

A CONSUMER CHECKLIST OF ESSENTIALS IN EUROPEAN SMART ENERGY MARKETS



CHOICE IS ESSENTIAL FOR ME PARTICULARLY IF IT COSTS ME MONEY

Consumers should have a free choice to use or refuse smart meters in their homes. Emphasis should be placed on convincing consumers of the benefits of smart technologies, not just forcing them into people's homes. Choice becomes even more important where consumers are required to pay.

THE KEY ISSUE FOR ME IS HOW TO BENEFIT FROM THE SMART METER

The diversity of consumers must be considered in any roll-out strategy. Especially when consumers are paying for smart meters, they must be able to avail of the new technology, regardless of income, social group or payment method. Independent, personalised information and 'best use' advice are necessary responses to consumers' various profiles and means.

I WANT MY BILL TO BE ACCURATE, BASED ON ACTUAL CONSUMPTION. ADDITIONAL SERVICES CAN COME LATER

If consumers get a smart meter, they should be accurately billed, with the possibility of flexible payments throughout the year. The technology must be able to react to changing consumer needs and smart meters should open the door to innovative services, particularly those enabling more energy efficiency.

THE INFORMATION I GET ON MY CONSUMPTION SHOULD BE EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND HELP ME TO COMPARE ALTERNATIVE OFFERS

Smart meters allow more frequent information on energy consumption. This should empower consumers to easily budget and compare their consumption patterns with market deals or communicate this information to a third party.

To make this information useful for consumers it must be: Accurate, understandable, up to date, in a user-friendly format and include monetary information.

I WANT MY DATA TO BE FULLY PROTECTED

Data protection and privacy must be integrated from the outset and throughout the whole project. The processing of personal data must comply with established fundamental principles – the processing must be transparent and based on data minimisation and purpose limitation – and consumers must be able to exercise their rights free of charge. Compliance with and effective enforcement of existing Data Protection legislation must be ensured.

I OWN MY DATA AND I WANT TO EASILY ACCESS AND CONTROL IT

Consumer ownership of their data must be guaranteed. Therefore they need free, easy and frequent access to their consumption data in an appropriate format. Consumers should be able to decide to whom, when and for what purpose they allow access to their own metering data.

IT SHOULD BE EASY TO SWITCH SUPPLIERS WHENEVER I WISH TO, AVOIDING UNNECESSARY REINSTALLATIONS

In order to avoid future 'lock-in', smart meters must be modular and easily upgradable to cope with future technological innovations. Smart meters, displays, appliances and all the features of smart homes which could be used in the future must be interoperable. All equipment should be able to communicate with each other so that consumers can switch supplier easily and move home without having to change their appliances or upgrade their system.

IN CASE OF PROBLEMS, I SHOULD CLEARLY KNOW WHOM TO CONTACT

Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders must be clearly defined so that the consumer knows who to turn to for problem solving. A single point of contact must be in place to provide basic energy advice to consumers and to resolve problems. Independent and strong ADR mechanisms across industries should be set up to settle disputes involving multiple providers.

I WANT TO BE PROTECTED AGAINST THE MISUSE OF REMOTE FUNCTIONALITIES

For meters with the ability to remotely disconnect, switch to and from prepayment or limit the amount of energy received, consumers must be able to choose when these functionalities are used. Consumers need to be confident about appropriate use by suppliers or others so that they are not left without supply or insufficient energy. The system must be secure against hacking into these functionalities by unauthorised persons.

I NEED SPECIAL MEASURES TO PROTECT ME WHEN I AM IN A VULNERABLE SITUATION

A measure of an advanced society is how it treats its poorest and most vulnerable consumers. Actions are necessary to understand the impact of smart metering and changes to the market on low income and vulnerable customers.

Proactive steps should be taken to deliver social benefits from rollout.

I WANT TO BE CONFIDENT THAT THE METER IN MY HOUSE IS SAFE AND SECURE

Smart meters must be reliable and safe reducing the risk of negative impact on consumers. The design and manufacturing of smart meters should respect safety standards and stringent criteria guaranteeing the highest consumer protection possible.

<http://bit.ly/RoGSXW>