



FACTSHEET Enforcement & COJEF

What is at stake?

It's a truism to say that consumers' legal rights are worth next to nothing if not effectively realised, respected and enforced. Therefore, BEUC works not just for robust consumer protections in EU legislation, but also on the level of enforcement of existing laws.

What is COJEF and what does it do?



BEUC pursues stronger enforcement of European consumer law via a specialised project called the Consumer **Justice Enforcement Forum (COJEF)**. COJEF began in 2011 with a 2 year project and we are now in the midst of the second edition.

This project aims to enhance networking, **exchange of expertise and training** among consumer organisations based in different European countries.

By enabling these organisations to share intellectual capital and case law experience, we get closer to the central goal of the project – the ability to better enforce consumer rights throughout the EU.

This is achieved by swapping awareness of **best practices and training consumer organisation's lawyers** to develop enforcement strategies which include problem analysis and solution mechanisms involving both national and European laws. COJEF also seeks **better cooperation** between consumer organisations, public authorities and other actors.

Who is involved?

The project involves BEUC and **10 national partner organisations** which are consumer organisations from different Member States.

They represent a broad geographical coverage and various legal traditions in order to have richly diverse input into the project's activities.

Most of the partner organisations boast longstanding experience in the private enforcement of consumer rights, often in the forms of **litigation** where necessary or **directly contacting businesses** on behalf of consumers.

Using this history, they participate in and offer scenario training for those less experienced consumer organisations, thereby filling the knowledge gap and helping to develop an enforcement strategy.

The current COJEF II project received funding in 2013 from the European Commission's 'civil justice action grants' scheme. This kicked in on 1 March, 2014 and will run for two years.



Which activities are involved?

COJEF's project plan is split into 3 broad areas – training seminars, a focussed policy debate and building a 'Knowledge Platform'.

4 training seminars are planned on issues which frequently arise in:

- Financial services
- Online markets
- Misleading claims
- Telecommunications

The second activity amounts to a **policy debate on how private international law rules apply to consumer protection cases**. This policy debate gathers consumer law experts, judges, private international law specialists and academics.

Finally, the third activity envisaged is the collection, preparation and publication of material for a **Knowledge Platform**. This will be carried out as a joint effort among all partners and academics.

What about assets for the longer term?

COJEF is in the process of creating our **online Knowledge Platform** comprised of case law, settlement records, research and information on selected consumer problems.

This will be accessible to consumer organisations so that they may easily refer to enforcement results and related information on comparable national experiences.

This will prove highly useful in helping to understand both the context and extent of a certain consumer problem, examine the various possible approaches taken elsewhere and deduce what remedy and approach should be pursued.

Throughout the project, consumer organisations will be trained up on how to **develop enforcement strategies** and which tools are at their disposal when faced with cross-border or pan-European infringements of consumer laws.

Legal practitioners train the participants on how to build cases.

Academic research will be undertaken on chosen issues so that both the common ground and the differences between national legislatures are determined.

The combination of the approaches cited above can prompt a coherent approach to tackling infringements of consumer laws.

You can discover more about the project, its partners, the activities involved and the end results at:

www.cojef-project.eu