



Coimisiún um  
Iomaíocht agus  
Cosaint Tomhaltóirí

Competition and  
Consumer Protection  
Commission

## CCPC opening statement

# Joint Oireachtas Committee on Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

15 April 2026, Leinster House

I am Brian McHugh, the Chairperson of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), and I am joined by Geoffrey Gray, Member of the CCPC, Simon Barry, our Director of Research, Advocacy and International and Síona Ryan, our Director of Digital and Data Regulation.

Both Ireland and the EU have identified competitiveness as a priority area. We know we cannot deliver a competitive economy that serves consumers without strong competition operating on a level playing field. The CCPC has recently published its State of Competition analysis, providing an overview of how Ireland's economy is performing. We will discuss today the state of competition in Ireland and the work the CCPC is progressing to deliver open markets that enhance consumer welfare.

As you know, the CCPC is responsible for promoting competition and protecting consumers and we are focused on the work that will have the biggest positive impact on both the economy as a whole and the individual consumer.

We were last before this committee in November 2025, just shy of six months ago. In that time, we have taken major consumer protection and competition enforcement actions, published key research and advocacy reports and hit major milestones in progressing our new competition powers.

## Enforcement and mergers

In terms of enforcement action, the CCPC had a major win in a school bus transport cartel case, with a unanimous Central Criminal Court guilty verdict for engaging in an anticompetitive practice known as bid-rigging. We also prosecuted a Kildare-based car dealer for misleading a consumer about the history of a second-hand car.

Since we were last here, our consumer protection enforcement teams published several enforcement actions. Some particularly notable ones include:

- Compliance notices to high-profile influencers for failing to disclose the commercial nature of their social media content.
- Undertakings secured to address compliance concerns from several retailers.
- Fixed payment notices to several traders for failing to display product prices.

The CCPC also prosecuted Brown Thomas Arnotts, which subsequently pleaded guilty to breaking sales pricing laws. The outcome in this case was a €1,000 contribution to charity. This is the same result as in prosecutions against Tesco, Boots and Lifestyle Sports that we recently discussed with the committee. While this was an important outcome, we have long advocated for stronger powers to tackle consumer protection law. We believe the potential for consumer detriment is extremely high, and we want financial penalties that match the crime. Therefore, we welcome the proposed Consumer Protection, Competition and Enforcement Bill 2026, which includes administrative financial sanctions for consumer law, and look forward to it progressing.

Our antitrust team secured policy changes with Chartered Accountants Ireland to remove competition restrictions relating to the recruitment of trainee accountants. The antitrust team also announced a home appliances investigation and carried out dawn raids in Ireland and Germany.

In January, we published our annual Mergers and Acquisitions Report for 2025, highlighting a very successful year for our mergers team. There were 90 mergers notified in 2025, which is almost a 10% increase since 2024 and a 32% increase since 2023. We used our simplified merger notification process for 64% of our determinations delivering a reduced average clearance time of 12.5 working days. However, where necessary we also intervened to protect competition, requiring divestments in deals across sectors including telecoms infrastructure, retail fuel supply, hotels and wholesale groceries.

Last month, we issued our assessment of a merger in the laundry services sector, which sets out our provisional concerns around the deal's potential to substantially lessen competition. This is a key service sector for the hospitality industry and so has an important impact on tourism and the economy.

We also used our new call-in power for the first time to review Uniphar's acquisition of TouchStore in the pharmacy sector. These powers allow us to ensure we can review potentially anticompetitive mergers that fall below our thresholds for mandatory notification. We also welcomed Government proposals to raise the thresholds for merger notifications. Together, call-in powers, and increasing our revenue thresholds will allow us to focus resources on potentially problematic deals and reduce red tape for businesses.

## Research and advocacy

We have published several important reports, including our State of Competition work, and advocated for some key solutions that we believe would dramatically improve consumers' lives and strengthen market competitiveness. Some examples include:

- New research and guidance on tipping and service charges.
- A report into Ireland's homebuying market, which recommended that homebuyers are provided with full and transparent information before making what is likely to be the biggest financial decision of their lives.
- Research into the taxi industry, which included strong recommendations about opening up the market to help address the severe supply shortage faced by consumers, particularly in rural Ireland.

In March, the CCPC conducted a rapid, high-level analysis of the home heating oil and motor fuel markets in light of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and resultant impacts on fuel prices. While the distress facing consumers is very real, our report found that the high retail prices were driven by sharp increases in wholesale prices.

Earlier this week, you will likely have seen the publication of our annual Helpline Report, which details key insights from over 40,000 consumers who contacted us last year, and for the first time, includes insights from ongoing consumer outcomes research, examining the effectiveness of consumer rights in practice.

The CCPC also finalised its competition adjudication rules and guidelines and welcomed a new panel of independent adjudication officers appointed by the Minister at the end of November 2025. These are significant milestones in strengthening our competition powers.

The CCPC also welcomed the appointment of Geoffrey Gray, who is here today, as a Member of the Commission in January. His expertise will be invaluable as we implement strengthened laws for both competition and consumer protection.

The real-life impact of the CCPC was also highlighted in our Impact Report, which showed that between 2021 and 2024, the CCPC's total operating cost of the relevant interventions was €32 million and the estimated consumer benefit over that period was €682 million. That means that for every €1 spent on the CCPC, it gives a consumer benefit of €21.

## State of Competition

I'd like to thank the Committee for inviting us here today to discuss our State of Competition report, an important piece of work completed by the CCPC since we last appeared before you.

This landmark study examined several indicators of competition over a 15-year period to assess how competition has evolved across Ireland's services sector. It found an overall increase in concentration across multiple service industries, meaning that, in a number of areas, a smaller number of companies now account for a greater share of activity. That matters because, if left unchecked, such trends can weaken competitive pressure over time, with possible adverse consequences for prices, choice, innovation and consumer outcomes for households and businesses alike.

Importantly, this is not a development unique to Ireland. Similar analysis undertaken internationally has identified comparable patterns in other economies. While our findings do not in themselves point to an immediate or serious cause for alarm, they do underline the need to avoid complacency and to continue monitoring how competition is developing across the Irish economy. They also reinforce the importance of an active and proactive national competition authority.

## Future focus

Looking ahead, we will continue to prioritise consumer rights, safeguard fair markets and enforce the law within our remit. While many of the CCPC's recommendations have been implemented over time, there are still areas where reforms have yet to be actioned. We are always happy to discuss how best to ensure our recommendations effectively feed into the decision-making process. Markets that continue to be a focus for us include the taxi market, the homebuying market, the waste sector and the legal services sector, to name a few.

I'm extremely proud of the CCPC's work and we welcome the strengthening of our powers in recent years. Our remit continues to expand, including our new digital, data and product safety functions.

In the context of these new functions, it is important to note that the CCPC received no significant additional funding in the 2026 budget. We will continue to prioritise the work that has the most impact, but resources remain a challenge in ensuring that Ireland retains a strong competitive economy that delivers for consumers.

We look forward to further engagement with the Committee on future legislation. We are happy to answer any questions.