Breakout session 1: Empowering consumers through accessible information

This session will aim at gathering stakeholder views on how consumers can be empowered by having access to better information on their bills, and by having the possibility to compare supplier offers based on both the price and non-price elements (fuel mix). Consumers should also be able to switch supplier easily without facing unjustified charges and obstacles. In addition, the session will address relevant enforcement issues linked to the Third Energy Package.

Chair: Carina Törnblom, DG JUST

Rapporteur: Florian Pichler (CEER/E-Control)

Presentation: Second consumer market study on the functioning of the retail electricity markets for consumers in the EU (Femke De Keulenaer)

Panel discussion:

* Paulo Fonseca (DECO)
* Margot Loudon (Eurogas)
* Mia König (GEODE)
* Lewis Shand Smith (NEON)

# Summary of input/output of the session

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|  | Topic to discus: input to the Forum | What possible output from the Forum? |
| Paulo Fonseca | * Surveys in PT indicate lack of knowledge of consumers about key facts of energy markets * Energy literacy to be increased (knowledge to foster understanding and action) * Giving consumers opportunity to understand why their participation in meaningful | * National evidence enriches both policies at European and national (sub national) level – provide further facts and evidence for policy makers * Improved information increases consumer understanding of how energy markets work and what part consumers may play therein as a truly important foundation for consumer engagement |
| Margot Loudon | * Stresses the need to differentiate between different types/groups of consumers in light of (newly emerging) complexities * Need to identify where EU action on information (on the bill) is really needed (rationale) | * Requirements for billing information need to bring together insights from studies, and the experiences (and knowledge) of key actors (suppliers, ADR, NRA…) * Engagement of consumers can come about by differentiating between wants of consumer groups |
| Mia König | * 4 key dimension of bills/invoice to be adapted to consumers: degree of information; tone of voice; format and design * Simple, medium and extensive needs and wants for information among consumer/different types of consumer groups | * Requirements for bills to find a balance between much needed information (cost, due date, etc…) and additional information beyond billing purposes (e.g. moving home) * Suppliers may not be able to create “the bill they wanted to create” because of legal obligations etc… * Use digital opportunities to provide detailed (special) information online |
| Lewis Shand Smith | * ADR practices and complaints are rich in detail and show where improvements are needed the most * Empowering consumers through better (billing) information (ADR have facts about this rather than study results) * Customer assessment of suppliers to promote better practices to the benefit of consumers | * ADR to be recognised as important expert in assessment of consumer tools * Wider coordination between relevant market actors, including ADR; NRA, suppliers, DSOs etc… |

**Suggested conclusions for the Forum:**

* Welcomes Commission and other (national) studies (on electricity markets, vulnerable consumers, and energy poverty) that provide evidence for future policy action at both European and national levels.
* Calls on the Commission to establish a structured and transparent cooperation process between energy regulators, ADR bodies and consumer authorities, and between consumer and energy ministries. Likewise, such cooperation between key market actors should also be established and/or fostered at national level to benefit the consumers to a greater extent.
* Calls for improved pre-contractual information, contract and billing information to facilitate coherent information policies, comparability of offers with current contracts and alternative products in order to increase consumer engagement.
* Calls on Member States to ensure that energy consumers have access to at least one free of charge, certified, reliable, comprehensive and impartial price comparison tool to further promote their use and benefit to consumers
* Calls for removing barriers to the switching process including unjustified fees in order to further engage consumers in energy markets, foster competition among suppliers and drive down energy bills.
* Calls for strict enforcement on unfair commercial practices in close cooperation of NRAs, consumer organisations, ADR and other bodies responsible for this.
* Takes note of the continuous cooperation between EURELECTRIC, Eurogas and BEUC towards a joint approach on improved comparability of energy offers in advertising and similar agreements on best practices and their enforcement between relevant market actors and associations.
* Endorses Part 1 of the report of the “Consumer as market actors” Working Group, and the relevant conclusions and findings, in support of ongoing work undertaken in the context of the Energy Union
* Encourages the Working Group to complete Part 2 of the report by the end of May 2016 so it can be considered by the Commission in the ongoing legislative process, and extends the mandate of the Working Group in this respect;