

The Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER)

is working hard for consumers, empowering them to

engage in and benefit from the new smarter energy markets

Putting consumers at the heart of EU energy policy



Energy Regulators champion consumer interests.

National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) for electricity and gas oversee the efficient functioning of energy markets across Europe. NRAs have been given significant **responsibilities**, under the (2009) EU energy legislation, **to protect and to empower customers**.

Working at European level through the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER), regulators have been championing consumer interests for many years.

Empowering customers stimulates competition and competition benefits consumers.

CEER's first priority is seeking to create a single, competitive, efficient and sustainable EU energy market which will benefit consumers.

CEER further believes that empowered customers are essential for the development of competition in energy retail markets. Hence, **customer empowerment** and building **customer trust** in the market is at the very heart of CEER's annual work programme. Our work ranges from providing guidance and developing advice on best practices to sharing experiences and conducting market monitoring (at both national and EU level) to ensure that Europe's energy markets are delivering benefits to consumers.

We have also launched an initiative to deliver results in line with the principles outlined in a 2020 Vision for Europe's Energy Customers.

Strengthening the voice of consumers

In addition to our own customer-focus, CEER promotes a more customer-oriented approach generally, seeking to place consumers and the London Forum at the heart of the EU energy market policy development:

- CEER **strongly advocates strengthening the voice of the consumer at national and EU level** e.g. the role of consumer associations and independent energy ombudsmen, and the important role of the Citizens' Energy Forum.
- CEER encouraged the creation (in 2008) of the **Citizens' Energy Forum (London Forum)**, an annual forum that brings together the European Commission, regulators, national consumer bodies, ministries, ombudsmen and industry representatives to discuss consumer and electricity/gas retail market issues. Each year, CEER contributes substantive work (e.g. sharing the findings of our monitoring activities, providing guidance and advice on best practices) to the Forum.
- CEER proactively **helps consumers participate more fully in EU energy debates**. To make it easier for consumer bodies and interested parties to voice their views, we organise (free) workshops to accompany our public consultations.
- CEER continually strives to **enhance our dialogue with consumer bodies to improve our understanding of their perspective**. We are therefore committed to **sharing expertise more effectively and widely**, including through our dedicated consumer webpage. In 2012, we held our first ever interactive conference with national consumer bodies (from 20 countries), inviting them to share their experiences, through short **testimonials and breakout sessions**.



CEER is a strong advocate of strengthening the voice of consumers in energy policy development.

CEER is working hard to place consumers at the

Through CEER, a not-for-profit organisation, national regulators cooperate, exchange best practice and develop forward-thinking recommendations on how markets should function for consumers. CEER has undertaken a great deal of work focusing on customer issues and how the energy sector operates for customers. Here are some recent examples of our work.

RETAIL MARKET DESIGN

CEER has developed guidelines on key features in markets, such as switching and billing. If these two processes are well-designed and fully-functioning, customers can engage in the energy market in a positive way, building customers' trust in the market system and greater customer engagement.

DEMAND RESPONSE

This is about allowing customers to manage their energy, such as when they want to adjust their usage, produce their own power or even sell it back to the system. CEER's advice identifies the key players and outlines the roles and responsibilities for all, in order to enable demand response.

MARKET MONITORING

EU energy laws strengthen consumer rights. Regulators are vested with powers to ensure consumer rights provisions are effective and enforced. Periodic monitoring is important to test if markets are functioning in the consumers' interest. As well as developing common indicators that NRAs can use at a national level, CEER undertakes various monitoring exercises.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

EU law requires that complaint handling standards for the energy sector be in place and that customers have recourse to alternative dispute settlement. Regulators' recommendations can help empower customers through more efficient complaint handling procedures and can help suppliers improve their customer service.

heart of EU Energy Policy – here's how



SMART METERING

New types of meters are being rolled out across Europe, which can offer enhanced communication and control of consumption data. We developed advice on the kinds of services and functions this new technology should deliver, to ensure that, when installed, they work in ways which benefit consumers.



PRICE COMPARISON TOOLS

In competitive retail markets, consumers should have a choice of energy supplier. Price comparison websites or services can help customers to compare offers. CEER's guidelines outline basic features and principles for such tools, to help consumers better understand what is on offer and more easily choose the right supplier and the best deal.



MONITORING LAWS

In addition to monitoring markets, CEER reviews whether NRAs have been granted the necessary powers in national law to ensure that all customer rights are effective and enforced.



FUTURE MARKET MODELS

In addition to our collective work, CEER participates actively in European fora (such as European Commission expert groups) to discuss and develop ways of further improving features and practices of the markets to benefit consumers.

2020 Vision for Europe's Energy Customers

CHALLENGES

- In order to participate fully in society, we all need access to energy – for warmth, lighting, cooking, and appliances. But the energy sector is embarking on a profound **period of change – in how we produce, consume and transport energy** – designed to promote a more sustainable energy sector.
- The challenge for all stakeholders is to focus on and act in a way that maximises the positive impacts for consumers and mitigates risks.

GOALS & MEANS

- In 2012, CEER committed to developing (with stakeholders) a **vision for the energy sector that puts customers first**. The result is the **2020 Vision for Europe's Energy Customers**, co-signed by CEER and BEUC (the European consumers' association), and endorsed by many stakeholders. This Vision is characterised by four principles governing the relationship between the energy sector and its variety of customers: **affordability, protection and empowerment, simplicity and reliability**.

CUSTOMERS

- CEER will continue to actively **engage with stakeholders, and in particular customers, in its work**, including through interactive customer conferences and dedicated workshops.
- Continuous dialogue between customer bodies, regulators, industry and policy makers will be key to turning the Vision into reality.
- CEER's (2012) **3-year rolling Action Plan** sets out what CEER is committed to doing to help make the Vision a reality.



CEER's Action plan of concrete work and measures to empower customers to actively engage in the market includes: **enhancing access to information**; improving retail market issues such as removing obstacles to **supplier switching**; **promoting smart metering** in a way that meets customers' needs and stimulates an effective **demand side response**; and addressing **customer protection issues** (e.g. **complaints, alternative dispute resolution and billing**).

Do you want to know more about energy customer issues?

Visit the dedicated consumer page of our website. It seeks to provide a simple and valuable gateway to useful information to help empower energy customers. Easy to navigate and logically structured, it contains information on:

CUSTOMER RIGHTS

WHO DOES WHAT?

HOW ENERGY WORKS

CEER PUBLICATIONS & EVENTS

YOUR CUSTOMER CONTACTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Give us your feedback!

We would be pleased to receive your feedback and suggestions on this consumer section. If you have any useful tips or practical experiences to share, please don't hesitate to drop us a line or go online and share.

We're on [Twitter](#) too!



Access the CEER website & the energy customer dedicated area now!

www.energy-regulators.eu



CEER Secretariat



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