

Benchmarking Report on roles & responsibilities of NRAs in customer empowerment and protection as of 1st January 2011

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On the agenda

- Background
- Methodology
- Key findings and good practices
- Further steps



Background

- The 3rd Package bestows on **NRAs** a new role in consumer protection and empowerment
- The CEER Benchmarking Report aims to examine the practices followed by NRAs in customer empowerment and protection just before the implementation of the 3rd Package (as of 1st January 2011)
- The Report is not a status review of implementation

Methodology

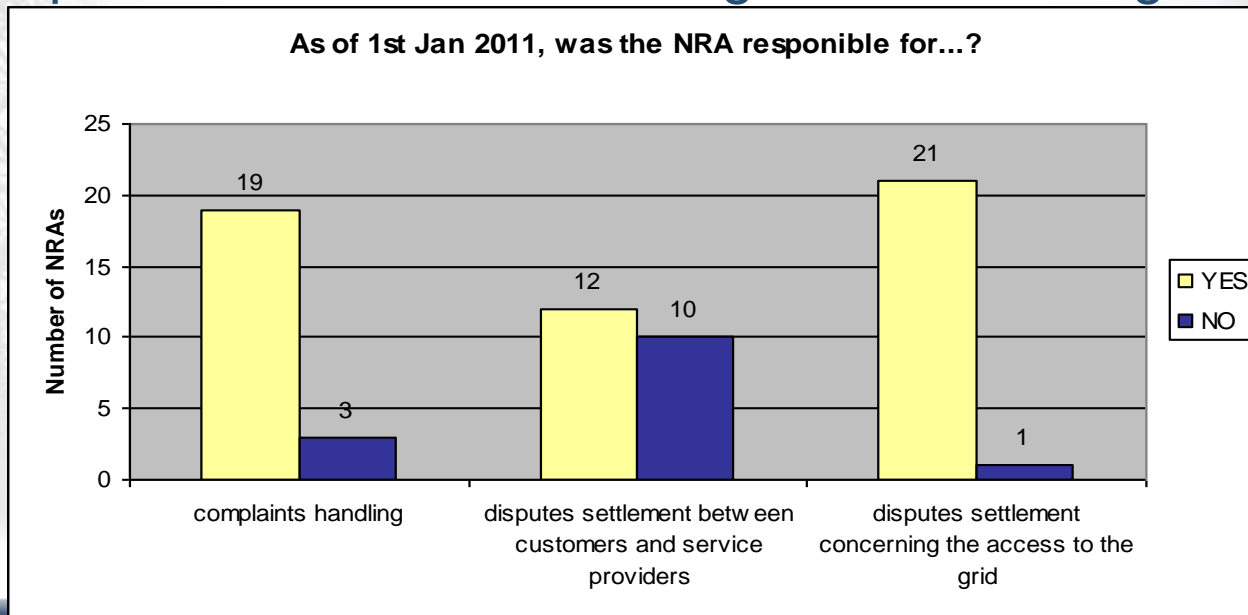
- On line questionnaire submitted to NRAs, divided into *General overview* (1st Part) and *Short case studies on good practices* (2nd Part)
- Consulted: 29 CEER members
- **22** complete or partial answers to the 1st Part, and **20** to the 2nd Part
- **Fields investigated:**
 - Complaint handling/dispute settlement/ADR
 - Specific protection of vulnerable customers
 - End-user energy efficiency
 - Customer information
 - Collection and use of inputs coming from customers
 - Other customer-related activities

Key Findings: General overview

- In 18 out of 22 countries there is a legal provision giving the NRA responsibility in the field of customer empowerment and protection. They represent more than 94m gas and more than 180m electricity household customers
- Even in countries where the NRAs are **not legally involved** they play an important role with reference to customer issues
- In the field of customer empowerment and protection there is a lot of cooperation among stakeholders. Consultation, advice and working groups are the main forms of dialogue

Key Findings: Complaint handling and dispute settlement (1/2)

- As of 1st Jan 2011, all the responding NRAs were responsible for at least one of the following tasks:
 - Complaint handling
 - Dispute settlement between customers and service providers
 - Dispute settlement concerning access to the grid

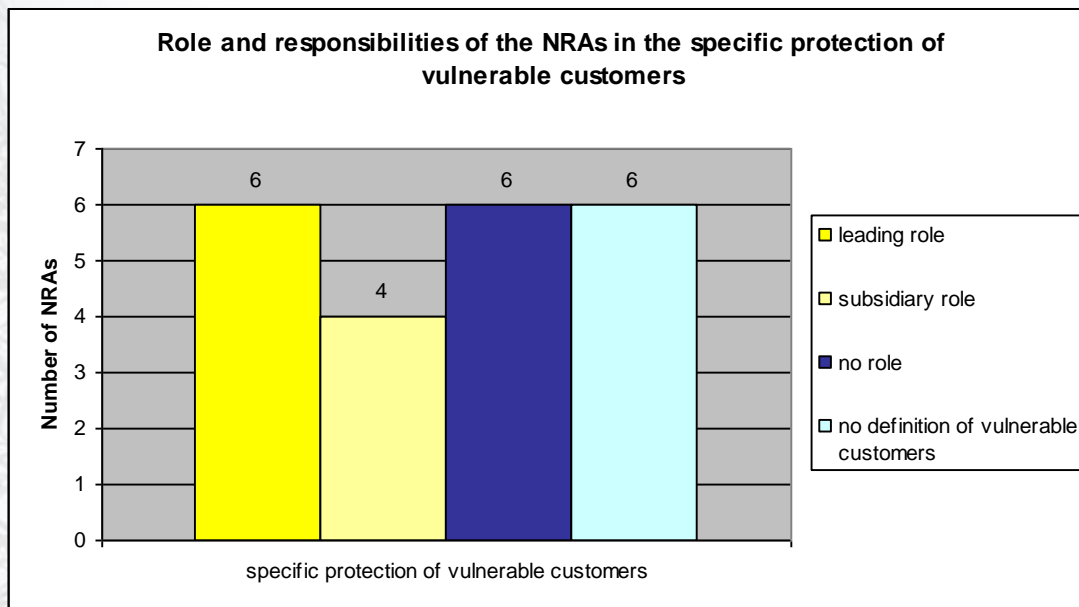


Key Findings: Complaint handling and disputes settlement (2/2)

- The range of NRA responsibilities in complaint handling and dispute resolution varies from imposing a solution on the parties, to trying to speed up the resolution of the dispute
- The NRA often cooperates with a third body or an ombudsman
- The information services (e.g. single point of contact) are considered as a first step for preventing complaints and disputes

Key Findings: Specific protection of vulnerable customers (1/2)

- Only in a few countries the NRAs have a leading role, while in the majority of cases they have a subsidiary role or does not play any role



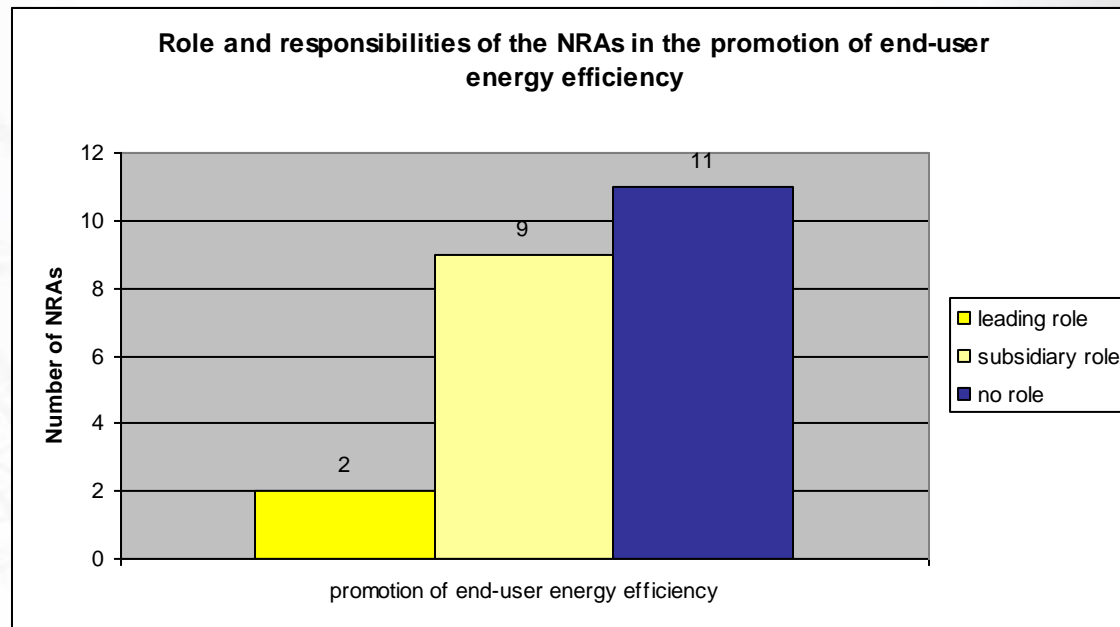
- In some countries, as of 1st Jan 2011, there was still no definition of vulnerable customers

Key Findings: Specific protection of vulnerable customers (2/2)

- Special services provided by the NRAs in the field of vulnerable customers are:
 - non-disconnection period
 - dedicated information channels about how to save energy
 - a dedicated information channel on how to get the best deal
- In a few countries, the NRA fixes social tariffs or special discounts for low income customers

Key Findings: Promotion of end-user energy efficiency

- Energy efficiency advice is often seen as a tool for protecting vulnerable customers, through smart use of energy
- The **general task** of promoting end-user energy efficiency is in several cases assigned by national legislation to entities other than the NRA

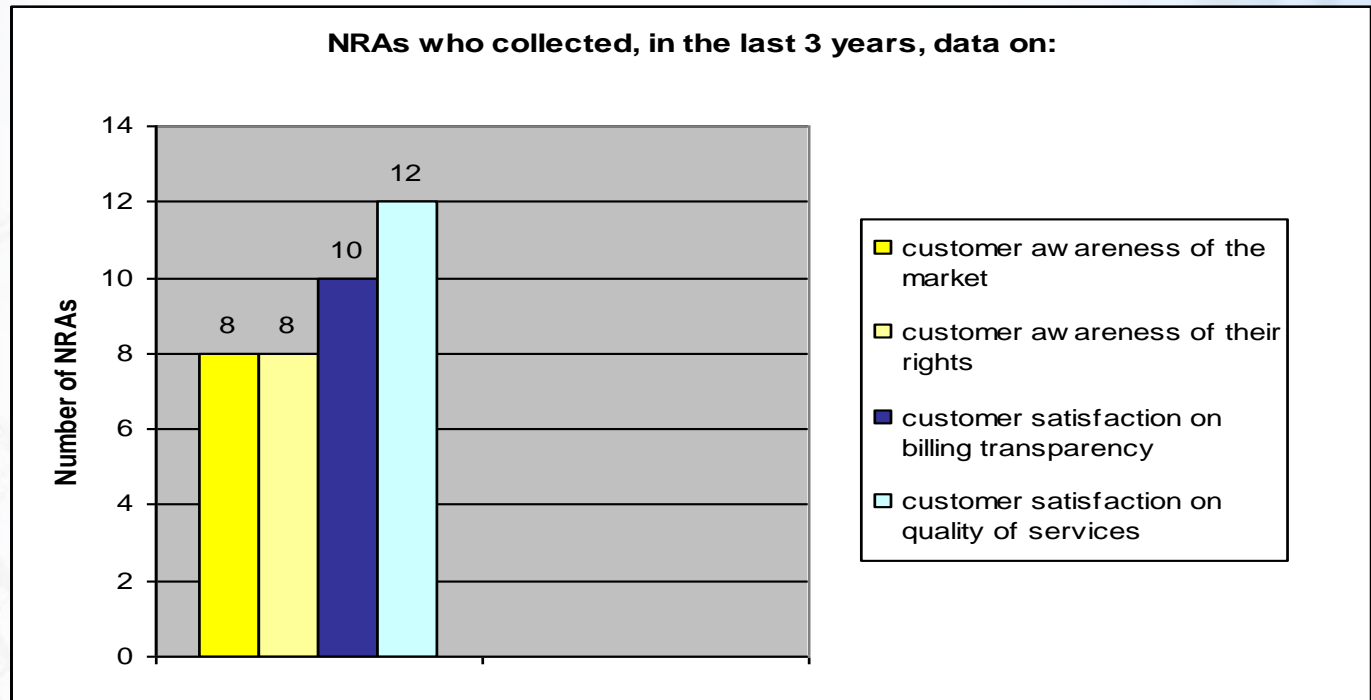


Key Findings: Customer information

- Customers are informed on the following **main topics**:
 - their rights
 - how to switch supplier
 - how to submit a complaint
 - how to save energy (less often)
- The main **channels of communication** are: website, leaflets, hotline (in 15 countries there is one run by the NRA), but also information campaigns at local level have been carried out

Key Findings: Collecting and using input from customers

- Data are collected on a regular basis or for specific purposes:



- Data are usually available to the public and have been used, as a contribution for better regulation or for investigating suppliers' and DSOs' behaviour

Key Findings: Other customer-related activities

- **The majority of NRAs are also involved in other customer-related activities like:**
 - monitoring contractual terms in supply contracts
 - issuing Codes of Practices and service regulations
 - running price comparison services
 - setting quality standards for supply and distribution
 - carrying out inspections on suppliers and DSOs

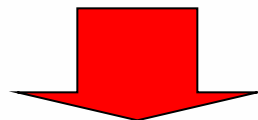
Good Practices

As a result of the Benchmarking Report, some existing **good practices** that benefit customers can be pointed out:

- Preventing complaints through **information services**
- **Empowering** customers, especially vulnerable ones, through **adequate information**
- **Cooperating** with other relevant stakeholders on a regular basis
- **Collecting input** coming from customers and using them as a contribution for better regulation

Further steps...

- **Draft CEER Work Programme for 2012**



- A status review of 3rd Package implementation, as of 1st January 2012 – related to Customer and retail market issues

Thank you for your attention!

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Weblink to the report (click on the title):

[Benchmarking Report on roles & responsibilities of NRAs in customer empowerment and protection as of 1st January 2011](#)