
*Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Law and Policy
(IGE Consumer)*

4th SESSION

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Morning Session

Working Group on E-commerce

UNCTAD Secretariat Report



Report of the Working Group on Consumer Protection in E-Commerce to the IGE 2019

1. Background

The Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy in its second session of 3 and 4 July 2017 decided that "the work programme of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts for 2017–2018 should further the exchange of experiences, particularly best practices; the collection and dissemination of information; the consideration of relevant studies, documentation and reports from relevant organizations; and the formulation of appropriate reports and recommendations on the issues discussed at the second session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts." Member States requested the UNCTAD secretariat to establish a working group on e-commerce (para. 12 of the [IGE agreed conclusions](#)) in July 2017.

The Working Group on Consumer Protection in E-commerce (WG) identified three issues for discussion among the Group participants in 2017:

- i. Misleading and unfair business practices,
- ii. Consumer education and business guidance, and
- iii. International cooperation in cross-border cases

The WG reported on its work to the IGE held in July 2018 (See the [Report of the WG to the IGE 2018](#)). The IGE extended the mandate of the WG for another year and requested the WG "to recommend policy options for consumer protection authorities of member States, in light of guidelines 63 to 65, and to report to the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts" to be held in July 2019 (See para. 10 in the [Agreed Conclusions of the IGE 2018](#)).

2. The Work of the WG in 2019

The WG held its first virtual meeting on 7 November 2018, and participants expressed their views on the functioning of the WG. They suggested to set up three sub-groups for each topic to be led by a consumer protection agency. The leaders of the sub-groups are as follows:

Misleading and unfair business practices (Colombia).

Consumer education and business guidance (Argentina).

International cooperation in cross-border cases (United Kingdom and United States).

In the period up to the IGE 2019, the WG discussed these areas mentioned above with a view to developing policy recommendations in consumer protection in e-commerce. The three areas were led by Secretariat organized the sessions and prepared the agenda for each meeting. The WG participants shared their knowledge and experiences, as well as their thoughts on how to best



address the challenges faced in each of these areas. Some participants sent written contributions which were circulated by the Secretariat.

Meetings of the Working Group

Dates of meetings	Subject
7 November 2018	Functioning of the WG
13 March 2019	Consumer education and business guidance: Consumer agencies/organizations' experiences and lessons learnt
17 April 2019	Misleading and unfair business practices in e-commerce
15 May 2019	International cooperation in cross-border cases
12 June 2019	Reporting on WG's work to the IGE 2019

The WG discussed a proposal on international cooperation in cross-border cases submitted by the Competition and Markets Authority of the United Kingdom and supported by the United States Federal Trade Commission during the May meeting. The proposal includes four main areas: Intelligence sharing and co-ordination, investigation, securing enforcement outcomes, resolving conflicts of law. It was well received by WG participants.

On misleading and unfair business practices in e-commerce sub-group, Colombia circulated a proposal on the work and the future work plan. The WG participants were given an opportunity to send comments on this proposal.

The WG will report to the 4th session of the IGE on Consumer Protection Law and Policy on Tuesday, 9 July 2019. The sub-group leaders will then have an opportunity to briefly present their proposals.