



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: Commission
to: Council
Subject: COUNCIL "COMPETITIVENESS" (Internal Market, Industry and Research)
on 10 December 2010

Fourth Consumer Markets Scoreboard

- *Information from the Commission*
(Other business item)

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission on the above-mentioned subject.

The Consumer Markets Scoreboard

The Scoreboard is a market monitoring tool which analyses how the single market is working both at national and EU level from a consumer point of view. It acts as the alarm system which informs national and EU policymakers of the problems faced by consumers and it communicates to citizens that their daily concerns are being addressed.

In 2010, two Scoreboards were published:

- The autumn edition analysed approximately 50 consumer markets in order to identify those at risk of malfunctioning. In-depth market studies will be then conducted, to analyse the problems and to propose solutions.
- The spring edition provided data on national consumer environments and it analysed the level of integration of the internal market.

Both editions deliver robust data at both EU and national level, enabling national policymakers to peer review national performance. Member States are fully involved in the Scoreboard throughout the Consumer Markets Experts Group.

Autumn Scoreboard

The 4th edition of the Scoreboard was published on 22 October 2010. It ranks consumer markets by looking at indicators such as comparability of offers, citizen trust in retailers' compliance with consumer rules, overall satisfaction, problems, complaints, the ease of switching providers, prices and safety. Some of these indicators are based on a market monitoring survey measuring the reported opinions of consumers with recent purchasing experience in each market. This ensures that these opinions reflect informed views.

According to the Scoreboard, losses incurred by European consumers, as a result of problems for which they had cause for complaint, are estimated at approximately 0.3% of EU's GDP. A better use of this money could result in the purchase of efficient and innovative goods and services which would provide the EU's economy with a much needed boost.

Consumer policy can play an important role in stimulating innovation and efficiency and in boosting the competitive advantage of the EU. Effective enforcement would rebuild trust in markets. Consumers who are provided with the necessary tools and skills to understand the more complex choices on offer would reward efficient and innovative providers with their business. The 4th Scoreboard contains indexes for all Member States included in the survey, which show how consumers rate the 50 markets included in the study. By focusing their efforts on the most problematic sectors, national policymakers can tailor their national research activities and enforcement priorities to the concerns of their citizens.

The 4th Scoreboard shows that "*investments, pensions and securities*", "*real estate services*" and "*internet service provision*" are the three markets most likely to be failing consumers across the EU. Among goods markets, "*second-hand cars*", "*clothing and footwear*" and "*meat*" have scored lowest.

The 4th Scoreboard launched two studies on the markets of "*meat*" and "*internet service provision*". The results should be published at the end of 2011.

Previous market studies launched by the Scoreboard have identified important policy challenges. The study on the prices of current accounts showed that opacity of tariffs is linked to higher prices and that this market remains fragmented across national borders. The study on retail investment services showed that 3 in 5 consumers rely on advice and that less than 2 in 100 consumers can make correct decisions in the analysed investment products. The study on the electricity market showed that EU consumers could save about 13 billion Euros by switching to a better electricity supplier. The e-commerce report revealed that, despite the important potential for savings, most e-commerce traders refuse to serve clients outside of their country.

Spring Scoreboard

The spring Scoreboard was published on 29 March 2010. It provides many data sources on the situation of national consumer environments, such as the proportion of consumers satisfied with existing consumer protection measures, those who trust public authorities to protect their rights, the percentage of consumers who made complaints and whether they were satisfied, use of redress mechanisms, enforcement, affordability, etc. The development of cross-border business-to-consumer trade is also monitored through various indicators.

The Scoreboard is also potential good source of information for the EU2020 reporting process on the integrated guidelines and the National Reform Programmes.