



*Promoting a **harmonised energy regulatory framework** in the Mediterranean.*

BEST PRACTICES TO ENHANCE CONSUMERS' ENGAGEMENT

Working Group on CONSUMERS ISSUES

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MEDREG – Association of Mediterranean Regulators for Electricity and Gas
Piazza Cavour 5 – 20121 Milan, Italy - Tel + 39 02 655 65 291 - Fax +39 02 655 65 562
info@medreg-regulators.org – www.medreg-regulators.org

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Main drafters: Mr. Nicolo Di Gaetano (MEDREG CUS WG Chairman, Italy)

Co-drafters: Mr. Bardhi Hoxha and Ms. Veronica Lenzi (MEDREG Secretariat)

Data and comments were provided by members of the CUS WG.

INFORMATION PAGE

Abstract

The scope of the present work is to support and encourage MEDREG Members to improve consumer's engagement within the regulatory process.

The report provides qualitative information on concrete examples of practices which have been collected through a survey, also looking beyond the role of Consumers Associations. Such information has been used to develop guidelines to provide guidance and inspiration for MEDREG members wishing to improve the involvement of consumers and their associations in their decision making process.

If you have any queries relating to this paper please contact:
MEDREG Secretariat
Telephone: +39 02 65565 524
E-mail: vlenzi@medreg-regulators.org

Related Documents

MEDREG documents

- “Survey on Consumers Associations in The Mediterranean“, CUS WG, May 2016, Ref. Med16-22GA-5.6.
- “CUS WG Update“, CUS WG, November 2016, Ref. Med16-22GA-5.6.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In 2015 MEDREG issued a survey on the Consumers Associations (CAs)¹ in order to focus the attention on the main organizations that represent and support the interests of domestic end-consumers within the energy sector.

The survey provided an overview of CAs roles and their interactions with energy regulators in 13 Mediterranean countries. These interactions were found ranging from participation in public hearings to the management of consumer complaints.

The survey also highlighted the interest of MEDREG members to keep on working on the topic of Consumer Associations, to involve them more in the regulatory decision making process, and to support higher consumer awareness of their rights.

Objectives

Following the traditional bottom up and fact based approach, a survey has been launched to collect qualitative information on concrete examples of consumer's engagement practices, also looking beyond the role of Consumers Associations. MEDREG members selected a number of case studies worthy to be considered as successful examples.

This information have been the basis to develop guidelines and recommendation to support guidance and inspiration for MEDREG members wishing to improve their approach with consumers taking into account concrete examples in other countries, facilitating the introduction of similar reforms.

Contents

Starting from the most relevant interesting issues raised from the "Survey on Consumers Associations", the report describes the methodology which has been put in place to collect, through a detailed questionnaire, the examples which MEDREG members considered as valuable to be shared.

Regulators were asked to provide main features such as objectives, strengths and challenges, impacted stages of the regulatory processes, methods to involve consumers, resources and resulting feedbacks.

Regulators answers may be schematized in different typologies of interactions among regulators, consumers and/or theirs association such as:

- a. Engaging Consumers in the Regulation;
- b. Information and consumer education;
- c. Complaint management;

¹ "Survey on Consumers Associations in the Mediterranean", 21st MEDREG General Assembly, Malta.

d. Consumer Protection.

These diverse approaches are clearly linked to different evolutions and status of the energy sectors, but all of them demonstrate the strong interest of regulators to put in place initiatives to take care of consumers' needs, to listen to their priorities and to raise their level of confidence and awareness to approach peculiar and crucial services such as power and gas.

Brief summary of the conclusions

Involving consumers is key in the regulatory process and regulators are used to put in place many activities to enhance consumer's participation even supporting consumers associations in increasing their technical capabilities to successfully contribute.

Many regulators establish committees to discuss with consumers about important topics as tariff setting. Therefore to include competent stakeholders to bring the voice of smaller consumers is crucial to open the debate and to receive opinions from a wider public side.

Web based solutions are very important to engage consumers both to inform and to collect questions and critical issues from consumers. An excellent instrument is considered to receive feedback from the real life, as an output form complaint management which is a crucial work stream in consumer protection.

1 Introduction

The regulation in energy sectors is devoted to ensure that all stakeholders may benefit from an efficient and effective development and functioning of the services which are delivered via networks or similar infrastructures. This effort is carried out by regulators which constantly aim to balance the interests of investors (private business as well as public bodies) and consumers who are the final users and also final payers both with bills and taxations.

Moreover the quality and the costs of the services, which are defined by regulators and delivered by regulated entities, affect a number of aspects of modern societies in terms of quality of life, economy, social and environmental sides. Involving as much as possible stakeholders in the decision making process has progressively becoming a crucial issue for a number of reasons.

Firstly, opening the debate on most important topics allows including opinions and point of views which may enrich visions, objectives and tools with which elaborate regulatory provisions.

Secondly, data and information, collected and shared through an active attitude of stakeholders, support to define a regulatory process based on clear rationales and evidences, with a positive impact on regulator's transparency.

Thirdly, educating and training consumers allows to let regulated sectors work at their best since consumers may improve knowledge of their rights and capacity to defend them, support their awareness about what they are paying for and increase their ability to take advantage of benefits and opportunities (i.e. social bonus, ability to choose supplier, energy saving tips).

Finally, to establish a two directional interaction with regulated entities it is a valid approach to enhance regulators' accountability.

The survey finalized in 2015 by MEDREG on consumers associations in the Mediterranean has clearly highlighted that involving consumers is a crucial objective of regulators for the above mentioned rationales. This report collects a number of practises that have been put in place to satisfy these needs and to better accomplish regulators' mission. Some conclusions and remarks have been drawn up in order to support MEDREG members wishing to enhance consumer's engagements within regulatory process.

2 Methodology

A survey has been conducted to collect qualitative information on practices to engage with consumers to form regulatory policy. MEDREG members have been asked to provide practical examples about how consumers and consumer associations are involved in the design of new regulations as well in the review of existing ones.

Both innovative practices, as well as traditional practices that can be relevant for countries starting to develop their regulatory systems have been included. The information on consumers practices have been arranged in a standardized form to ensure coherence and comparability between answers.

The survey has posed broad, open questions on the experiences and procedures used in MEDREG countries to be able to capture as many useful examples as possible and account for the diversity of existing practices in the Mediterranean region.

Key elements of the survey include:

- general features of the practice, including its objectives, main actors involved and examples of concrete application;
- methods used to collect inputs from consumers, including the use of information & communication technologies and supporting material;
- usage of comments received from consumers and feedback mechanisms;
- output and impact of the practice;
- time and resources needed to develop and implement the practice, as well as challenges encountered during the development and implementation and how they were overcome;
- results the practice evaluations.

Consumers engagement has been considered both with reference to the direct involvement of small or large consumers and of their associations, in order to have a broader overview.

3 Collection of practises

The questionnaire submission received 16 case studies coming from 11 countries as shown in the following map which shows that answers are equally distributed along the Mediterranean Area.



Figure 1: Map of responding MEDREG members

Moreover, in the map stars indicate that some countries have experienced and reported more than a single experience.

In the following table 1, all submitted practices are listed.

Table 1: List of practices

Regulator	Country	Title of the practice
ERE	Albania	Alternative Dispute Resolution
CREG	Algeria	Box Listen Conso
CERA	Cyprus	T&D Rules Committee & Trading & Settl. Committee
CERA	Cyprus	Regulatory Decision and Primary Law Amendments
AEEGSI	Italy	Permanent Observatory for Energy, Water and District Heating Regulation
EMRC	Jordan	Compliant Mechanism
REWS	Malta	Maltese Regulator for Energy & Water
REGAGEN	Montenegro	Public Hearing
PERC	Palestine	Hearing Panel
PERC	Palestine	Consumer Satisfaction Survey (Universities)
ERSE	Portugal	Cooperation & Support Protocol for Consumers Ass. in the Tariff Council
ERSE	Portugal	Cooperation Protocol for information to energy consumers
ERSE	Portugal	ERSEFORMA
CNMC	Spain	Consultative Councils of Gas & Electricity
CNMC	Spain	Switching Procedures Working Groups
EMRA	Turkey	Protecting Consumers who need life support equipment

According to the provided contents and the main goals of the practices (in the following sections more than a scope may have been declared), four main areas may be identified:

- Engaging Consumers in the Regulation;
- Information and consumer education;
- Complaint management;
- Consumer Protection.

In figure 2, it is possible to verify that engaging consumers is the principal rationale behind the initiatives put in place, confirming regulators' real need to involve as much as possible consumers within the regulatory process.

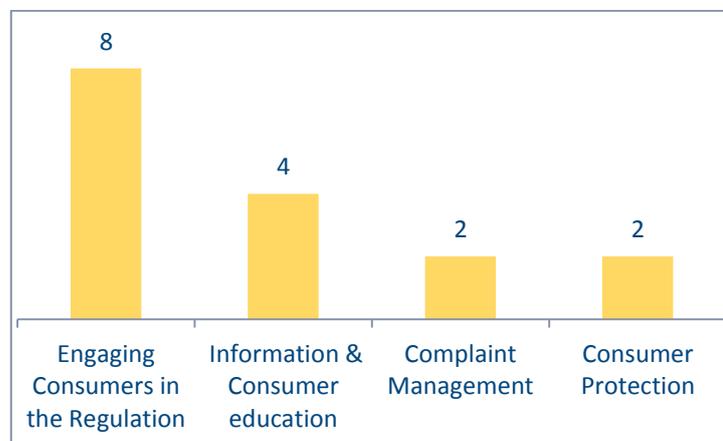


Figure 2: Main goals of the practices

4 Main Results

Structured and organised in 25 topics, the questionnaire was devoted to collected practices eventually carried out by any institutions or stakeholders aiming to involve consumers within the regulatory process. (i.e. regulator\ consumer’s association\ public institution, etc.).

For each practices, NRAs were asked to describe main features in terms of strengths, challenges and results in order to catch positive as well as critical issues. In this section, each topic will be described and the relevant results coming from NRAs replies.

4.1.1 Regulatory Stages

An important question concerned the phases of the regulatory process which was impacted by the practice. The phases were distinguished in drafting, implementing or monitoring regulatory provisions. In particular a further distinction was made between a preliminary phases of the regulatory process, e.g. when data are collected or guidelines and general approaches are formulated, and a more mature stage when provisions are drafted and NRAs seek to share opinions on the final conclusions.

The implementation is more devoted to guarantee and provide transparent enforcement of the regulation, to enhance also regulator’s accountability. At the very end of the regulatory process, these practices may be extremely useful to verify outcomes and impacts of the regulators decisions also to gather feedback from the ground and to improve or correct regulations.

From the results it may be observed that later stage of the drafting provision is considered more important, when regulators have already defined main guidelines of a decision but some refinements may be useful to improve and enrich the output.

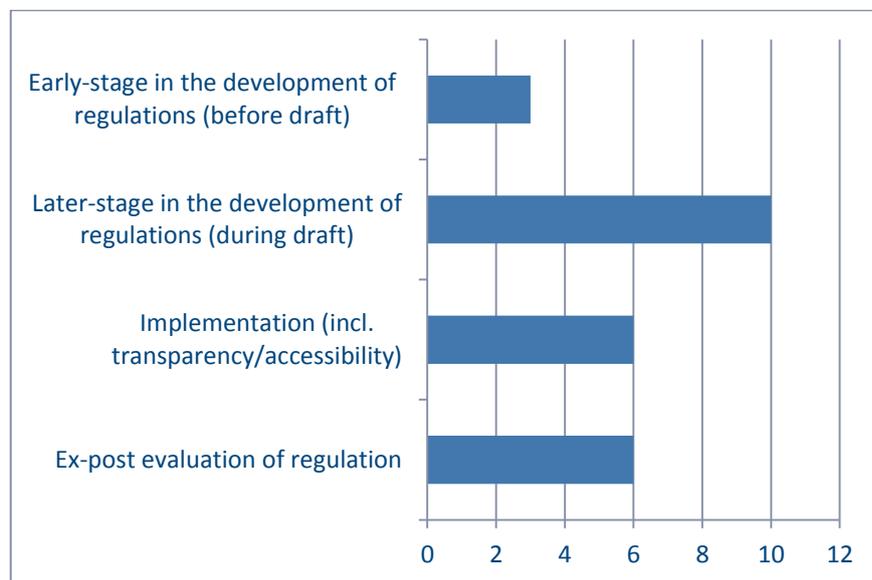


Figure 3

(Each practice may have multiple answers)

4.1.2 Objectives

Strictly linked to the previous questions, regulators were asked to provide specific details or examples to illustrate the objectives of the practice. For instance, to receive suggestions from consumers may be extremely advantageous to obtain inputs (opinions or data) when approaching a new aspect, as well as to get reactions or complaints to adjust regulations.

It may be also important to collect trends and sentiments on some particular topics, for instance to obtain political or social backing or to share views on specific policies (i.e. how to support vulnerable consumers).

In any case, as reported in the following figure 4 derived from the replies, to include consumers within the decision-making process is very valuable since it means to enhance transparency and accountability since regulations may be perceived as a fact-and-data based approach, not influenced by specific interests, but exerted in favour of the entire regulated sectors.

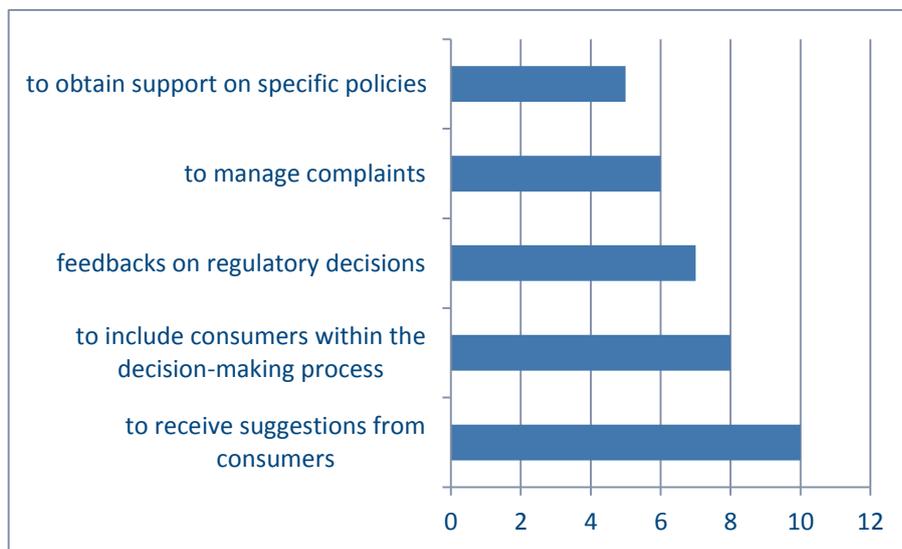


Figure 4

(Each practice may have multiple answers)

4.1.3 Methods to involve stakeholders

Regulatory experiences include a number of different tools and approaches to involve consumers, obviously depending on peculiar institutional missions or the regulated sector arrangements, with one-way or bidirectional-way interactions

It is possible to distinguish among input from Consumer to regulators, when consumers and generally speaking stakeholders are invited to provide information or to express their point of view: this is the case for public consultations which may include hearings on periodical basis or ad-hoc for specific issues, focus groups established to interact more directly and frankly with selected stakeholders. Handling Consumer complaints is key to catch potential improvement in the regulation when some faults may occur from operator's side, for instance dramatic increase in the quality of supply.

On the side, consumer may be involved in communication and information campaigns, for instance to enhance awareness of their rights, to benefit from market opportunities or social provisions and to increase educations in energy topics. Some consumer-friendly practices may consist in price monitoring or tool to check and verify the cost of energy to let them understand what they are paying for.

As reported in figure 5, complaint management is very frequently considered a good tool, not only to answer to consumers, but to hear from the ground the live voices, jointly with public consultations and hearings, albeit working on different stages of the decision making process (respectively ex post fine tuning vs drafting stages).



Figure 5

(Each practice may have multiple answers)

4.1.4 Involved Consumer groups

Practices may be devoted to involve specific consumers categories, considering that households and small/medium enterprises may requires specific support, being their knowledge in the energy sector seldom not enough adequate.

This issue requires putting in place measures to involve Consumer Associations which are generally considered important stakeholders, even if their knowledge on energy specificities may need further education and training with special programs. Some practises may require consumer association's cooperation or their direct pivotal role in delivery information to end users consumers.

Finally large consumers may also be involved for instance when large scale topics are discussed and their experience, data and studies may enrich the debate. In any case, as reported in figure 6, practices are mainly devoted to support householders.



Figure 6

(Each practice may have multiple answers)

4.1.5 Participation and Inputs Received

Effectively involving consumers means to design, activate and manage internal processes in the regulator organization. Collecting efficiently information and data must be followed by a mechanism which may allow to improve the overall regulation, for instance with regular reports from consumers affairs department to the regulatory officials and directors, aiming to highlight feedback and issues raised from the interaction with consumers.

In almost all replies, inputs are taken effectively into account during the regulatory process. As reported in figure 7, it may be stressed that in the submitted practices there no limitation to participate in seven cases, while two case studies are limited to a selection of Consumers associations and other stakeholders, and eight to Consumers associations. This is to confirm the representativeness of consumers associations as fundamental, since consumers may not realistically participate to the process, but their interests are to taken into account.

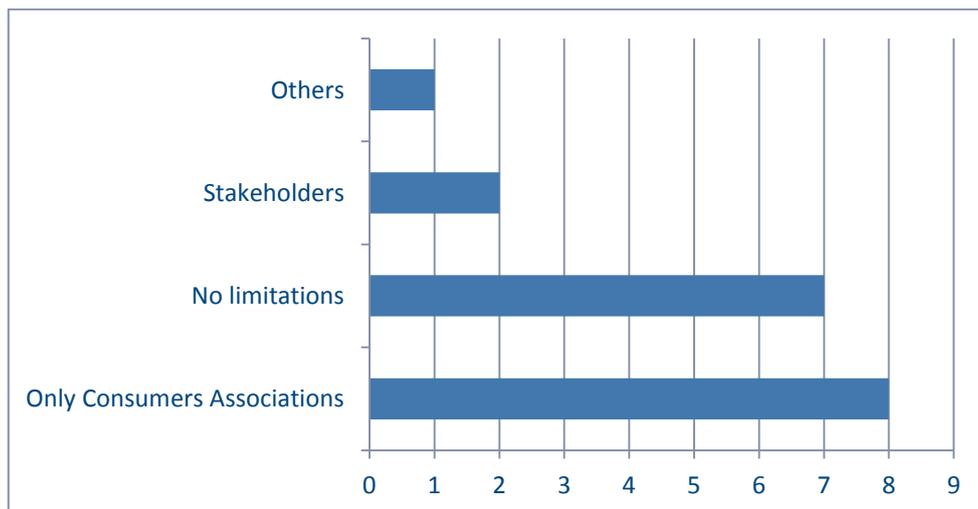


Figure 7

4.1.6 Communication practices

In order to fully involve consumers, and generally any stakeholders, it is important to interact efficiently to get and to provide information and feedback. Web-based tools are currently cheap tool to reach a very large portion of the consumers. For instance public consultations may be opened in the NRA website with multiple choice questions, open space to write and comments or to allow submission of documents.

Moreover videos and minutes of meetings, workshops and public hearings may be diffused on internet to enhance transparency and to stimulate participation from stakeholders. Interactive websites may also gather complaints and to provide information for instance on consumers rights, as MEDREG itself has started to activate a consumer section on the institutional site. In any case an extensive use of internet solutions is put in place to give maximum diffusion to the information and final decisions.

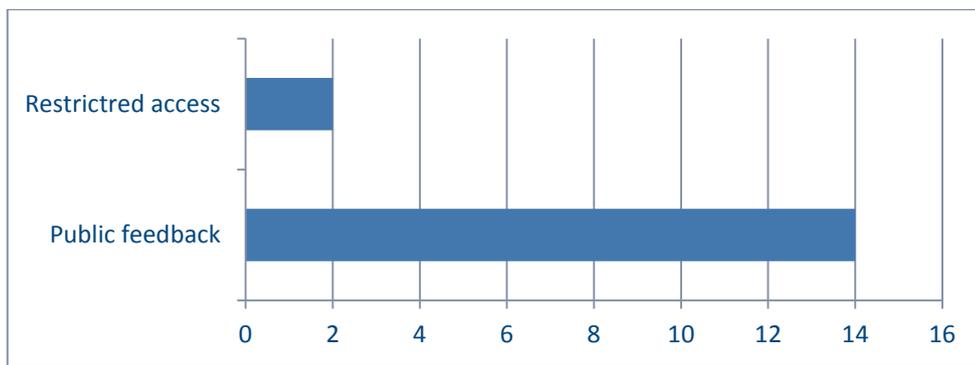


Figure 8

4.1.7 Time & Resources

Facing budget constraints, consumer’s engagement may be sometime perceived as no-core activity. Actually, these practices cost mainly in ICT services and hardware or in organizing events and workshop. More significant are human resources who may be involved to provide training or to manage complaints. In any case an average of 115 working day (figure 9) are needed to implement practices, ranging from 30 day to an year, with significant overload of internal staff whose scarcity is often claimed.

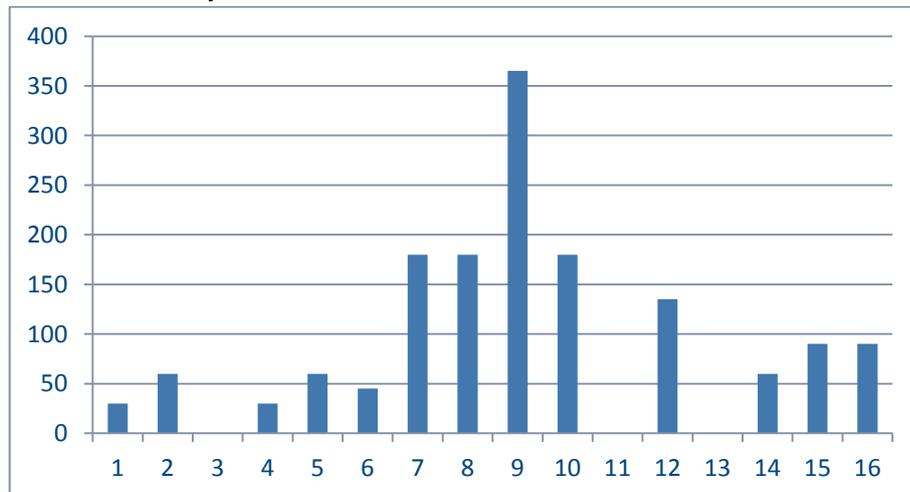


Figure 9

4.1.8 Challenge and Results

Generally speaking, the approaches to involve consumers have been recently put in place and feedbacks are reported to take time to be effective, more expected on the medium term. If there is a general consensus on the results, the main challenges to implement these practices are reported to derive from scarcity of knowledge of the regulatory issues since sometime consumers associations are not enough competent on these topics.

This is the reason why many efforts are devoted to upgrade these skills, both technical and regulatory, also to organize and start up committees and training. On the other hand, critical issues are scarcity of resources, both staff and budget. In this sense, information technology is very important to reach consumers and to get reached by them.

5 Conclusions

- An inclusive approach of consumers and stakeholders is highly desirable to improve regulation and to provide a transparent decision making process.
- The use of Internet of Things reduces both physical and social distance among institutions and citizens (website\mailbox\..) and promotes accessibility to a large amount of information.
- Limited amount of resources are generally spent with satisfactory results with an excellent cost\benefit ratio.
- Gathering stakeholders in organized groups is an effective way to engage consumers on main topics.
- Some practices allow regulators to share studies and data with stakeholders, allowing a more transparent and evidence base regulation.
- Almost all the stages of the regulatory process may benefit from consumers engagements.
- Complaint management, unless mainly devoted to support consumers, is a profitable channel to receive feedback.

Annex 1 – List of abbreviations

Term	Definition
MEDREG	Mediterranean Energy Regulators
GGP	Guidelines of Good Practice
CA	Consumer Association
NRA	National Regulatory Authority

Annex 2 – Questionnaire

Overview	Practice #
1. Title of the practice	
2. Name of the performing organization (i.e. regulator\consumers association\public institution, etc.)	
3. Time of application (please, indicate when it started, ended/if it is still ongoing)	
4. Has the practice evolved over the time? If yes, why have modifications occurred?	
5. Please describe the practice, including information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of the practice that you consider its key strengths • Key challenges faced during the implementation of the practice • Main results of the practice 	
6. What stage(s) of the regulatory process is the practice related to? Please tick all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Early-stage in the development of regulations (before draft) <input type="checkbox"/> Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft) <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation (incl. transparency/accessibility) <input type="checkbox"/> Ex-post evaluation of regulation
7. Please provide specific details or examples to illustrate the practice (including supporting links and documents).	
8. What are the objectives of the practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> to receive suggestions from consumers <input type="checkbox"/> to manage complaints <input type="checkbox"/> to obtain support on specific policies <input type="checkbox"/> feedbacks on regulatory decisions <input type="checkbox"/> to include consumers within the decision-making process <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
9. Which methods are used to involve consumers in the practice? (Please tick all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Public consultations (on general/specific issues) <input type="checkbox"/> Public hearings (on periodical basis/ad-hoc for specific issues) <input type="checkbox"/> Focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Information campaigns <input type="checkbox"/> Complaint handling <input type="checkbox"/> Price comparison tools <input type="checkbox"/> Price monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing of statistical data or

	<p>researches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer hotlines <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
10. Which consumer groups are involved? (Please tick all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Householders <input type="checkbox"/> Small and Medium Enterprises <input type="checkbox"/> Large Consumers <input type="checkbox"/> Others (specify)
11. Have Consumers Associations been involved ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The practice was focused only on them <input type="checkbox"/> CAs were allowed to participate <input type="checkbox"/> No
12. What inputs are received from consumers (e.g., brief comments, position papers)?	
13. How are inputs from consumers used and by whom?	
14. Is participation limited? If yes, please describe the selection mechanism.	
15. Is supporting material made available to consumers ? If yes, of what kind?	
16. Is ICT (website, app, etc.) used for the practice? If yes, how?	
17. Is information on the process and the outcomes of the practice collected? If yes, what did it include?	
18. Is this information made publicly available? If yes, where could it be accessed?	
19. Is feedback provided to participating consumers? If yes, please describe how.	
20. How long did the development and implementation take?	
21. Which resources were needed to implement the practice (e.g., staff and budget per consultation)?	
22. What challenges were met during the practice development and implementation and how were they overcome?	
23. Did the implementation of the consumer's engagement practice lead to any new regulations, reviews of existing regulations, or structural reforms?	
24. Has the practice been evaluated internally by the regulator or externally by other actors? Which were\are final results?	
25. Is there any more information or documentation that it you want to share in relation to the practice?	

Annex 3 – Countries’ Case Studies

Albania

Title	«Alternative Dispute Resolution»	Organization	Albanian Energy Regulatory Authority (ERE)
Main Features	Complaints Handling & Settling, consisting of investigation and verification of all relevant circumstances and data. ERE may call parties to a hearing session before decision about the dispute.	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation Ex post evaluation
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage complaints To include consumers within the decision-making process 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultations Public hearings Information campaigns Complaint handling Sharing of statistical data or researches
Consumers	All (unlimited participation)	Input received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparent and equal procedures Confidentiality
CA engagement	Yes	Public Information	All procedures & disputes final results of disputes are available on website
Challenges	Scarcity of staff	Feedback for regulation	No
Resources	Staff members	Main Results	Providing to all consumers a simple and easy procedure to settle disputes with energy companies

Algeria

Title	«Box Listen Conso: ecoute-conso@creg.gov.dz»	Organization	Electricity & Gas Regulation Commission (CREG)
Main Features	A digital communication channel to provide customers with accurate and reliable information and to discuss their concerns regarding the electricity and gas services provided by distributors	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform consumers: a non-exhaustive list of questions and answers has been set. Collect the consumer issues: an application form is available in the mailbox. 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information campaigns The applicant will have to write to ecoute-conso@creg.gov.dz or fill out the application available on the website
Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All (unlimited participation) 	Input received	Information requests
CA engagement	No	Public Information	No
Challenges	Establishing a direct relationship to exchange information with customers	Feedback for regulations	No
Resources	Mailbox managed by Consumer Protection Dept. who answers directly or activates other Dept.	Main Results	Providing to all consumers a cheap and direct source of information

Cyprus (#1)

Title	"Transmission and Distribution Rules and Trading and Settlement Rules Advisory Committees"	Organization	Transmission System Operator (TSO) of Cyprus
Main Features	Permanent Committees (chaired by TSO) who propose amendments and periodically review the Rules to CERA, advise the TSO about possible change of the Rules, monitor and inform the TSO any changes in international best practice	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to receive suggestions from consumers • to obtain support on specific policies • to include consumers within the decision-making process 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Groups
Consumers	Eligible consumers, non-Eligible consumers (the Committees comprise representative of TSO, DSO, Generators & Suppliers, Trade Unions of workers in the electricity field, CERA, the Ministry of Energy,)	Input received	Comments and suggestions. Input are used by the TSO for possible amendments to the Rules
CA engagement	Yes	Public Information	Yes, via CERA and TSO websites
Challenges	n.a.	Feedback for regulations	No
Resources	The members of the Committees shall be remunerated by the TSO (appearance costs, refund for each meeting, travelling costs etc.)	Main Results	Significant input from consumers side to the regulatory process

Cyprus (#2)

Title	"Regulatory Decisions and Primary Law Amendments"	Organization	Cyprus Energy Regulatory Authority (CERA)
Main Features	CERA calls any interested party to submit information in writing relevant to the consultation issues	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft)
Objectives	to receive suggestions from consumers to obtain support on specific policies to include consumers within the decision-making process	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Consultations • Public Hearings
Involved consumers	All	Input received	Comments are used for by CERA for final decisions
CA engagement	Yes	Public Information	YES
Challenges	n.a.	Feedback for regulations	Not yet
Resources	n.a.	Main Results	Significant input from stakeholders within the regulatory process

Italy

Title	“Permanent Observatory of Energy, Water and District Heating Regulation”	Organization	AEEGSI
Main Features	It consist of a permanent focus group, gathering associations of consumers, market operators, infrastructures operators, public institutions. They regularly meet under the AEEGSI Presidency and in dedicated working groups dealing with topics related to the regulated sectors	Stage of regulation	Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft) Ex-post evaluation of regulation
Objectives	to receive suggestions from consumers to obtain support on specific policies feedbacks on regulatory decisions to include consumers within the decision-making process	Methods	Focus groups Sharing of statistical data or researches
Involved consumers	Householders Small and Medium Enterprises Large Consumers Others (specify): Infrastructure Operators, Public Sector	Input received	Data and information to evaluate regulation ex-ante and ex-post. Preparation of consultation documents.
CA engagement	CA were allowed to participate (only the official ones)	Public Information	Yes. The process is published on AEEGSI website
Challenges	The main challenge has been to push for the organization of the working groups and to help them to identify the main topics	Feedback	Not yet. The process is very recent.
Resources	AEEGSI nominated a Secretary to support the Observatory. The Secretary organizes the meetings which are held in AEEGSI venues	Main Results	This approach has greatly enhanced AEEGSI accountability and has been perceived as an important step to include stakeholders in the regulatory process.

Jordan

Title	“Compliant Mechanism”	Organization	EMRC
Main Features	EMRC collects complaints (by fax, email, by hand) by consumers and interacts with DISCOs to solve them.	Stage of regulation	• Implementation
Objectives	• To manage complaints	Methods	• Complaint Handling
Involved consumers	Householders	Input received	Complaints are used by Public Relationships Dept. Final Decisions are collected.
CA engagement	No.	Public Information	Yes. Electricity Laws & Cost of Services Directives
Challenges	Sometime responses from DISCOs take a long time to arrive	Feedback	Provided to consumers with meetings.
Resources	Staff members	Main Results	Support for consumers in front of DISCOs.

Malta

Title	"Consultation Process"	Organization	Maltese Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS)
Main Features	The Regulator is statutorily responsible to ensure greater focus on and increased consumer protection. This is ensured via public consultations and face-to-face meetings	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft) • Implementation • Ex-post evaluation of regulation
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to receive suggestions inter alia from consumers • to manage complaints • to include consumers within the decision-making process 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public consultations • Information campaigns • Complaint handling • Price monitoring • Others: Individual interactions and meetings
Involved consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Householders • Small and Medium Enterprises • Large Consumers 	Input received	Comments on regulation
CA engagement	Yes	Public Information	Consultation documents are available on REWS website. Report on consultation responses is published too.
Challenges	Explanation of technical terms sometimes difficult to be conveyed to stakeholders.	Feedback	Provided to consumers with meetings and correspondence. Input are used to improve regulation
Resources	Costs sourced from overall budget of the Regulator.	Main Results	Enhanced interactions with consumers on main topics

Montenegro

Title	Public Hearing	Organization	Energy Regulatory Agency
Main Features	Public hearings are done 1) to collect suggestions relevant within public consultations 2) during application period to improve customer awareness and regulated entities' responsibility	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft) • Ex-post evaluation of regulation
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to receive suggestions inter alia from consumers • to include consumers within the decision-making process 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public consultations
Involved consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Householders 	Input received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief comments
CA engagement	Yes	Public Information	Draft documents & final decisions are on the Regulator's website
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers understanding of process. • During the complaint procedure sometimes late responses occur from energy subjects. 	Feedback	Regulator considers suggestions in order to improve customer's positions as well as to protect energy undertakings.
Resources	Staff members	Main Results	n.a.

Palestine (#1)

Title	Hearing Panel	Organization	Palestinian Electricity Regulatory Council
Main Features	All DISCOS and major parties in addition to consumer associations are invited in a meeting to explain tariff methodology and the suggested tariff. Similarly, all involved parties are invited to discuss regulation regarding renewable energy.	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-stage in the development of regulations (before draft)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to receive suggestions inter alia from consumers 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public consultations • Information Campaign • Complaint handling
Involved consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Householders • Small and medium enterprises • Large consumers 	Input received	Comments on the proposed regulations
CA engagement	Yes	Public Information	All documents are publicly available on the Regulator's website
Challenges	New concept. It took some time for all to understand.	Feedback for regulations	Regulator takes into account main inputs and provide formal communications to participants
Resources	Consultants	Main Results	Growing number of participants and positive feedback for the regulation

Palestine (#2)

Title	Consumer Surveys	Organization	Palestinian Electricity Regulatory Council
Main Features	PERC made survey on the services and level of satisfaction from distribution companies and also about their satisfaction from regulator itself, through interviews in the universities	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-stage in the development of regulations (before draft)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to receive suggestions from consumers • Feedbacks for regulatory decision 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Campaign • Others: University
Involved consumers	Only Universities	Input received	Useful information about consumer satisfaction
CA engagement	No	Public Information	yes
Challenges	It was smooth process	Feedback for regulations	Useful information about consumer satisfaction
Resources	Staff members and Transportation costs	Main Results	Satisfactory information

Portugal (#1)

Title	“Cooperation and support protocol for technical capacity and participation of consumers’ representatives in the Tariff Council”	Organization	Consumers Associations
Main Features	NRA gives financial support for consumer associations in order to promote studies about energy tariffs. The technicality of the themes involved is the main challenge. Better knowledge and technical capacity for the consumer representatives in the discussions at Tariff Council are achieved.	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-stage in the development of regulations (before draft) • Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to receive suggestions from consumers • to manage complaints • to obtain support on specific policies • feedbacks on regulatory decisions • to include consumers within the decision-making process 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public consultations (on general/specific issues) • Public hearings (on periodical basis/ad-hoc for specific issues) • Price monitoring • Sharing of statistical data or researches
Involved consumers	Householders Small and Medium Enterprises Large Consumers	Input received	Usually position papers about some particular issues
CA engagement	The practice was focused only on them	Public Information	no
Challenges	Choosing the main issues for consumers interest	Feedback	Those inputs are used in the Tariff Council, an advisory body of NRA for tariffs issues.
Resources	This practice is supported by the NRA budget of each previous year, with the limit of 0,25%	Main Results	Lead to engage the consumers representatives in the regulatory decision making process

Portugal (#2)

Title	“Cooperation protocol for information to energy consumers»	Organization	Consumers Associations
Main Features	The main scope is to promote cooperation between the NRA and consumer associations in order to create a dedicated call center for energy consumers.	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation (incl. transparency/accessibility) • Ex-post evaluation of regulation
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to receive suggestions from consumers • to manage complaints • to obtain support on specific policies • feedbacks on regulatory decisions 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaint handling • Price comparison tools • Consumer hotlines
Involved consumers	Householders Small and Medium Enterprises	Input received	Feedbacks on regulatory decisions through their requests and complaints
CA engagement	CA were allowed to participate	Public Information	No
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the most complained issues • training of the call center team, physical implementation of the service • Choosing the model for the 	Feedback	Inputs are used on the regulation processes and complaint handling by NRA

	implementation of the service		
Resources	This practice is supported by the NRA budget of each previous year. NRA staff participate in a supervising focus group	Main Results	n.a.

Portugal (#3)

Title	«ERSEFORMA»	Organization	Portuguese Regulator for Energy (ERSE)
Main Features	NRA organizes an annual training program and thematic sessions for people who work at consumers associations and ADR entities. These people bring their own questions about energy sector and we all discuss them. The objective is to enforce the role of the consumers' organizations about energy issues.	Stage of regulation	Implementation (incl. transparency/accessibility) Ex-post evaluation of regulation
Objectives	Other (specify): The objective is to enforce the role of the consumers' organizations about energy issues.	Methods	Information campaigns Other (specify) Mailing lists; NRA website
Involved consumers	Householders Small and Medium Enterprises	Input received	Feedbacks on regulatory decisions through their requests and complaints
CA engagement	CA were allowed to participate	Public Information	Yes. All the information about training program is published on NRA website.
Challenges	Choosing the main issues for consumers interest	Feedback	For NRA the Inputs are used in the regulation processes and complaint handling. For consumer and ADR organizations in their own activity
Main Results		Assessment of the practice	no

Spain (#1)

Title	CAs participation in regulatory processes	Organization	CNMC: «Consultive Councils of Gas and Electricity»
Main Features	The Councils participate in the regulatory process giving their feedback to the CNMC and the Ministry. Not all the regulations are relevant to consumers and/or it is too complex to give a proper feedback.	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feedbacks on regulatory decisions to include consumers within the decision-making process 	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultations (on general/specific issues) Public hearings (on periodical basis/ad-hoc for specific issues)

Involved consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Householders Small and Medium Enterprises Large Consumers Others: Market stakeholders, Regional Governments 	Input received	Brief comments and/or position papers
CA engagement	CAs are members of these Councils.	Public Information	Depends on the documents and the contents of its allegations (some could be confidential).
Challenges	To allocate time and staff resources. In occasions the regulation procedure could not allow enough time to the Council to give a proper feedback.	Feedback	The CNMC takes their views into accounts for the regulatory process. They participate in a continuous basis in the new regulation
Resources	Staff to process the feedback and decide what to take into account or not	Main Results	CNMC is able to know the CAs and market stakeholders view, and take it into account it when elaborating their proposals

Spain (#2)

Title	CAs participation in Switching procedures	Organization	CNMC
Main Features	Permanent focus groups about switching procedures and their communications formats. In these WG are involved the market stakeholders including CAs.	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early-stage in the development of regulations (before draft) Later-stage in the development of regulations (during draft)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feedbacks on regulatory decisions to receive suggestions from consumers 	Methods	Focus Groups
Involved consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Householders Small and Medium Enterprises Large Consumers Others: Market stakeholders, Regional Governments 	Input received	Brief comments and/or position papers
CA engagement	CAs are members of these Councils. CNMC opened the groups to the rest of stakeholders (small suppliers and distributors, CAs, Big consumers associations, regional governments, etc.	Public Information	A private website is available for the registered participants in the WG).
Challenges	So the main challenge was to give publicity to the groups and contact the stakeholders.	Feedback	In case of new regulations and in processes that are agreed among agents could be taking into account
Resources	Staff for managing and participate in the working groups and IT resources for the private website. (These groups were previously functioning funded by the private sector (main suppliers and distributors)	Main Results	Allows CAs to anticipate new regulations and problems. So far useful for big consumers that are interested in using the communications development in the switching procedures

Turkey (#1)

Title	Protecting the consumers who need life support equipment	Organization	Energy Market Regulatory Authority (EMRA)
Main Features	Main aim of this practice is to provide the electricity continuous to consumers who need life support equipment Distribution companies are responsible to register these kinds of consumers and have to inform the retail companies. Distribution companies cannot cut off electricity because of the unpaid electricity bills.	Stage of regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Later-stage in the development of regulations (before draft)
Objectives	To manage complaints	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Hearings • Complaint handling
Involved consumers	Householders	Input received	EMRA received consumer complaints about the electricity cut off consumers who needs life support equipment
CA engagement	No	Public Information	They are published on EMRA web site and national media.
Challenges	Some distribution companies object the regulation.	Feedback	The Consumer Right Working Group evaluates the complaints and decided to make a regulation on them.
Resources	-	Main Results	Significant support to vulnerable consumers

About MEDREG

MEDREG is the Association of Mediterranean Energy Regulators, bringing together 25 regulators from 21 countries, spanning the European Union, the Balkans, North Africa and middle east.

Mediterranean regulators work together to promote greater harmonization of the regional energy markets and legislations, seeking progressive market integration in the Euro-Mediterranean basin.

Through constant cooperation and information exchange among members, MEDREG aims at fostering consumers rights, energy efficiency, infrastructure investment and development, based on secure, safe, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable energy systems.

MEDREG acts as a platform providing information exchange and assistance to its members as well as capacity development activities through webinars, training sessions and workshops.

The MEDREG Secretariat is located in Milan, Italy.

For more information, visit www.medreg-regulators.org