



UNCTAD

**The Report of the Working Group on Consumer Protection in E-Commerce
to the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection
Law and Policy**

June 2023

The [sixth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts \(IGE\) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy](#) held on 18 and 19 July 2022, decided to renew the mandate of the Working Group on Consumer Protection in E-Commerce (WGE) as follows: “welcomes the deliberations of the working group on consumer protection in electronic commerce since 2017 and the exchange of information and sharing of experiences among member States, including the current work on misleading and unfair practices, consumer education and business guidance, and cross-border enforcement cooperation; takes note of the report presented to the sixth session; requests the UNCTAD secretariat to incorporate the recommendations of the report into its work; and decides to renew the mandate of the working group.”¹

Since then, the WGE has held six online meetings. Following an initial discussion on 6 October, members were invited to submit proposals for possible work areas. On 10 November 2022, the WGE adopted the workplan for 2022-2023 until the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy. The main scope of the workplan was to carry forward the work of the subgroup on cross-border enforcement cooperation from previous year. A steering group was set up to lead the work, which comprises of consumer protection authorities of several member States, including Argentina, Colombia, Kenya, Mexico, Rwanda (joined later), Sweden, United Kingdom, the United States, and a scholar from the University of Reading (United Kingdom).

The activities listed in the agreed workplan were implemented as follows:

1. **Survey:** the WGE carried forward the 2021 survey on mapping different consumer protection systems across the world. The survey was prepared by the United Kingdom and aims to better understand the domestic frameworks and legal powers of consumer protection authorities, as well as mechanisms for consumer redress and international cooperation. This year, the steering group worked on reaching out to member States to get more responses to the original survey. By 20 June, aside from 13 responding countries from last year, another six members, namely Ecuador, Hong Kong (China), Hungary, Italy, Nicaragua, and Portugal, submitted their responses. In addition, Greece updated the answer about authority’s power to conduct investigations.

¹ [TD/B/C.I/CPLP/32](#).

2. **Platforms for dissemination:** the steering group explored possible platforms for disseminating the survey outcomes. The group contacted the UNCTAD team that manages the [World Consumer Protection Map](#) and found it was not feasible in the short term to link the survey. The group also explored other potential external sources of funding and routes for information sharing, such as the [WGE website](https://unctad.org/Topic/Competition-and-Consumer-Protection/working-group-on-consumer-protection-in-e-commerce)<https://unctad.org/Topic/Competition-and-Consumer-Protection/working-group-on-consumer-protection-in-e-commerce>. In addition, the group updated graphics of the survey results and circulated them to the WGE for comments. The new full report and graphics will be published on the WGE website.
3. **Communication:** the United States took forward seeking agreement on setting up generic email addresses for UNCTAD participating and other interested agencies. The main goal is to have a standardized email address per agency to facilitate cross-border enquiries and to help the secretariat contact members more reliably. Following discussions within the WGE and steering group, the United States prepared instructions on creating and maintaining a non-personal email account. At the meeting on 20 June, the WGE discussed the instructions and agreed upon a timeline to implement this initiative. This information will be circulated to the member States after the IGE.
4. **Coordination with other networks:** the steering group members followed the work of other international consumer protection networks and reported recent developments in cross-border work at WGE meetings. The group prepared an overview of initiatives within these partner networks, such as Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network, Forum of Consumer Protection Agencies (FIAGC), OECD's Committee on Consumer Policy (CCP) and International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN). The objective of this initiative is to share information and to keep WGE members informed on what is happening in other consumer protection related networks.

In conclusion, the WGE agreed to propose to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection Law and Policy that its mandate be extended during until the eighth session.

The WGE proposed and discussed the following possible work areas and strategies for 2023-2024:

- Each WGE meeting can feature at least one relevant subject hosted by a WGE member for discussions.
- Proposed work areas could include dark commercial patterns online (potentially including Artificial Intelligence) and consumer vulnerability in e-commerce.
- The WGE should focus on accessible outputs designed to assist less experienced national agencies, for example through webinars, short toolkits, or other brief materials.