

CP2C: Develop accessible communication channels to receive consumer complaints

REGULATORY FUNCTION: CONSUMER PROTECTION REGULATION		CP2C
OBJECTIVE CP2 There are mechanisms to monitor and review information received about consumer protection rights	ACTION CARD CP2C <h2 style="margin: 0;">DEVELOP ACESIBLE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS TO RECEIVE CONSUMER COMPLAINTS</h2>	
COST: Medium FREQUENCY: One time TARGET GROUPS: Regulators, service operators, consumers		
DESCRIPTION Collecting consumer feedback and relevant data about service provision usually requires appropriate mechanisms to receive complaints. Since the resolution of potential conflicts between consumers and operators lies primarily with regulators, such mechanisms become their most important tool when protecting consumer interests. Generally conceived as online platforms, this process allows regulators to conduct an initial analysis of submitted complaints, and where it is considered necessary, request clarification from operators or from claimants to better understand the situation. Regulators should also establish clear and transparent procedures to deal with complaints, including later analysis.		
EXPECTED OUTCOMES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a clear and transparent procedure for consumer complaints. • There is a database for regulators that is easy to manage and administer. • There is a knowledge base for policy decisions. 		
EXAMPLE: TANZANIA In Tanzania , the regulator ZURA (Zanzibar Utilities Regulatory Authority) established an online mechanism to receive complaints, which must be submitted with a specified time limit to enable service providers to be accountable. The main reason for setting a time limit is to enable the authority to collect evidence which will help in resolving the matter with integrity. The authority issues guidelines to consumers on how to initiate a complaint, the rights, obligations of consumers, and how to complete a complaint form. The authority also maintains a complaints register for all regulated sectors. A similar model is used nationally in Zambia by its regulator NWASCO (see figure).		
<p>Consumer complaints procedure</p> <pre> graph TD A[Consumer complains to water company] --> B{RESPONSE IS SATISFACTORY} B -- NO --> C[Consumer complains to NWASCO] C --> D[NWASCO investigates complaint with provider] D --> E{RESPONSE IS SATISFACTORY} E -- NO --> F[NWASCO publicises failure by provider and/or penalises the provider] B -- YES --> G[COMPLAINT RESOLVED SATISFACTORILY BY WATER COMPANY] E -- YES --> G </pre>		
LINKS ZURA web page: http://www.zura.go.tz/complaints-register/ NWASCO web page: http://www.nwasco.org.zm/index.php/consumer-service/water-watch-groups		
INTERNAL CAPACITIES NEEDED AND THE ROLE OF PARTNERS The establishment of consumer complaints mechanisms require regulators to have solid IT, administrative, and procurement abilities. Whereas consumer associations, research institutions, operators and national ombudsmen could play roles in supporting this action, the required capacity building training could be sustained by development actors. Regulators' staff must be trained on how to manage an online platform, how to inquire about complaints, and how to proceed with regulatory steps.		