

Contracts for the online and other distance sales of goods

2015/0288(COD) - 31/10/2017 - Document attached to the procedure

This Commission staff working document focuses on the impacts of fully harmonised rules on contracts for the sales of goods.

It presents a comprehensive overview of the findings and data gathered through different sources as regards the possible impacts of fully harmonised rules on consumer contracts for the online and offline sale of goods.

It builds on the December 2015 impact assessment:

- firstly, it aims to update the description of the problem to be tackled, taking into account recent data and evidence for both online and offline sales;
- secondly it aims to deepen the analysis of the impacts of the preferred policy option in the light of the amended Commission proposal which extends the scope to all consumer sales.

Main findings: the document stressed that a single set of EU-wide high consumer protection rules would further **empower EU consumers to take advantage of an increased offer and strengthened market competition**, thus directly contributing to the shaping of a true single market.

It should also be noted that several Member States are considering revising their legislation in the field of sales of goods (such as BE, CZ, LT and FR). All businesses in these countries will in any event incur similar costs to adapt to the new national law. Harmonising at EU level for both online and offline sales would present the advantage of **triggering adaptation costs only once**, while at the same time giving incentives to companies that are interested to sell cross-border but do not do so currently because of differences in consumer contract law rules.

Beyond the important issue of consumers' rights, which would also benefit by the legal certainty brought by the proposal since consumers would enjoy the same level of protection whether they buy online or offline, domestically or cross-border, the proposal would yield a number of economic benefits for consumers in terms of wider choice of products at more competitive prices. The impact assessment accompanying the original proposal estimated that a full harmonisation of consumer contract rules would increase household consumption in the EU by EUR 18 billion from its current level.