



National Energy Ombudsmen Network

NEON Good Practices
Exchange and Capacity
Building:

Work Programme 2018-2019

NEON is the European network of independent, not-for-profit consumer dispute-resolution services and ombudsmen active in the energy sector. Our members have the public mandate to provide an easily-accessible and free-of-charge or low-cost system to solve disputes between consumers and companies.

We work to guarantee the rights of all consumers, including the most vulnerable ones, through the promotion of public-interest, independent complaint-resolution bodies.

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I. Introduction

NEON is the European network of independent, publicly-mandated, not-for-profit consumer dispute-resolution services and ombudsmen active in the energy sector. Our association was established in 2011 in order to encourage the protection and empowerment of energy consumers through the promotion of statutory, public-interest and independent complaint-resolution bodies.

Since its creation, one of its main missions has been to facilitate and promote facilitate the exchange of information, experience and good practices between members in order to help them to find new solutions to common challenges.

This work programme is based on an internal survey, and lists the topics NEON will work on in the coming months. This is not a closed list, but only a starting point, which can be adapted to members' needs as they arise.

In order to facilitate the readability, the topics have been divided into three major areas: topics related to the implementation of EU legislation, specific issues related to the missions and activities of NEON members and issues related to a specific (trans-)national situations.



II. Area of work 1: topics related to the implementation of EU legislation

EU legislation is one of the main drivers of energy consumer rights and dispute resolution, not only within the EU but also outside. As national reference points for energy consumer rights and complaints, NEON members are at the forefront of the implementation of EU law in their countries.

Exchanges will help members to better foresee developments, identify upcoming challenges and propose innovative solutions in the following areas:

Energy

- **Smart meters:** following EU requirements, smart meters are being rolled-out in most Member States. Taking into account national specificities, NEON members will exchange on the issues encountered (types and number of complaints) and the strategies and ways to address them.
- **New market actors and services:** the importance of new market actors and services such as prosumers, aggregators, bundled offers, etc. will increase further with the adoption of the Clean Energy Package. Exchanges should help members get an insight into other members' experiences and strategies in dealing with these new actors and services.
- **Energy bills:** as the main "interface" with consumers, the bill is still the main cause of complaints. NEON will foster the exchange on different national practices (layout of bills, contact of ombudsman on bill, etc.) to help members get insights and inspiration to better address the complaints they receive and, if relevant, allow them to propose recommendations to improve the existing national practices.
- **Phasing out of regulated tariffs:** the phasing out of regulated tariffs¹ has created specific issues due to the lack of awareness of consumers or the lack of implementation of the EU law (for ex, the lack of a supplier of last resort in France). NEON members will exchange on how to face these issues.

ADR

- **National ADR landscape and implementation of the ADR Directive:** while setting some common standards, Directive 2013/11/EU (ADR Directive) has been implemented in different ways across MS. NEON members will increase their exchanges related to the implementation of the ADR Directive and the issues created by it.

Data Protection

- **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** the EU GDPR is applied by all members since May 2018. However, specific implementation issues regarding personal data handling and protection practices may still occur after that deadline.

¹ Following the latest CEER Retail Markets Monitoring Report, and taking into account the NEON geographical coverage, regulated prices for all customers are still found in Spain and France:
<https://www.ceer.eu/documents/104400/-/-/56216063-66c8-0469-7aa0-9f321b196f9f>

III. Area of work 2: topics related to the missions and activities of NEON members

NEON members have different set-ups, governance arrangements and practices, but they share the same missions and face similar challenges:

- **Vulnerable consumers and energy poverty:** during the last couple of years, these issues have gained more political relevance, both at the European and at the national level, fuelled by rising energy prices and stagnating household revenues.

Members will exchange on whether/how to identify vulnerable customers (indicators and other means), and whether these consumers should be offered tailored assistance (in terms of communication, case handling and others). In addition, exchanges will also include sharing of views on national practices to address energy poverty.

- **Big data and statistics:** the data on complaints held by NEON members is one of their greatest added values, allowing them to point out malfunctioning in the market. In addition to helping members share best practices in complaints data collection and management, common themes coming up in different countries through this data analysis will be identified and analysed.
- **Governance, organisation and management of NEON members:** NEON will foster the exchange between members on issues specific to their work and organisation, including how they reach out and engage with customers and other stakeholders, how they manage their relations with other public institutions and how they communicate internally.
- **Economic value of ADR in energy:** in view of the future revision of the ADR Directive, NEON could promote a study on “the economic value of ADR in energy”, to estimate the economic benefit of energy ombudsmen activities in Europe.

IV. Area of work 3: topics related to a specific (trans-)national situations

Some topics, although of high importance to some citizens and consumers, are quite localised. In addition, they may not affect all members of NEON. Specific “side-events” or bilateral meetings could be organised in those areas.

- **Gas B to H conversion:** the end of the “gas B” fields in the Netherlands may create issues in the North of France and Belgium, especially due to the need to adapt the existing infrastructure and appliances.

V. Actions

In order to implement this work programme, a series of workshops are planned until the beginning of 2019. The dates and topics for further workshops will be decided in January 2019:

- Internal Workshop on Smart Metering – Sept 2018
- Internal Workshop on Prosumers and Energy Communities (end 2018)
- Internal Workshop on Implementation of ADR Directive (beginning 2019)

Interested in Participating?

For more information, please contact the NEON Secretariat at neon@neon-ombudsman.org