

Brussels, 11th July 2016

Concluding remarks by Marie-Pierre Fauconnier (CEER Customer Conference 2016)

I am pleased to have the opportunity to close this 5th Edition of the CEER Customer Conference. Thank you all for attending today's event and to all the speakers and moderators for their precious contributions. Before anyone leaves, I would like to enhance the challenges and draw the conclusions of today's conference.

Today's event showed the many challenges we will all – stakeholders, consumer organisations, public authorities and regulatory authorities – have to face to ensure customers are empowered and engaged in the market. Many steps will have to be taken to provide an effective transition in the benefit of all consumers, industrial, SMEs and residential (including vulnerable consumers).

Let me remind you of some of the key challenges and targets identified today:

- **We** – public authorities, regulatory authorities, consumer organisations – **must educate and inform consumers**. They should learn and understand that they can benefit from being an actor on the energy market and adopting a new behaviour. Switching for example is in their interest. We saw that only 30% of consumers in electricity and 26 % in gas are interested in switching. There is definitely more work ahead...
- **Once well-informed, consumers should engage in the market**. This can happen via the new services and new technologies' opportunities but also just by being an active consumer regarding its bill, switching and so on. Once engaging happens via new technologies etc., we are looking at an even-more empowered consumer who may be offering / benefitting from flexibility, self-generation and consumption, who could be driving an EV, having batteries to stock his energy... In any case, consumers must benefit from the market competition.
- **Flexible markets should be designed around consumer needs**. And we also heard today that non flexible consumers should not be penalised. It is just like the internet revolution, it takes time to be active and all consumers cannot be forced to go in that direction at the same moment in time, at the same rhythm.
- **Tools should be easy to use and useful to consumers**: bills (which are at the top of the registered complaints everywhere) should be made clearer. Complexity should be our enemy and must be reduced to boost activity and engagement of consumers. Easy to use and transparent price comparison tools should - have to - be developed. Tools should allow consumer to handle their own consumption and push consumers forward to a new behaviour. Both policy makers and regulators have to help this shift happen.
- **Different levels of empowerment will for sure be in place**. Some of the speakers today mentioned a potential growing role for cities, municipalities, mayors, as key level to allow a rapid transition to happen. Let me give you a personal insight here. I believe new levels of empowerment will coexist and appear. Maybe it will just be a district or a parent association of a school that will be the kick-off for empowering people. I believe it will be very flexible, depending on the community you take part in.

- **We should adapt consumer rights to the new encountered realities** such as digitalisation, combined offers demand response & supply, the development of EVs and its charging facilities... This implies a development of data protection and data property rules, consumer protection rules, privacy protection,... in the field of energy. From an authority point of view, it implies stronger cooperation and links between the competent authorities to guarantee an adequate level of protection for consumers in this changing environment.
- **Regulation should become closer to consumers and allow innovation in the consumer's interest.** Efficient regulation should become the rule and naturally regulation should continue to be done smartly:
 - ➔ To anticipate these market changes / new business model notably by large-scale stakeholders' consultation processes: Regulation is often behind innovation. There is a challenge for and need for flexibility and accessibility to regulation.
 - ➔ To define the right and sufficient framework to allow innovation, competition and consumer empowerment. Deregulation versus Overregulation : it is essential to find the right balance.
- Furthermore, this new energy market model should **allow a win-win situation to happen** between market actors (such as DSOs) and consumers and their new active role (as prosumers, self-generators, self-consumers).
- **A special focus will have to be done on SMEs and vulnerable consumers** to make sure that
 - 1) they benefit from the transition and the created value (lower prices, higher competition)
 - 2) no one is left aside by this digitalisation and transition.

We could see today that all stakeholders, European and national public authorities, as well as regulatory authorities are currently trying to find the best way to address these challenges and tackle the eventual bias that consumers may encounter in the energy market.

Further work on these issues is for sure ahead. The transition is ongoing and although many roles may be shifting and evolving in the market, something is certain: this transition will above all have to be **consumer-centric**.

Let me just point out again a CEER initiative announced by Lord Mogg this morning, the launching of the PEER project – the **Partnership for the Enforcement of Energy Rights**. Gathering in the consumer's interest all competent authorities, such as Ombudsmen, Data Protection Authorities, Telecom Regulators, under CEER's leadership, this PEER project will allow stronger cooperation among cross-sectoral authorities to happen. This should definitely help ensure joined up thinking to deliver the European goals of an Energy Union and a Digital Single Market in the consumer's interest.

I thank you all once again for your presence today. May I please ask you to fill in the Feedback Form so that we can improve our future events.

Have a safe trip home.