

**Seventh Intergovernmental Group of Experts on
Consumer Law and Policy
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Opening Plenary

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Georgia

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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor to address you today as a representative of the Georgian National Competition Agency. I would like to extend my gratitude to the organizers and all the attendees for this opportunity.

I would like to provide you with brief information about consumer rights protection in Georgia. In March 2022, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law of Georgia on the Protection of Consumer Rights, which was prepared in line with the requirements of the Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia. The Law entered into force on 1 June 2022 and from August of the same year, the Department of Consumer Rights Protection started functioning within the system of the GNCA.

The Georgian National Competition Agency (GNCA) is the main enforcement authority of consumer rights legislation. However, its powers are limited in certain areas where other regulatory bodies have their jurisdiction. For instance, the GNCA does not have powers in the areas regulated by the Law of Georgia on Activities of Commercial Banks, Investment Funds, Insurance, Electronic Communications, Broadcasting, Energy and Water Supply.

I would like to inform you that the Parliament of Georgia has successfully implemented 70% of the European directives concerning the protection of consumer rights.

Moreover, by the end of 2023, it is planned to adopt the Law "On Tourism," which will incorporate two additional directives.

Additionally, I would like to highlight that the National Competition Agency actively uses the UN Guidelines on the "Protection of Consumer Rights" during the enforcement process.

Enforcement

Our Agency started enforcement of the law and handling consumer complaints from November, 2022. We are authorized to issue three types of decisions: confirming a violation, rejecting a violation, or a commitment decision without evaluation of the alleged violation of the Law. The latter option allows companies to acknowledge violations, make necessary policy changes and protect their image while restoring consumer rights.

Thousands of citizens have had their rights restored within seven months, and dozens of companies are proactively modifying their trade policies to prevent future incidents.

The Agency has delivered several decisions that might constitute a precedent for future cases. Such as the standard for indicating prices during trading on social networks, the standard for sending advertising SMS messages, the standard for using electronic means for consumer awareness, and the standard for providing services in the Georgian language etc.

Advocacy

Alongside the enforcement process, the National Competition Agency actively carries out awareness-raising activities.

- In cooperation with international partners, GNCA has prepared information leaflets on the Protection of Consumer Rights; thousands of leaflets were distributed in the city of Tbilisi and regions of Georgia.

- Meetings were held with different stakeholders in order to raise public awareness on the issues of consumer rights protection.
- On 16-17 November 2022, the first international conference on Competition and Consumer Protection was held in Georgia organized by five market regulatory agencies jointly including the Georgian National Competition Agency. Within the framework of the conference, there were discussed competition law, consumer rights protection mechanisms, activities carried out by regulatory agencies, and international practices. The conference was attended delegations from fellow agencies of 20 countries.
- A short animated video clip was produced with the support of the EU-funded Twinning project. The video has been circulating by means of the Georgian Public and 6 private TV broadcasters, as well as through online media outlets.
- On 13-17 March, the first International Week on the Protection of Consumer Rights was held in Georgia, which was attended by about 300 participants.
- In cooperation with international partners and national regulatory agencies, our Agency has started working on the "National Strategy on the Protection of Consumer Rights", which is expected to be adopted by the end of 2023.

As I conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers of this conference for providing us with a platform for exchanging insights and expertise on consumer protection policy. This meeting highlights the significance of fostering cross-border partnerships among colleague agencies from different nations since only together we can effectively safeguard consumer rights and create a harmonized global environment for fair and transparent markets.

Thank you all for your commitment and contribution to consumer welfare!