2001/95/EC, serious risks. So it should be 1 % to be good, if it is > 1 %, it means that Member States carry out market surveillance also when they do not have the legal obligation. A notification can trigger several reactions from authorities of other Member States.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
scientific advice	33 04 01	1	0,4
market surveillance and enforcement actions	33 04 01	6	3,6
cosmetics portal and database	33 04 01	2	0,5
Total		9	4,5

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
scientific advice	F	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	P	1	1	1	1	1	1	
market surveillance and enforcement actions	F	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
	P	6	6	5	5	6	6	
cosmetics portal and database	F	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	P	2	2	2	2	2	2	

Specific Objective 2: Consumer information and education, and support to consumer organisations: to improve consumers’ education, information and awareness of their rights, to develop the evidence base for consumer policy and to provide support to consumer organisations, including taking into account the specific needs of vulnerable consumers

Performance

The initial 2020 target for the implementation of the 2010 Commission Recommendation on harmonising the registration of consumer complaints – in terms of the number of complaints handling bodies/countries submitting harmonised complaints data – was achieved early, in 2015, and the targets were revised upwards at that time. The number of participating countries continued to grow and by end 2016, 77 consumer organisations from 23 EU Member States and 1 EEA country (Norway) had sent harmonised

complaints data to the Commission (around half of them on regular basis), bringing the total number of records in the harmonised database to 6.15 million by end 2017. However, in 2017 the situation of the project – in particular the development and maintenance of the harmonised database – was re-assessed in view of competing priorities and resource limitations, in a context where its continuation in the medium and longer term was conditional of major upgrades in the underlying IT system. The development of the project was therefore put on hold and, after a consultation with the Member States’ representatives, a decision to discontinue its maintenance was taken in 2018.

In practice, evidence for policymaking is gathered more efficiently through dedicated and focused market studies, consumer and retailer surveys, which can target emerging issues and gather data with higher value. Complaint data are in any case already gathered through various tools owned by the Consumer enforcement and redress unit (newly launched ECC-Net compliant platform, ODR and the legally binding IT tool of the Committee on Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPCS), covering all relevant data except national offline complaints). For instance, the ODR platform connects 443 dispute resolution bodies from 30 countries. In the ODR platform, both parties have to agree on transfer of complaints to the ADR body. However, the consumers can use the ODR platform to find an ADR body who may be able to receive complaints directly. 30 national European Consumer Centres (ECCs) (EU, NO, IS) are not, per se, complaint handling bodies, but they work closely with the enforcement authorities.

Indicator 1: Number of complaint bodies and number of countries submitting complaints to the European Consumer Complaints Registration system (ECCRS).

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2012	Milestones foreseen							2020
Complaint bodies: 33	Actual results							100
	37	73	77	77				
2012	Milestones foreseen							2020
Countries: 7	Actual results							25
	13	20	24	24				

Narrative: Systems were decommissioned by 2018 – no more data

Comment: After a consultation with the Member States’ representatives, a decision to discontinue its maintenance was taken in 2018, due to competing priorities and resource limitations. Complaint data are in any case already gathered through various tools owned by the Consumer enforcement and redress unit (newly launched ECC-Net compliant platform, ODR and the legally binding IT tool of the Committee on Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPCS), covering all relevant data except national offline complaints). The 2020 target was already reached in 2015. We revise the 2020 target and milestones to make them more ambitious.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
evidence base	33 04 01	3	3,3
support to consumer organisations	33 04 01	3	4
consumer information	33 04 01	7	2
consumer education	33 04 01	2	1
Total		15	10,3

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
evidence base	F	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	P	3	3	3	3	3	3	
support to consumer organisations	F	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	P	3	3	3	3	3	3	
consumer information	F	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	P	7	7	5	7	7	7	
consumer education	F	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	P	2	2	2	2	2	2	

Specific Objective 3: Rights and redress: to develop and reinforce consumer rights in particular through smart regulatory action

and improving access to simple, efficient, expedient and low-cost redress including alternative dispute resolution

Performance

The proportion of referrals of unresolved cases to ADR depends on the performance of ADR/ODR and the traders’ engagement in the alternative dispute resolution system.

The choice to refer the cases to ADR by consumer centres depends on their experience with traders being ready to submit to ADR and the efficiency of the ADR bodies in any particular jurisdiction. Consequently, ECCs will decrease the number of cases referred to ADR if they perceive that other means of redress (courts, EPO, ESCP, enforcement bodies or the police) are more likely to help the consumer. Moreover, with the launch of ODR the consumers can attempt alternative dispute resolution entirely online: 13,363 cross-border complaints were submitted directly to ODR compared to 5,323 cases submitted to ECCs in 2017 that were closed as unresolved during the year.

It is therefore necessary to re-evaluate the target setting methodology to adapt it for monitoring the performance of ADR/ODR and develop new indicators which would be better suited for assessing the performance of ECCs.

Also, the ECCs are funded under specific objective four (enforcement) and not under specific objective three, which concerns ADR/ODR (rights and redress).

Since the launch of the ODR platform, almost 130 000 consumers decided to lodge a complaint. On the basis of the available data, it is estimated that about 40 % complaints are resolved, either bilaterally between the consumer and the trader following the contact from the ODR platform, or by ADR bodies accessible via ODR platform.

The Commission Report on the implementation of the ADR/ODR legislation of September 2019 concluded that the Member States achieved full territorial and (with some punctual gaps) sectoral coverage of ADR in all segments of consumer market. The ADR bodies in the EU Member States benefitted, for the second time, for the financial support in the form of grants for capacity building and mutual learning.

Indicator 1: % of those cases dealt with by European Consumer Centres (ECCs) and not resolved directly with traders which were subsequently referred to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
9 %	Actual results							75.00 %
	40.00 %							
	16.20 %	16.00 %	18.00 %	11.15 %	14.00 %			

Comment: This indicator is not suited for assessing the performance of ECCs. The proportion of referrals of unresolved cases to ADR depends on the performance of ADR/ODR and the traders’ engagement in the alternative dispute resolution system. The choice to refer the cases to ADR by consumer centres depends on their experience with traders being ready to submit to ADR and the efficiency of the ADR bodies in any particular jurisdiction. Consequently, ECCs will decrease the number of cases referred to ADR if they perceive that other means of redress (courts, EPO, ESCP, enforcement bodies or the police) are more likely to help the consumer. Moreover, with the launch of ODR the consumers can attempt alternative dispute resolution entirely online: 13 363 cross-border complaints were submitted directly to ODR compared to 5 323 cases submitted to ECCs in 2017 that were closed as unresolved during the year. It is therefore necessary to re-evaluate the target setting methodology to adapt it for monitoring the performance of ADR/ODR. Also, the ECCs are funded under specific objective four (enforcement) and not under specific objective three, which concerns ADR/ODR (rights and redress).

Availability of Data: 2019 results not available: CHAFAEA confirmed ECC reports for 2019 are not due before end February.

Indicator 2: Number of cases dealt with by a Union-wide online dispute resolution system

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
17 500	Actual results							100 000
	50 000							
	25 384		20 176	52 735	97 762	129 456		

Comment: ODR platform became operational in February 2016.

Unit of measure: Complaints received by ECCs related to e-commerce.

Indicator 3: % of consumers who took action in response to a problem encountered in the past 12 months.

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2012	Milestones foreseen							2020
83.00 %			80.00 %		85.00 %			90.00 %

	Actual results					
	75.00 %		69.00 %		77.49 %	

Comment: As the methodology for the computation of the indicator has been revised in 2016, the values for 2014 and 2012 are not directly computable with those of 2016. Therefore, the values for 2014 and 2012 have been back-estimated by applying to the 2016 values the changes in percentage points observed between 2016 and 2014 and between 2016 and 2012 (computed on indicators based on the same methodology). By doing that, the values for 2014 have been slightly revised with respect to that reported in the previous edition of this document.

Availability of Data: Data collected every second year.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
preparation of legislation	33 04 01	5	2
coordination and monitoring of ADR and operation of the ODR platform	33 04 01	2	1
Total		7	3

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
preparation of legislation	F	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	P	5	4	3	5	5	5	
coordination and monitoring of ADR and operation of the ODR platform	F	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	P	1	2	2	2	2	2	

Specific Objective 4: Enforcement: to support enforcement of consumer rights by strengthening cooperation between national enforcement bodies and by supporting consumers with advice

Performance

For indicator 1, the numbers for 2019 are below the 2017 milestone (but improvement over 2018). However, this issue has been addressed through the adoption of the new CPC Regulation (Regulation 2017/2394, applicable from 17 January 2020) based on which the Commission has a stronger monitoring role on all CPC activities, and especially in order to ensure the respect of deadlines by CPC authorities (Article 14(5)). Moreover, in line with the new CPC Regulation, the Commission has developed a new electronic database replacing the current CPCS IT tool, which will serve the cooperation needs better.

For indicator 2, the number of enforcement request which have been dealt with within 12 months is below the 2017 milestone (but improved over 2018). This indicator is, however, no longer relevant: the issue has been addressed through the adoption of the new CPC Regulation (Regulation 2017/2394, applicable from 17 January 2020) which introduced a clear new time frame. With the new legislation, the Commission has a stronger monitoring role on all CPC activities, and especially in order to ensure the respect of deadlines by CPC authorities (Article 14(5)). The new CPC regulation requires CPC authorities to deal with request for enforcement measures with no delay and at the latest within 6 months, unless justified in exceptional circumstances.

For indicator 3, the number of requests to exchange information, which have been dealt with within 3 months increased in 2019 to almost attain the 2017 milestone. This indicator is, however, no longer relevant as a clear new time frame has been introduced by the new CPC Regulation. The new CPC Regulation (Regulation 2017/2394, applicable from 17 January 2020) has introduced a stronger monitoring role on all CPC activities, and especially in order to ensure the respect of deadlines by CPC authorities (Article 14(5)). The new CPC regulation requires CPC authorities to deal with information requests with no delay and at the latest within 30 days, unless agreed otherwise in exceptional circumstances.

Indicators 2 and 3 for year 2020 will not be relevant anymore given that the reformed CPC Regulation introduced new time frames.

Indicator 1: Level of information flow and cooperation within the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2007-2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of requests to exchange information between CPC authorities: 129				156				167
	Actual results							
	132	122	68	80	44	39		

2007-2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of requests for enforcement measures between CPC authorities: 142				172				185
	Actual results							
	130	138	194	198	109	127		
2007-2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of alerts within the CPC network: 63				76				82
	Actual results							
	35	45	57	78	53	25		

Narrative: Target:

a – Increase of 30 % (to 167)

b – Increase of 30 % (to 185)

c – Increase of 30 % (to 82)

Comment: Current situation: annualised averages 2007-10. Cases opened in 2015. 2015 is a year with many new cases, but as the case load can vary substantially, the progress will have to be monitored over a couple of year before updating the targets. These numbers are to be confirmed once the technical problem with our reporting tool is solved. The numbers for 2018 are below the 2017 values. However, this issue has been addressed through the adoption of the new CPC Regulation (Regulation 2017/2394), based on which the Commission has a stronger monitoring role on all CPC activities, and especially in order to ensure the respect of deadlines by CPC authorities (Article 14(5)). Moreover, under the new CPC Regulation, the Commission is currently developing a new electronic database replacing the current CPCS IT tool, which will serve the cooperation needs better.

Indicator 2: % of enforcement requests handled within 12 months within the CPC Network								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2007-2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
50.00 %				55.00 %				60.00 %
	Actual results							
	51.00 %	46.00 %	26.30 %	14.23 %	23.30 %	28.00 %		

Comment: This percentage is to be confirmed once the technical problem with QV reporting is solved for CPCS. The number of enforcement request which have been dealt with within 12 months is below the 2017 value. However, this issue has been addressed through the adoption of the new CPC Regulation (Regulation 2017/2394) based on which the Commission has a stronger monitoring role on all CPC activities, and especially in order to ensure the respect of deadlines by CPC authorities (Article 14(5)). The new CPC regulation requires CPC authorities to deal with request for enforcement measures with no delay and at the latest within 6 months, unless justified in exceptional circumstances. Regulation 2017/2394 will be applicable from 17 January 2020. This indicator is, therefore, no longer relevant as a clear new time frame has been introduced by the new CPC Regulation. Until the entry into application of the new CPC Regulation, the Commission will regularly report on open cases within the CPC Network, and continue to discuss delays with the Member States concerned to ensure that enforcement request are carried out efficiently and timely.

Indicator 3: % of information requests handled within 3 months within the CPC Network								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2007-2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
33.00 %				37.00 %				50.00 %
	Actual results							
	34.00 %	38.00 %	25.37 %	22.78 %	28.89 %	36.00 %		

Comment: Cases opened in 2013, 2014 and 2015 Q1-Q3; This % is to be confirmed once the technical problem with QV reporting is solved for CPCS. The number of requests to exchange information which have been dealt with within 3 months is below the 2017 milestone. However, this issue has been addressed through the adoption of the new CPC Regulation (Regulation 2017/2394) based on which the Commission has a stronger monitoring role on all CPC activities, and especially in order to ensure the respect of deadlines by CPC authorities (Article 14(5)). The new CPC regulation requires CPC authorities to deal with information requests with no delay and at the latest within 30 days, unless agreed otherwise in exceptional circumstances. Regulation 2017/2394 will be applicable from 17 January 2020. This indicator is, therefore, no longer relevant as a clear new time frame has been introduced by the new CPC Regulation. Until the entry into application of the new CPC Regulation, the Commission will regularly report on open cases within the CPC Network, and continue to discuss delays with the Member States concerned to ensure that information exchanges are carried out efficiently and timely.

Even if indicators 2 and 3 fall below the 2017 milestone, the issue was addressed by the recently adopted reformed CPC Regulation – Regulation 2017/2394) as explained under Indicators 2 and 3. Indicators 2 and 3 for year 2020 will not be relevant anymore given that the reformed CPC Regulation introduced new time frames. Moreover, under the new CPC Regulation, the Commission is currently developing a new electronic database replacing the current CPCS IT tool, which will serve the cooperation needs better.

Indicator 4: Number of contacts with consumers handled by the European Consumer Centres (ECC).								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
71 000				88 750				106 500
	Actual results							
	83 425	93 964	111 563	99 201	124 054	120 443		

Narrative: Target: Increase of 50 % (to 106500), compared to 2010

Indicator 5: Number of visits to the website of the ECCs.								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
3 000 000				3 900 000				5 100 000
	Actual results							
	3 868 979	4 694 205	4 286 984	4 528 585	5 450 421			

Narrative: Target: Increase of 70 % (to 5100000), compared to 2013

Availability of Data: 2019 results not available: CHAFEA confirmed ECC reports for 2019 are not due before end February.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
CPC coordination of enforcement actions	33 04 01	4	3
support to the European Consumer Centres	33 04 01	2	6,7
Total		6	9,7

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
CPC coordination of enforcement actions**	F	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	P	4	3*	3*	4	4	4	
support to the European Consumer Centres	F	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	P	2	2	2	2	2	2	

4. Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy and mainstreaming of policies

Gender mainstreaming

All the consumer evidence collected through surveys, market studies and behavioural studies is gender disaggregated and analysed for any significant gender-based differences on a regular basis. However, we cannot estimate a specific budget allocated to gender mainstreaming.

5. Programme contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

The Consumer Programme contributed via its dedicated energy efficiency awareness raising actions.

SDG 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

The Consumer Programme contributed via awareness raising actions targeting consumers promoting green transitions and circular economy.