

LEGAL BASIS

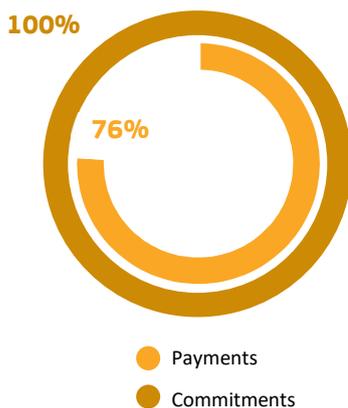
Regulation (EU) No 254/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council

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BUDGET ALLOCATION 2014-2020

EUR 188.4 million

**OVERALL EXECUTION
(2014-2020)****Evaluations/
studies conducted**

In 2019 the Commission published its report on the midterm evaluation of the 2014-2020 consumer programme, available here: <https://europa.eu/!jC36Hv>

How is it implemented?

The Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers is the lead DG for the implementation of the programme. It is supported by the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency. The programme is implemented through direct management (grants) and procurement.

CONSUMER PROGRAMME

What is the consumer programme?

The programme supports the EU's consumer policy. It aims to help citizens fully enjoy their consumer rights and actively participate in the single market, thus supporting growth, innovation and meeting the objectives of Europe 2020. The 2014-2020 consumer programme focuses on the following four key areas.

- A single market of safe products for the benefit of citizens and as a component of competitive businesses and traders.
- A single market in which citizens are well represented by professional consumer organisations whose capacity is built to meet the challenges of today's economic environment.
- A single market in which citizens are aware of and exercise their rights as consumers so that they contribute to the growth of competitive markets. Citizens must enjoy access to redress mechanisms in the event of problems without needing to resort to court procedures that are lengthy and costly for them and for governments.
- Concrete and effective collaboration between national bodies to support the enforcement of consumer rights and support consumers with advice.

**Specific objectives**

- **Safety.** To consolidate and enhance product safety through effective market surveillance throughout the EU.
- **Consumer information and education, and support for consumer organisations.** To improve consumer education, information and awareness of rights, to develop the evidence base for consumer policy and to provide support to consumer organisations, taking into account the specific needs of vulnerable consumers.
- **Rights and redress.** To develop and reinforce consumer rights, in particular through smart regulatory action and improving access to simple, efficient, expedient and low-cost redress procedures, including alternative dispute resolution.
- **Enforcement.** To support enforcement of consumer rights by strengthening cooperation between national enforcement bodies and by supporting consumers with advice.

Why is it necessary?

Ensuring that products circulating in the internal market, including online, are safe for consumers is a basic objective of EU consumer policy.

Consumers need to be confident that unsafe products have no place on the EU market and that the relevant rules are effectively and efficiently enforced, both domestically and across borders. This is why the EU supports a coordinated and coherent approach to the enforcement of safety and market surveillance rules across the EU.

Outlook for the 2021-2027 period

In the next multiannual financial framework this programme will be integrated into the new single market programme.

Budget implementation (in million EUR)

EXECUTED COMMITMENTS			EXECUTED PAYMENTS	
28.0		2018		27.6
29.2		2019		26.5
29.7		2020		29.1

Key performance indicators

	Baseline	PROGRESS TO TARGET	Target	Results	Assessment
Safety – % of notifications to rapid alert system for dangerous consumer products resulting in at least one reaction ⁽¹⁾		> 100%	48%	50% achieved compared to a target of 48%	On track
EU-wide online dispute resolution system – number of cases dealt with		> 100%	100 000	147 456 cases dealt with compared to a target of 100 000	On track
Contacts with consumers handled by the European consumer centres	71 000	> 100%	106 500	167 833 contacts compared to a target of 106 500	On track
Visits to the website of the European consumer centres ⁽²⁾	3 m	> 100%	5.1 m	6.7 million visits compared to a target of 5.1 million	On track

% of target achieved by the end of 2020

⁽¹⁾ Average of results for 2014-2020.

⁽²⁾ Latest results from 2019.

Where are we in the implementation?

- The 2014-2020 consumer programme has been implemented by means of annual work programmes that set out the actions to be undertaken in a given year and that have been implemented mainly by calls for tender and calls for proposals. As result, under the 2020 work programme, 52 grant agreements and 54 procurement contracts were signed, amounting to a total of EUR 25.3 million. Overall, enhanced product safety and support for enforcing consumer rights together account for about 60% of the total amount committed in 2020. The activity that received the largest amount of funding (EUR 6.5 million) was financial contributions for joint actions with the bodies constituting the European Consumer Centres Network.
- Although the implementation of some activities is still ongoing, the related performance indicators of the consumer programme have already been achieved.
- In 2020, the COVID-19 emergency impacted various procurement contracts and grant projects, resulting in several contract amendments. Consequently, the planning of some procurement activities (due to the cancellation of meetings, conferences and study visits) was adjusted and the budget reallocated to grants, which helped to improve the overall rate of implementation. The payment appropriations will continue to be executed in the coming years (estimated until 2023) to allow for ongoing projects to be finalised regarding both grants and procurements. Given that they relate to activities that are still being implemented, the final payments have therefore not yet been made.

Performance assessment

- The programme made progress towards meeting its specific objectives in the areas of safety, consumer information and education, rights and redress, and enforcement, with, in particular, a high level of EU added value in a highly interconnected economy.
- In the field of product safety, the Commission has promoted and facilitated cooperation among enforcement authorities by financing joint sampling and testing activities on specific products, which eventually feed into the rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products and knowledge-sharing activities on a variety of market surveillance issues. The feedback ratio of reports of other authorities to 'serious risk' notifications increased from 0.90 in 2013 to 2.69 in 2020. The number of notifications has now stabilised at a rate of around 2 000 per year.
- The objective of the 'Coordinated activities for the safety of products' initiative is to foster cooperation by implementing a package of product-specific and horizontal activities with flexibility and efficiency. The 2020 'Coordinated activities for the safety of products' initiative has reached its final phase, in which the testing activities have finished and market surveillance authorities are working on the risk-assessment and follow-up measures, depending on the test results. Since 2019, exchanges involving product safety enforcement officials have also been integrated within 'Coordinated activities for the safety of products' activities, under the name 'VisitUs'. Over an initial 6-month period (October 2019–March 2020), 26 officials (from 33 European Economic Area countries) participated in such exchanges in this new form. The scheme had to be suspended after March 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- The consumer programme has funded several communication and information campaigns to promote consumer rights while travelling and shopping (including online shopping). Thanks to an annual operating grant of EUR 2 million, awarded in 2020, the European consumer organisation Bureau européen des unions de consommateurs could carry out various activities in favour of defending the interests of all EU consumers. Furthermore, almost EUR 3 million is dedicated to Consumer PRO, a service contract signed with the Bureau européen des unions de consommateurs (running for a period of 4 years) to organise and implement training and other capacity-building activities in the EU, Iceland and Norway for consumer organisations and other actors in the consumer-policy field. The programme has supported cooperation in the area of national consumer protection. Intense work took place in 2020 to ensure that national authorities are ready to implement the new consumer protection cooperation regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/2394, which entered into force on 17 January 2020) efficiently and to have a modern IT system to support their cooperation. The consumer programme has provided funding for the European Consumer Centres Network, which helps consumers with cross-border purchases, explains their rights when shopping internationally and helps them seek redress from a trader in another EU Member State (or Iceland or Norway).
- The Online Dispute Resolution platform, launched in 2016, is today also a modern way to register consumer complaints, replacing other systems such as the European Consumer Complaints Registration system. In 2020, the number of cases dealt with by this EU-wide system reached almost 147 000, surpassing its target, and an estimated 40% of these complaints have been resolved.

Concrete examples of achievements

Over 2 000 notifications	9% of alerts	One third	EUR 7 million	147 000 customers
of dangerous products are received every year through the rapid alert system for dangerous non-food products.	in 2020 were related to products linked to COVID-19 (mostly face masks).	of all claims received by the online platforms checked were found to be scams.	in annual funding was provided to the European Consumer Centres Network.	have lodged a complaint through the Online Dispute Resolution platform since its launch in 2016.