

COMPETITION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS

IMPROVING MARKET EFFICIENCY AND CONSUMER WELFARE



GLOBAL CONTEXT



UNCTAD assists developing countries and countries with economies in transition in adopting or revising competition and consumer protection legislation and policies, to align with international best practices, as well as regional frameworks in these areas. Competition and consumer protection policies are complementary to trade and industrial policies. They play an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNCTAD contributes to the strengthening of competition and consumer protection regimes in developing countries and countries with economies in transition through the following:

- Developing policy, legislative and institutional frameworks;
- Drafting competition and consumer protection legislation adapted to addressing current challenges and harmonized with regional frameworks;
- Designing institutional frameworks to improve institutional efficiency;
- Building human capacities through training programmes;
- Developing curriculums for universities, to deliver courses on competition and consumer protection;
- Establishing links between agencies through study visits to agencies from both developed and developing countries.

UNCTAD has expertise in competition and consumer protection policies and has been working in these areas since the 1980s. Competition and consumer policies are crucial to inclusive and sustainable development. In the current global economy, with highly concentrated markets, competition policy is even more relevant. On the demand side, consumers need more effective protection and appropriate remedies in the digitalizing world.

UNCTAD has a record of accomplishments in assisting developing countries in building capacities to adopt and implement competition and consumer protection laws and policies. The work of UNCTAD in this field is evident in the following regions: Asia and the Pacific, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; Eastern Europe, including the Sofia Competition Forum; Latin America, including Competition and Consumer Protection for Latin America (COMPAL) Programme I, II and III; the Middle East and North Africa, including the competition and consumer protection programme for the region; and sub-Saharan Africa, including, at the national level, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe and, at the regional level, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, SADC, the Southern African Customs Union and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

As a result of the effective implementation of its capacity-building programmes, UNCTAD has developed good cooperation and working relationships with competition and consumer protection agencies in member States. The UNCTAD network with these agencies is further reinforced through annual meetings of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy, held since 1998, and the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, held since 2016.





HOW CAN COMPETITION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS HELP?

UNCTAD competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks help countries to adopt appropriate policies and legislation in these areas or improve existing ones, foster a competition culture and raise awareness among consumers and businesses. UNCTAD provides support to relevant institutions to improve their structures and organizations and to strengthen staff capacities in implementing competition and consumer protection legislation.



RESULTS AND IMPACT AT A GLANCE

UNCTAD has achieved the following results in countries involved in its capacity-building programmes:

- Improved competition and consumer protection legislation, to address current challenges;
- Strengthened human capacities in competition and consumer protection law enforcement;
- Improved institutional structure and organization to strengthen effective and efficient law enforcement;
- Enhanced competition culture through advocacy and awareness raising seminars.

Brief highlights

The West African Economic and Monetary Union adopted a new institutional and regulatory competition framework to strengthen cooperation between national competition authorities and the regional authority.

With the support of COMPAL, at present, 31 competition and consumer protection agencies in Latin America are linked by over 35 cooperation agreements. UNCTAD organizes seven annual regional activities, gathering more than 250 participants. Since 2015, more than 800 civil servants have been trained each year under COMPAL at the National Institute for the Defense of Competition and Protection of Intellectual Property (INDECOP)–COMPAL school in Peru. COMPAL has built partnerships with other entities, ensuring the sustainability of its activities, whereby beneficiary funding forms up to 80 per cent of the budget.

“The competition and consumer protection project implemented by UNCTAD and funded by the Government of Luxembourg helped the Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Authority of Ethiopia build capacities, restructuring the Authority and amending the competition law. Training workshops have been helpful to [Authority] staff in competition law enforcement. The guidelines produced and validation workshops helped [the Authority] identify the gaps in the existing competition law and amend it to conform to international standards.”

Mr. Biruh Gemed, Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Authority, Ethiopia



PROGRAMME FACTS AND FIGURES

Scope: All regions

Start date: 2003

Completed programmes:

1 national (Zimbabwe); 3 regional (COMPAL I and II, West African Economic and Monetary Union and Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

Ongoing programmes:

COMPAL III; 1 national (Ethiopia); 2 regional (Central African Economic and Monetary Community and competition and consumer protection programme for the Middle East and North Africa)

Website: unctad.org/competition



Sustainable Development

Goals addressed:

Directly: 8 and 10

Indirectly: 12



DONORS/ FUNDING SOURCE

Current and past: Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the European Union

