

VNO NCW

European Commission
DG Sanco
Acting Head of Unit B1,
Consumer Markets, mr. D. Mair
B-1049 BRUSSELS
Belgium

① ps register
② Akw - reply please

Adres
'Malietoren'
Bezuidenhoutseweg 12
Den Haag
Postadres
Postbus 93002
2509 AA Den Haag
Telefoon
070 349 03 49
Telefax
070 349 03 00

Briefnummer
08/12.203/Bre/Dey

Den Haag
October 2nd, 2008

Onderwerp
Consultation on the development of a
harmonised methodology for classifying
and reporting consumer complaints
across the EU

Telefoonnummer
070 349 03 58
E-mail
breemen@vno-ncw.nl

Dear mr. Mair,

The Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers would like to react to you, in the framework of the ongoing consultation on the development of a harmonised methodology for classifying and reporting consumer complaints across the EU.

Since our response does not easily fit into your questionnaire, we write this letter.

We fully can understand, and appreciate, that you consider developing such methodology, for e.g. governmental enforcement agencies and government sponsored consumer complaints agencies. Or for use by private consumer organisations, if they so wish. This indeed would increase the possibility for an advanced European policy use of this kind of data.

We would like to inform you of the fact that our federation did react (in Dutch) on the EU Consumer Scoreboard, a.o. on the indicator consumer complaints. We are available for a discussion with you on this matter, if you so wish.

In our view consumers, who have a complaint on a product or service of a company, first should contact the company involved. We suppose, many would agree with this statement. Only if that contact fails, additional steps could be considered, such as access to ADR systems.

Besides, when complaints directly relate to legislation, a large number of (rightful) consumer complaints could, depending on the issue, be an indication of any collective problem, for public enforcement of the law.

We acknowledge, and agree with you, that consumer complaints can be a valuable source of information to further improve the performance of a company. Since complaints are company specific, any classification or (internal) reporting always will be allowed to be tailored according to the needs (and quality system) of that company. Company specific consumer complaints data are not public. So, any methodology you might develop for handling consumer complaints data in the public domain should not be imposed on companies.


Now, it may not be your intention to do so at all, which we would appreciate. You define complaints in the consultation document as 'complaints made to a third party.' In this document you mention, as one of the suggested options, that member states **and other relevant stakeholders** would be obliged to use the harmonised classification and a common IT tool. We wonder how you define 'other relevant stakeholders'? In our view there should, for companies, not be a legal obligation to do so. So, we answer 'yes' to your question in the questionnaire that only the classification of complaints 'addressed to third parties' should be harmonised, and not 'those made to sellers/retailers'. Besides, third parties like self regulatory bodies, in a specific context, e.g. advertising, may wish to apply context specific schemes.

As a final remark, we would like to ask you to be informed about COICOP (Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose), which you mention as a possible classification scheme.

We appreciate that you entered into a public consultation on this, and look forward to discuss with you any further developments.

Kind regards,

Confederation of Netherlands
Industry and Employers,



Drs. H.J.J. (Hubert) van Breemen.