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Case Study – Italy

Capacity building and information sharing

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*CEER Workshop: How to make consumer organisations' involvement
in the regulatory process most effective*

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Autorità per l'energia elettrica, il gas e sistema idrico

AEEGSI-CONTEXT

Authority has invested in recent years to strengthen the collaboration with consumer associations and supported initiatives for the benefit of consumers.

Memorandum of Understanding with the National Council of Consumers and Users (CNCU is the representative body Italy's most important Consumer Associations under the chair the Ministry of Economic Development or a delegate) has four main objectives:

- ✓ to improve **information** to end customers
- ✓ promote consumer **education** and awareness of customers about their rights and use of energy
- ✓ transferring knowledge and **train staff** of consumer organizations
- ✓ enhancing access to alternative forms of dispute resolution

For implementation of activities is established a working group that normally meets on a quarterly basis or more often if necessary. Authority and consumers organisations cooperate for the development of joint initiatives.



TRAINING AND E-LEARNING

In order to qualify the competence of consumers' associations staffs and operators and to make sure they were equipped to provide effective support and information to consumers a **training program** was projected since 2003.

A large number of stakeholders express interest in professional training dedicated to members associations. The courses had to be organized in stages in a "top-down" configuration, through a cascade system.

In 2004 the first stage was addressed to consumer association staffers (30/40 participants in 2 editions). On the bases of material learned participants organized themselves **local professional training sessions** all other interested parties the following months.

In order to provide operators adequate tools for documentary replicate the presentations the offices of the Authority provided the **materials** to organize the following courses (legislation, slides, explanatory sheets, list of FAQ, list of sources).

A year later was developed an **e-learning programme** that would keep operators up-to-date and replicated training in the following periods for almost 500 operators (7 modules for electricity – 7 modules for gas).



INFORMATION SHARING

To overcome the **weaknesses** especially in the technical aspects and specific knowledge in relation to the functioning of energy markets the offices of the Authority provided also:

- ✓ an operational guide to the rights of energy consumers, aimed at operators of the consumer associations
- ✓ a guide to consultation with the Authority's website (a website sections is devoted "for customers", with non-technical summaries of regulation ("Atlas" for Electricity and Gas Consumers' Rights Consumer, leaflets on topics of interest of consumers, etc.)

Furthermore are permanently organised:

- ✓ presentations, meeting, video conferencing and seminars for **explain proposals** and measures affecting consumers' rights
- ✓ hearings of associations into which **users** and **consumers** are organised

All these activities aims to a **more assertive role** of the consumers' associations both in ex post **protection** of consumer rights, but also in dissemination of **information** on consumer rights and **ex ante contribution** to the process to set measures of protection



PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

In recent year several projects and initiatives have been developed in the framework of the projects to the benefit of consumers. These projects are financed from the found fines/penalties paid by the operators (established by law 244/07).

The projects/initiatives are:

- ✓ **Conciliation court** – Total budget 890,000€
 - ✓ **Training and courses** for mediators of the associations of CNCU– budget 500,000€ (10 courses involved more over then 160 partecipants)
 - ✓ Contribution to the costs of conciliation procedures - budget 390.000 €
- ✓ Project for the **qualification of local branches** of the association and a call center for information on energy - budget 1,300,000€
- ✓ **Disclosure/circulation territorial** - budget 400,000€

Ongoing:

- ✓ **Training and courses** for experts in dissemination
- ✓ Organization of more than 110 public **meetings**
- ✓ Promoting access to services and information about energy rights through broadcast information in tv programs with diffusion on the entired nation (PAC)

