

## CCPC Opening Statement

Joint Oireachtas Committee, Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

5 November 2025, Leinster House, Room 2000

Good afternoon, Cathaoirleach and members of the Committee.

I am Brian McHugh, the Chairperson of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), and I am joined by Patrick Kenny, member of the CCPC and Simon Barry, our Director of Research, Advocacy and International.

I was appointed Chair in September 2023, and this is my first appearance before you in that role. I am proud to be leading a team that keeps Irish markets open and competitive, and champions consumer rights.

## Role of the CCPC

The CCPC is responsible for promoting competition, and protecting the interests of consumers through enforcement, information and advocacy. We also have roles in product safety, financial education and digital and data regulation.

Open and fair markets are the foundation for the success of the Irish economy and it is the CCPC's role to protect and promote them. They drive innovation in products and services, create jobs and ultimately improve consumer welfare. At a time of turmoil and uncertainty, competitive markets are more important now than ever – both in Ireland and in Europe.

## Annual Report updates

I would like to set out some of our recent achievements.

## Enforcement and Compliance

Under our merger powers in 2024 we blocked Daa's proposed takeover of the former Quick Park car park at Dublin Airport. Today, thanks to our decision, consumers parking at the Airport have more choice, greater supply and lower prices.

In competition law enforcement we are proactively using our powers and have conducted six dawn raids in the last two years. Our competition enforcement teams have a number of live investigations under way, including into the gambling, home alarms, ports, and healthcare technology sectors.

On consumer law enforcement, last year, we conducted 200 frontline inspections throughout the country. We have actively enforced new laws designed to protect consumers from misleading sales discounts. This resulted in prosecutions of Boots, Lifestyle Sports, DID Electrical and Rathwood. We also took a prosecution against Tesco for failing to provide full pricing information of Clubcard products. The outcome in all these cases were guilty pleas and a donation of €1,000 to charity.

Given their increasing role in consumers' buying decisions, we also produced guidelines to help influencers comply with the law. We have followed this up with warning letters and more recently we issued compliance notices to a number of influencers. More are on the way.

Working with consumer protection colleagues across Europe we secured a range of commitments to improve transparency and clarity for millions of consumers. These businesses included WhatsApp and TikTok and investigations are ongoing in relation to Apple, Temu and Shein.

In 2023 and 2024 our market surveillance teams removed or prevented over 360,000 unsafe products from reaching the Irish market. This ranges from dangerous toys to hurling helmets and travel adaptors.

### Empowering and Informing Consumers

We have run multiple campaigns to inform and empower consumers to pursue their own rights and financial wellbeing. 2024 saw 1.8 million visits to our website, and over 44,000 calls to our helpline. A significant number came on the back of our sponsored consumer rights TV show, The Complaints Bureau, which reached 2.7 million views.

### Research and advocacy

In the CCPC our research and advocacy reports explore critical consumer and market issues and propose solutions. Some recent examples include:

- our Car History report which highlights the need for State led access to car history information for consumers;
- our Consumer Detriment report which found that Irish consumers experience issues that cost them almost €1 billion a year
- our Groceries Analysis highlighted that Irish consumers have recently faced sharp increases in grocery prices, but the evidence does not suggest that competition in the supermarket sector is a significant problem
- Our Home Buyers report highlighted the challenges faced by consumers when buying a home and made several recommendations to improve the process, such as legislating for providing consumers with pre-sale information, and easy access to relevant information held by public bodies

## Structure

In recent years the CCPC has seen our powers strengthened and new enforcement regimes added within our competition and consumer protection remit including

- The Competition Act
- Consumer Rights Act
- General Product Safety Regulations

In addition, we have been or will be allocated a significant number of new responsibilities in areas including:

- Digital Services Act
- Data Act
- Data Governance Act
- Digital Markets Act
- The European Consumer Centre,
- AI Act
- Accessibility Regulations and
- Foreign Subsidies Regulations

Some of the new functions such as Digital Markets Act and European Consumer Centre reinforce the powerful synergies we derive from our dual competition and consumer protection mandates. However, we need to sound a note of caution. Some of the functions expand the breadth of the CCPC's remit into significant new areas such as Data and Accessibility regulation.

We enjoy a strong relationship with our Department and this period has seen a significant increase in our budget and staff numbers, which is very welcome.

However, the pace and scope of this change is challenging, and this pressure was acknowledged by the Department in its recent review of the CCPC. Additionally, our organisation has not scaled at senior leadership level to match our increased mandate. Addressing these risks will be critical to the success of the CCPC in future years. In order for us to fulfil all our new functions, we will need additional resources.

## Priorities for 2026

While we have built a stronger more impactful organisation in recent years we have more work to do to deliver on our current Strategy.

## Enforcement and Compliance

We have no doubt that businesses and consumers suffer significant harm from ongoing breaches of competition and consumer law and finding, stopping and sanctioning such breaches will remain a critical priority for us in 2026.

We strongly welcome government commitment in the Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity to provide the CCPC with new powers to screen for bid rigging in public procurement and, financial sanction powers for breaches of consumer law, as well as increasing the limit of the Small Claims Court. These all send powerful messages to businesses and consumers that those who break the law should not be allowed to benefit at the expense of those who don't.

We look forward to future engagement with the Committee when the legislation reaches the appropriate stage.

## Empower and Inform Consumers

In order to better empower and inform consumers, we will deliver a major upgrade to the CCPC website in 2026. Our goal is to deliver a mobile friendly website, optimised for AI and search, and grow our traffic to over 3 million visitors per annum.

## Advocacy and Research

We will publish the first in a series of reports on the State of Competition in Ireland in the coming weeks. This will provide a picture of how competition is functioning across the economy. We will build on this work in 2026 by initiating more detailed research into areas that merit closer examination.

We will continue to work closely with the Department of Finance and the Central Bank to support the successful implementation of the National Financial Literacy Strategy.

## Competitiveness

In inviting the CCPC today, the Committee has highlighted its interest in Competitiveness and the Cost of Doing Business. Both areas are central to our work. You cannot achieve competitiveness and efficiency without strong competition within well-functioning markets.

Today the Irish economy and consumers benefit hugely from decisions made in the past to open up markets such as airlines and telecoms. We have analysed and issued recommendations for numerous markets in recent years, including Banking, Insurance,

Waste and the legal sector. In some areas we have seen these recommendations implemented.

In other areas our recommendations have not been acted on.

It is 20 years since our landmark report on solicitors and barristers. But the appetite for reform has been anaemic. The Irish legal system is slow and expensive and is a drag on Ireland's competitiveness. Irish home buyers are poorly served by a solicitors' monopoly.

The CCPC welcomes the proposed legal reforms set out recently by Government, which reflected many of the previous recommendations made by the CCPC. But Irish businesses and consumers need to see reform go further and faster and the CCPC will remain a loud voice advocating for this.

We also take a strong interest in the broader competitiveness debate in Europe, where there are arguments for the European Commission to relax merger rules to allow new European Champions to take on US or Chinese firms.

In our view, Europe needs to strengthen the single market to allow firms to trade freely and expand consumer choice. We believe that consumers should decide who the Champions are – not bureaucrats.

I think you will see from the evidence today that the work of the CCPC has delivered significant results for Irish businesses and consumers, and our role in ensuring open and fair markets remains critical to the future prosperity of Irish households. Our proposed new powers will increase our impact. We look forward to further engagement with the Committee on future legislation. We are happy to answer any questions.