



2017 EDITION

Consumer Conditions Scoreboard

Trust in e-commerce dramatically increases

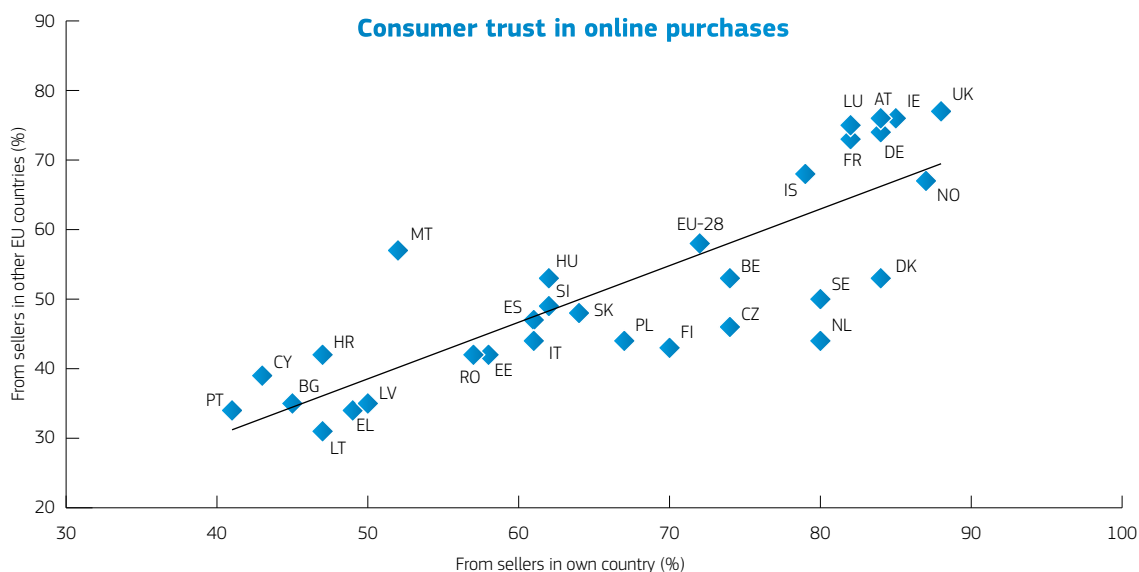
The Consumer Conditions Scoreboard monitors the consumer environment across Europe and tracks progress on the EU Digital Single Market from a consumer's perspective. It also examines how consumers' vulnerability influences their perceptions of the consumer environment.

The 2017 Consumers Conditions Scoreboard shows that **consumer trust in online shopping has dramatically increased**, especially in buying from other EU countries. However there are still important obstacles preventing e-commerce from developing to its full potential.

Key findings

More consumers are buying online and their trust in online purchases has dramatically increased: Levels of trust increased by 12.4 percentage points for purchases from

retailers located in the same country. For purchases from other EU Member States, the levels of trust increased by a stunning 21.1 percentage points.

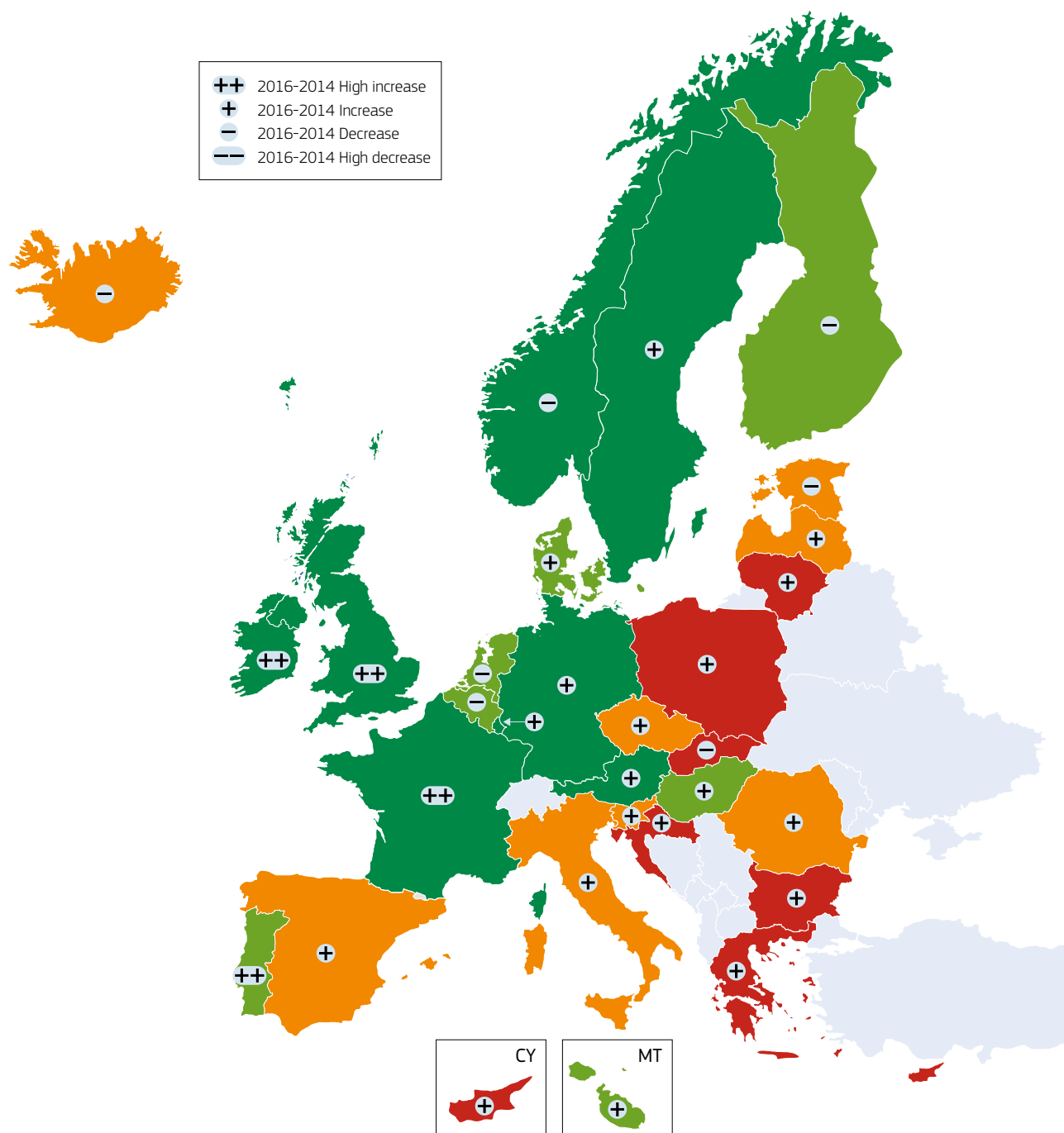


However, retailers are still reluctant to sell online to consumers in other EU countries: Their main concerns are higher risks of fraud and differences in tax regulations. They are also discouraged by differences in national contract laws, differences in national consumer protection rules, and potentially higher costs for solving disputes cross-border.

In general, trust in, and uptake of, e-commerce is higher among consumers than among retailers.

Conditions for consumers have improved across the EU, but there are still significant differences between countries: Consumer conditions are generally better in northern and western EU countries than eastern and southern ones. This pattern is similar to previous years.

Consumer Conditions Index



Measuring consumer conditions

If a country has good consumer conditions, this means that consumers can make informed choices in the market and maximise their welfare. It also means that consumer rights are well-known and respected, and that problems can be easily solved. Consumer conditions are measured in three ways:

- ★ knowledge of consumer rights and trust in institutional and market conditions;
- ★ compliance with and enforcement of consumer rights and product safety legislation;
- ★ complaints and dispute resolution.

Knowledge and Trust

Consumers are more aware of their rights and are more confident that these rights are being protected.

The scoreboard tested their knowledge of three key rights, namely:

- ★ The right to return a product bought at distance within 14 days without giving any reason
- ★ The right to a replacement and/or the repair of faulty products
- ★ The right to neither pay nor return unsolicited products

The consumers scored much better than they had done previously. 12.6% of consumers answered all three questions correctly (an increase of 3.6 percentage points since 2014).

On the other hand, retailers' knowledge scores were slightly lower than they were two years ago.

One of the most encouraging findings is that consumers are placing more trust in companies, public authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to respect and protect their rights. 72.2% of consumers place trust in these organisations, which is an increase of 8.2 percentage points

since 2014. This follows the largely positive trend observed in previous scoreboards.

Compliance and Enforcement

Retailers have improved their compliance with consumer rules. Fewer consumers experienced unfair commercial practices (16.8% on average, or 6.9 percentage points less than in 2014) and unfair contractual terms (8.9%, that is 5.4 percentage points less than in 2014).

Retailers find compliance costs reasonable in their country. However, they struggle with compliance and the related costs when it comes to consumer laws in other EU countries.

There is a clear link between retailers' views on authorities' enforcement efforts and their assessment of their competitors' compliance with consumer legislation. This suggests that effective enforcement of consumer and safety rules makes a real difference.

There is also a clear link between retailers' positive assessment of the work done by public authorities and consumer NGOs to ensure compliance, and consumers' trust in these organisations to protect their rights.

Complaints and Dispute Resolution

Fewer consumers reported having encountered a problem worth complaining about (20.1%, which is 2.6 percentage points less than in 2014).

More of those who complained were satisfied with how their complaint was dealt with (63.4%, which is 3.5 percentage points more than in 2014).

Almost a third of consumers decided not to complain about their problem. This is a higher proportion than in 2014.

Consumer Vulnerability

Consumer vulnerability significantly influences consumer conditions

Consumers may perceive themselves to be vulnerable due to their financial circumstances, their employment situation, age, health problems, personal issues or belonging to a minority group.

Consumers who perceive themselves as vulnerable have less trust in organisations, product safety and environmental claims.

They are more likely to report having been exposed to unfair commercial practices. They are also more likely to experience problems and be less satisfied with how their complaints were handled.

Full information can be found on the webpage http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=117250

