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PART 2/4

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Consumer Markets Scoreboard: Making markets work for consumers  
2018 Edition**

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## 1.1. Assessment of different market components

The following sections present the results of the individual MPI components at EU level, averaged across all markets and across all countries. Responses were collected using a scale from 0 to 10 points, unless stated otherwise.

### 1.1.1. Comparability

To make informed choices, consumers must be able to understand and compare different offers. When product characteristics and prices are presented in a complex and opaque way, this can hinder consumers' ability to seek the best deal. This can lead to consumer detriment and reduce competition, thus harming overall economic efficiency. It also damages consumer trust in retailers/providers.

#### *Comparability in goods markets remains easier than in services markets*

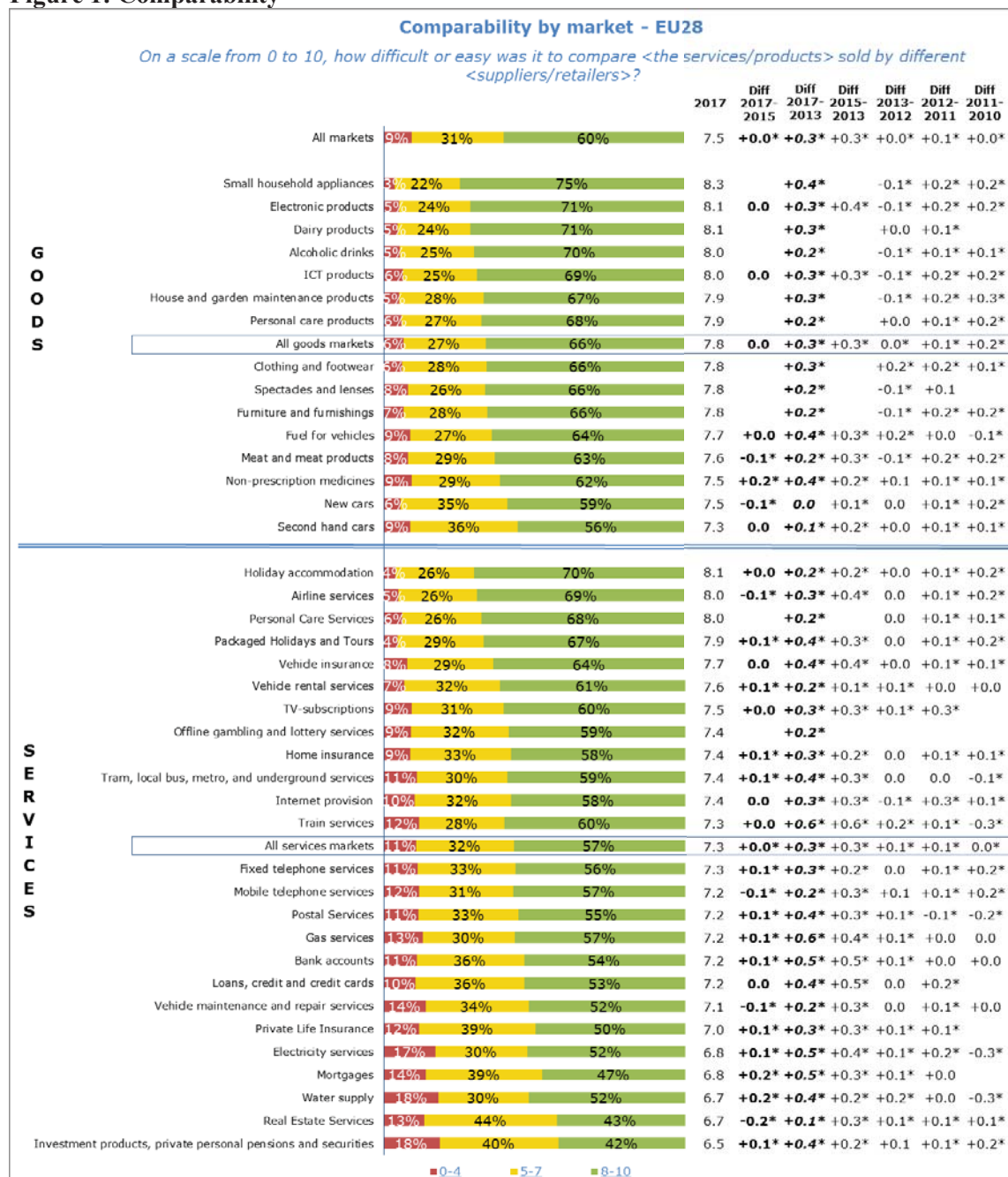
The average 'comparability' score for all markets is 7.5. However, as with past Scoreboard results, goods markets (7.8) score better than services markets (7.3). The average score for 'comparability' marginally increased when compared to 2015, and it increased by 0.3 points compared to 2013 for both the all-goods-markets average and the all-services-markets average.

As shown in Figure 17 below, among the goods markets, comparison remains most difficult in 'second-hand cars', followed by 'new cars', 'non-prescription medicines' and 'meat and meat products'. In 2015, 'second-hand cars' was also the market where comparison was the most difficult, followed by 'non-prescription medicines' and 'new cars'. Among the services markets, the market for 'investment products, private personal pensions and securities' remains in the bottom ranking (as in 2015), followed by 'real estate services' and 'water supply'.

Compared to 2015, the only increase in ease of 'comparability' (+0.2) among the goods markets is observed for 'non-prescription medicines'. This was also the market with the greatest increase in 'comparability' between 2013 and 2017, together with 'small household appliances' and 'fuel for vehicles' (all of which saw an improvement of 0.4 points in comparability between 2013 and 2017). Among services, the markets with the highest increase in 'comparability' scores compared to 2015 are 'water supply' and 'mortgages' (both increased by 0.2 points). When compared to 2013, the highest increases are observed for 'train services' and 'gas services' (both of which saw an improvement of 0.6 points). Notably, compared to 2013 only one of the 40 markets surveyed did not increase its 'comparability' score ('new cars').

As highlighted in earlier Scoreboard editions, services tend to be more complex than tangible goods. This could explain, to some extent, the lower scores on 'comparability' for services. In certain cases, consumers of services are obliged to compare bundled products as opposed to just one service.

Figure 1: Comparability



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

As in 2015, western European Member States (7.7) give higher-than-average scores for ‘comparability’, while northern Member States (6.9) give the lowest scores. The lowest evaluations of ‘comparability’ are found in Croatia (6.4), Sweden (6.5) and Denmark (6.7), whereas Hungarian consumers give the highest assessment (8.7).

Overall, ‘comparability’ is assessed by consumers as the second least important component after ‘choice’. ‘Comparability’ is considered marginally more important for goods markets than for services markets. Consumers in the ‘offline gambling and lottery services’ market attach the lowest importance to ‘comparability’. Markets such as ‘water supply’, ‘train services’, ‘postal services’, ‘alcoholic drinks’ and ‘tram, local bus, metro and underground services’ are also ranked low in the importance that consumers assigned to ‘comparability’.

Most of these latter markets have either a monopolistic character or have been liberalised more recently in some Member States. However, consumers award much higher importance to ‘comparability’ in markets that have a recreational character such as ‘holiday accommodation’, ‘packaged holidays and tours’ or ‘airline services’, in line with ‘mortgages’ and ‘vehicle insurance’. They also attach a higher importance to it in markets for semi-durable goods like ‘ICT products’, ‘small household appliances’ and ‘electronic products’. All of these markets involve high-value products, so it is important that consumers are able to distinguish the best offers available.

In October 2017, the Commission published the findings of a study on consumer decision-making in insurance services<sup>1</sup>. The study showed that comparison websites can be effective in helping consumers make their choices if certain conditions are met (e.g. comparisons must be objective, and the results must be presented clearly). The Payment Accounts Directive<sup>2</sup>, adopted in 2014, helps to ensure that some of these conditions are met. This Directive introduced the obligation for Member States to ensure that at least one comparison website is available to consumers so they can compare the different bank accounts on offer.

An ongoing Commission study<sup>3</sup> into the energy services markets will provide further insights. The study is examining the minimum requirements needed for bills and pre-contractual information. The aim is to increase the clarity, comparability and transparency of contractual conditions, energy prices and consumption information. The study will use behavioural experiments to identify and test different ways of presenting pre-contractual information and bill formats. The study will also build on the Commission’s second study of the electricity market<sup>4</sup> and its study of comparison tools and third-party verification schemes<sup>5</sup>. It will also examine specific issues with price-comparison tools in the energy sector, identify verification schemes where they exist, and make recommendations on best practice across the EU for certification requirements for comparison tools.

In 2016, the Commission updated its guidance on the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive<sup>6</sup>, providing some key criteria that must be complied with by comparison sites (e.g. identification of advertising; information on the comparison coverage; information on the criteria used for ranking; information on the frequency of updates; the criteria applied in the comparison). The Guidance incorporates the key principles for comparison tools<sup>7</sup>, which have been developed by a group of stakeholders with the steer of the Commission. Its aim is to help operators of such sites better comply with the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive and assist in its implementation. In addition, there are several pieces of sector-specific legislation that are either already being implemented (e.g. Payment Accounts Directive) or are being

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=117420](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=117420)

<sup>2</sup> OJ L257/2014 dated 28.8.2014.

<sup>3</sup> On pre-contractual information and billing in the energy market — improved clarity and comparability. This study is expected to be published in 2018.

<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=53331](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=53331)

Findings from the 2016 Electricity Study were published in November 2015 together with the State of the Energy Union 2015 Communication.

[http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/energy-union/state-energy-union/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/energy-union/state-energy-union/index_en.htm); see in particular ‘Energy Consumer Trends 2010 – 2015’, SWD(2015) 249 final, 18.11.2015.

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/comparison-tools-and-third-party-verification-schemes\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/comparison-tools-and-third-party-verification-schemes_en)

<sup>6</sup> SWD(2016) 163 final.

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/consumers/unfair-treatment/unfair-treatment-policy-information\\_en#comparison-tools](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/consumers/unfair-treatment/unfair-treatment-policy-information_en#comparison-tools)

negotiated (in telecoms and energy) to ensure that consumers in these sectors have access to reliable and trustworthy comparison websites.

### *1.1.2. Trust*

This indicator measures the extent to which consumers consider suppliers or retailers in a given market as reliable partners who respect consumer-protection rules. Trust is necessary for consumers to feel confident and actively engage in a market.

#### ***Consumers' trust is the lowest in the 'second-hand cars' and 'real estate services' markets and the gap between these two markets and other markets is widening***

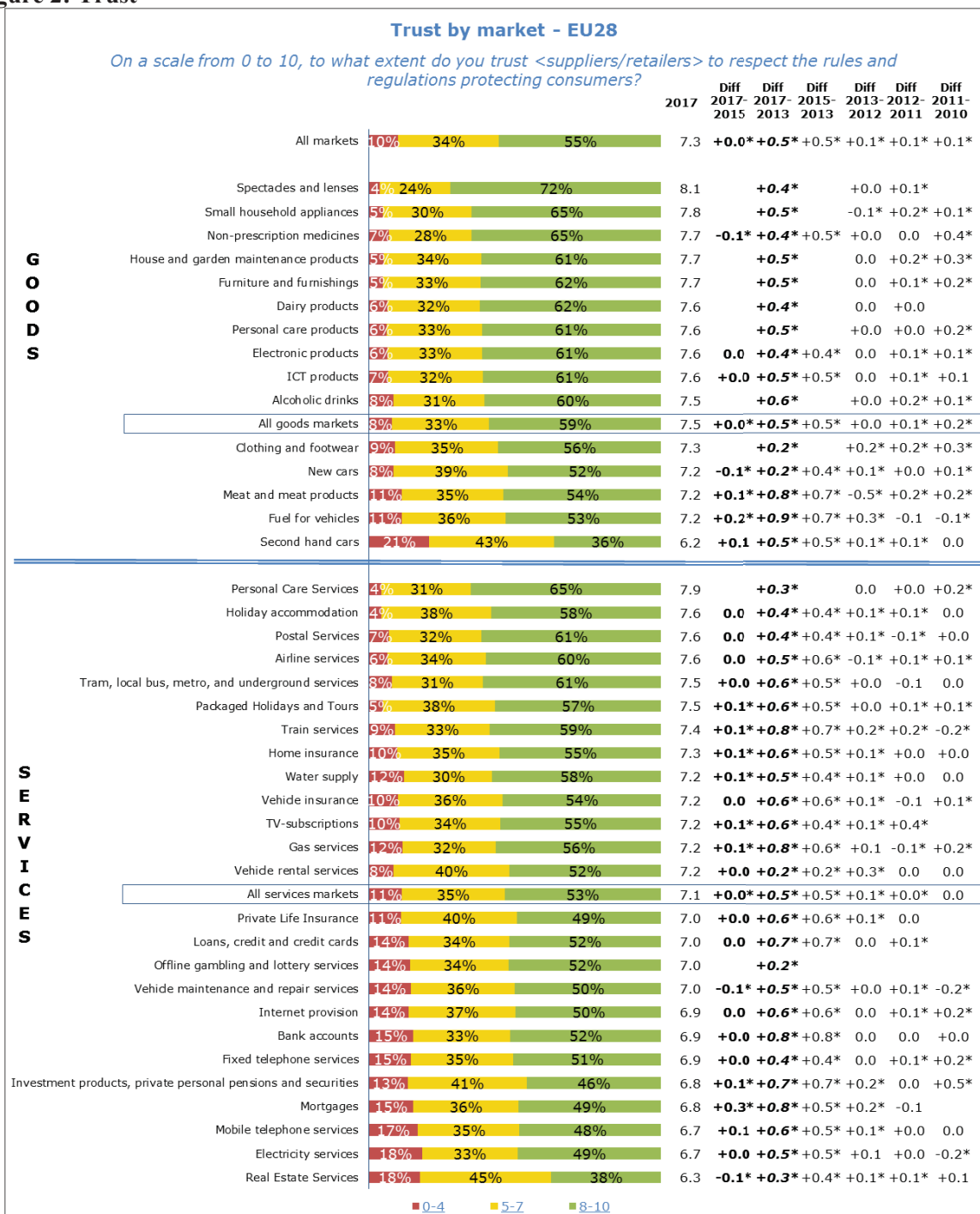
The average 'trust' score for all markets is 7.3 and has only marginally increased since 2015. However, between 2013 and 2017 'trust' increased its score by 0.5 points. Only 10.1 % of respondents expressed concerns that suppliers/retailers do not respect consumer-protection rules by awarding 'trust' a very low score (between 0 and 4). The proportion of respondents giving a very low score for 'trust' decreased by 1.6 pp. compared to 2015 and by 4.4 pp. compared to 2013. Trust in retailers (7.5) remains higher than trust in service providers (7.1), with a marginal increase for both categories since 2015. Both categories saw an increase of 0.5 since 2013.

The 'second-hand cars' market continues to have the lowest score on 'trust' (6.2) of all markets (including both goods and services), with no increase since 2015. The next lowest score was given to 'real estate services' (6.3). These two markets also had the lowest score for 'trust' amongst the corresponding all goods and all services markets in 2015. 'Fuel for vehicles' is the goods market that experienced the highest increase in 'trust' score compared both to 2015 and 2013 (+0.2 and +0.9 respectively), followed in both cases by the market for 'meat and meat products' (+0.1 and +0.8 respectively). For services, only the 'mortgages' market showed an increase larger than 0.1 points in its 'trust' score compared to 2015 (+0.3). Compared to 2013, the largest increases in 'trust' scores for services are observed for 'train services', 'mortgages', 'bank accounts' and 'gas services' (all four markets saw an increase of 0.8).

While the score for 'trust' increased for all 40 markets compared to 2013, four markets surveyed in both 2017 and 2015 saw a marginal (-0.1) decrease in their score. One of these markets is 'real estate services', which is ranked in the second-lowest position out of all 40 markets in its score for 'trust'.



Figure 2: Trust



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

Consumers in western Europe give above-average assessments for ‘trust’ (7.8), while scores are below average in the southern (6.5) and eastern (7.0) regions. The lowest scores on ‘trust’ are reported in Bulgaria and Croatia (both at 6.1), while consumers in Hungary (8.6) and Luxembourg (8.2) have the highest trust in retailers and service-providers across all EU-28 countries.

Overall, ‘trust’ is highly valued by EU consumers who report this as the third-most important component, only slightly below ‘expectations’ and ‘problems and detriment’. As in the previous Scoreboard edition, some regional differences can be observed. Consumers from



western Member States attach the least importance to ‘trust’ even though most of them appear to trust businesses overall (except for the Netherlands and Belgium, where scores for ‘trust’ are low). Northern Member States give ‘trust’ by far the highest importance, followed by southern Member States. Consumers from the eastern region assess the importance of the ‘trust’ component at the same level as western Europeans.

Online platforms are a significant part of a booming digital economy and it is crucial that they operate under conditions that ensure trust, transparency and fairness to their users.

A recent Commission study on the transparency of online platforms<sup>8</sup> investigated how greater transparency in searches and selection of products and services in online platforms affects consumer trust and behaviour. The study concluded that information on the ranking criteria and order in which search results are presented influences product selection. In addition, the study showed that when a third-party trader makes clear that they provide consumer-protection rights, it increases the probability of a purchase, and results in increased trust and confidence. The study also showed that prominently displaying user reviews on the website leads to a 200 % increase in the probability of selecting a good/service, as does the product receiving the highest user review. The study recommends a series of measures to be put in place by online platforms to increase transparency for consumers.

Another important way to secure consumer trust is effective enforcement of consumer-protection rules. For markets to function well, businesses must be aware that they will be detected and sanctioned for not complying with consumer rules. It is also crucial that consumers believe that businesses will be sanctioned for not upholding consumer-protection rules and that consumers have the means to exercise their rights when required. The Fitness Check of consumer and marketing law, and the evaluation of the Consumer Rights Directive in May 2017 pointed to some areas for targeted improvements (e.g. on the transparency of the platforms). However, this Fitness Check confirmed that consumer law remains fit for purpose, although it did highlight the need to strengthen enforcement.

Several recent Commission initiatives aim to strengthen the effectiveness of enforcement. The Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation<sup>9</sup> provides a framework and conditions for the cooperation of national consumer enforcement authorities. One of the main reasons this Regulation was modernised in 2017 was to strengthen coordinated enforcement. On 11 April 2018, the Commission tabled a ‘New Deal for Consumers’<sup>10</sup> that included two legislative proposals. These proposals will strengthen consumers’ rights by modernising consumer-protection rules. For example, consumers buying on online marketplaces will know whether they are buying from a trader or an individual, and they will therefore know if consumer laws apply or not. The proposals will also introduce strengthened mechanisms for individual and collective redress when consumer rights have been breached. In addition, they will contain

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<sup>8</sup> This study took a behavioural perspective. It assessed: the criteria for (and presentation features of) search results; the identity of contractual parties; and quality controls on consumer reviews, ratings, and endorsement systems. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/behavioural-study-transparency-online-platforms-2018\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/behavioural-study-transparency-online-platforms-2018_en)

<sup>9</sup> Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017R2394&qid=1517481607078&from=en>

<sup>10</sup> See ‘A New Deal for Consumers: Commission strengthens EU consumer rights and enforcement’; [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-3041\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-3041_en.htm)

stronger mechanisms to deter infringements, in particular stronger penalties for the most serious cross-border violations of consumer laws.

### *1.1.3. Expectations*

The ‘expectations’ component measures the extent to which the services or products on offer live up to consumer expectations. This component is therefore used as a means of capturing consumer satisfaction, and is considered an important indicator for consumers’ intention to purchase again.

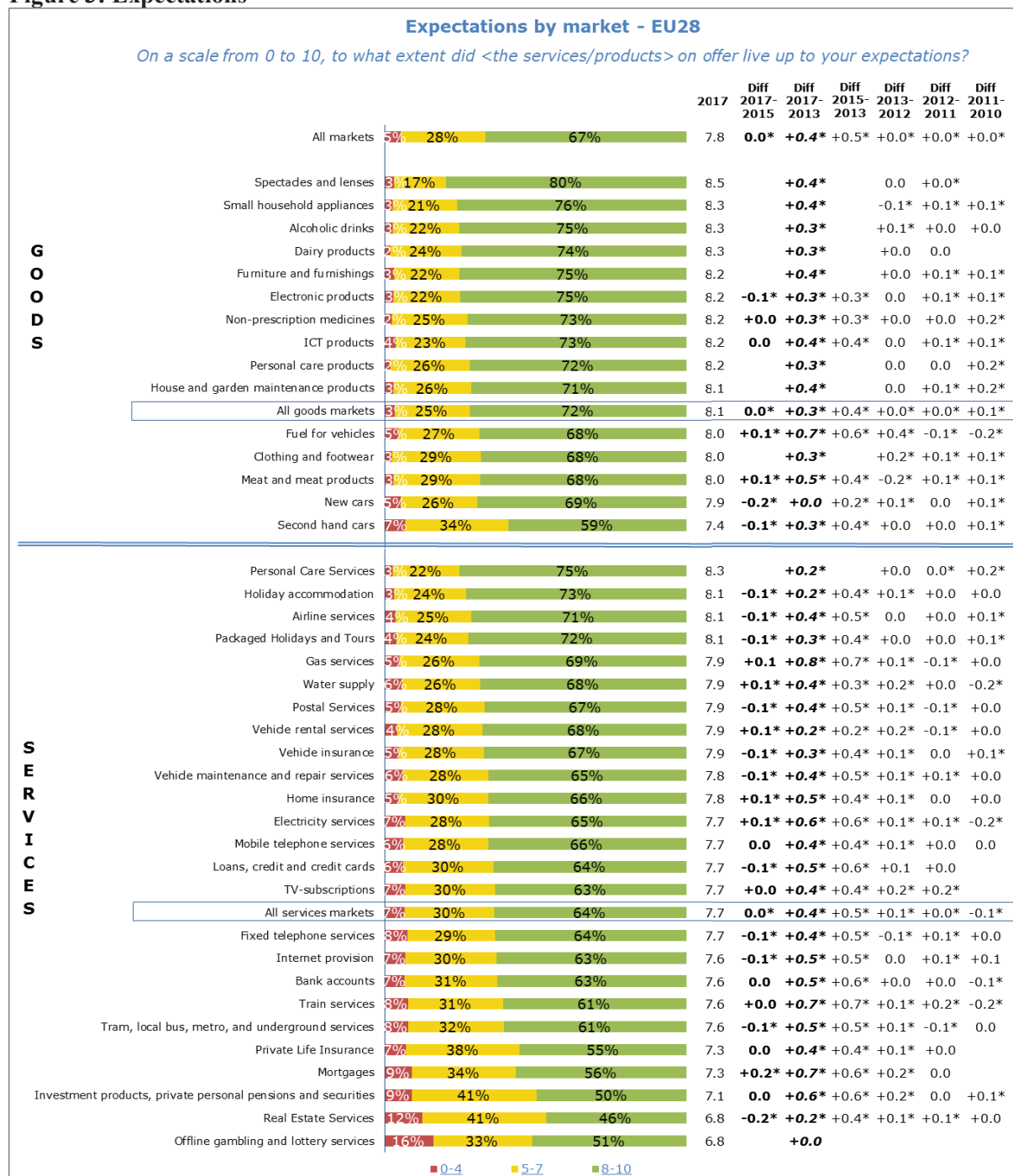
#### ***Electricity services and water supply live up to consumers’ expectations even though consumers find that these two markets do not perform well for them overall***

Across all markets, the average score for the ‘expectations’ component (7.8) decreased marginally when compared to 2015, but increased its score by 0.4 points compared to 2013. In line with previous years, ‘expectations’ for goods markets (8.1) received a higher score than for services markets (7.7). In 2017, only 5.4 % of EU respondents awarded a very low score (i.e. a score of between 0 and 4) to the ‘expectations’ component.

Expectations are met to the highest degree in the markets for ‘spectacles and lenses’ (8.5), ‘small household appliances’, ‘alcoholic drinks’, ‘dairy products’ and ‘personal care services’ (all 8.3). At the other end of the scale, expectations are met to the lowest degree in ‘offline gambling and lottery services’ and ‘real estate services’ (both 6.8). Compared to 2015, the only statistically significant increases in scores for ‘expectations’ among goods markets are observed for ‘fuel for vehicles’ and ‘meat and meat products’ (both increasing by a very small 0.1 points). Both these markets recorded the highest increase on ‘expectations’ when compared to 2013 (+0.7 and +0.5 points respectively). The largest decrease compared to 2015 was observed for ‘new cars’ (-0.2 points). For services, ‘mortgages’ had the largest increase compared to 2015 (+0.2 points), whereas ‘real estate services’ saw the largest decrease (-0.2 points). Compared to 2013, the largest increases in score for ‘expectations’ are reported for ‘gas services’ (+0.8 points), ‘mortgages’ and ‘train services’ (both +0.7 points).

High scores on the ‘expectations’ component don’t necessarily mean that the market ranks at the top in overall MPI score. Despite a strong correlation between the ‘expectations’ component and the overall MPI (this correlation is at 0.76 for goods markets and 0.77 for services markets), there are certain markets where this is not the case. In particular, the markets for ‘offline gambling and lottery services’, ‘tram, local bus, metro and underground services’ and ‘bank accounts’ rank lower on ‘expectations’ than on their overall MPI (with differences of 11, 8 and 7 places, respectively). The opposite is true for ‘water supply’ and ‘electricity services’, which rank higher on ‘expectations’ than on MPI (with respective differences of 13 and 10 places). Somehow, the latter markets appear to provide what consumers had expected.

Figure 3: Expectations



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

Consumers in northern and western Europe (8.0) give a more-favourable-than-average assessment of the extent to which their ‘expectations are met, while these scores are below average in the southern (7.5) region and in line with the EU average in eastern Europe (7.8). As in 2015, the countries where consumers awarded the lowest scores for this component are Bulgaria and Croatia (both 7.3), while consumers in Hungary awarded the highest score (8.8) for products or services on offer living up to their expectations.

Consumers award the highest importance to ‘expectations’, on par with ‘problems and detriment’. ‘Expectations’ is an equally important component for both goods and services

markets. From all 40 markets assessed in 2017, ‘offline gambling and lottery services’ was the market where the ‘expectations’ component appeared to matter by far the least.

Consumers from northern countries attach the most importance to ‘expectations’, followed by those in eastern Member States. Consumers from the western and southern regions attach the least importance to the ‘expectations’ component, both below the EU-28 average.

#### *1.1.4. Choice*

The ‘choice’ component of the MPI measures the extent to which consumers are satisfied with the number of suppliers present in the markets assessed. The survey question was modified slightly in 2015<sup>11</sup> to better capture the understanding of what consumers consider to be a satisfactory choice. Comparisons between survey years can therefore only be made between 2015 and 2017.

#### ***Consumers are more satisfied with the choice of suppliers in the utilities cluster but things could still improve further***

The average score for ‘choice’ given in all markets is 7.8, and has only marginally increased since 2015. Approximately two thirds of respondents (64 %) are satisfied with ‘choice’ (i.e. they give a score of between 8 and 10 points to this component), while 6 % are dissatisfied (a score between 0-4 points). The percentage of consumers dissatisfied with the choice available went down by 1.4 pp. since 2015. As was also the case in 2015, consumers in 2017 are more pleased with the number of retailers they can choose from in goods markets than with the number of suppliers in services markets (the average scores being 8.2 for the goods market and 7.5 for the services market). Compared to 2015, the goods markets showed a stable performance while the services markets increased only marginally.

The ‘choice’ component has the highest assessments in ‘alcoholic drinks and ‘dairy products’ (both at 8.5), followed by ‘holiday accommodation’, ‘personal care products’ and ‘small household appliances’ (all 8.4). All ‘utilities’ markets and ‘transport’ markets (except for ‘airline services’) score rather low on ‘choice’, generally below the average score for services markets. The two markets which receive the lowest scores for ‘choice’ are ‘water supply’ (6.3) and ‘train services’ (6.4). Nonetheless several ‘utilities’ markets that rank in the bottom half of the table in terms of ‘choice’ (i.e. ‘water supply’, ‘electricity services’ and ‘gas services’) also had the highest increase in their score for this component between 2015 and 2017 (+0.2 points, together with the markets for ‘mortgages’ and ‘vehicle rental services’).

‘Choice’ matters most to consumers in the markets for ‘clothing and footwear’ and for ‘holiday accommodation’. At the other end of the scale, ‘choice’ scores low in importance for ‘train services’ and ‘water supply’, i.e. in services markets where providers are fewer by nature.

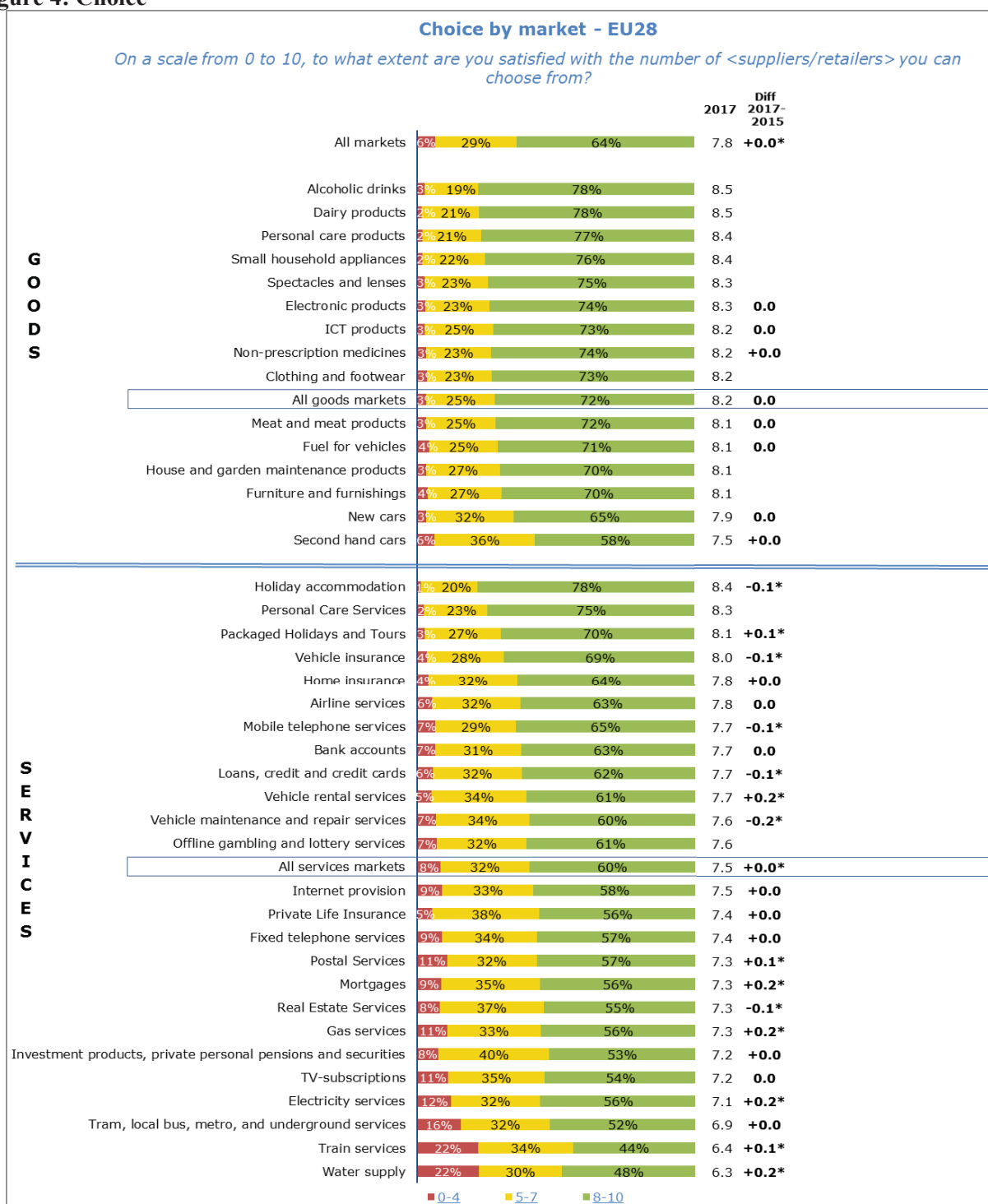
There is a high positive correlation between the ‘choice’ component and the overall market performance for both the goods markets (0.68) and services markets (0.70). The markets for

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<sup>11</sup> In Scoreboard editions that presented data before 2015, consumers were asked whether they thought there was enough choice; this implicitly assumed that more choice is always better, a premise questioned by recent behavioural insights.

‘mobile telephone services’, ‘internet provision’ and ‘real estate services’ are ranked higher for ‘choice’ than for their MPI (by 11, 7 and 7 places respectively). In contrast, the markets for ‘tram, local bus, metro and underground services’, ‘gas services’, ‘TV-subscriptions’ and ‘postal services’ are ranked higher for MPI than for ‘choice’ (respectively 11, 10, 8 and 8 places higher), probably reflecting the lower availability of providers in these markets.

Figure 4: Choice



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

In terms of performance, the ‘choice’ component receives higher-than-average scores in western Europe (7.9). It also scores slightly above the EU average in the northern and eastern regions (7.8), and lower than average in southern Europe (7.3). The best assessments of ‘choice’ are given by consumers from Hungary (8.9) and Slovenia (8.3), whereas the lowest scores in the EU-28 are seen in Croatia and Italy (both 7.2). However, the lowest score of all countries in the Scoreboard is given in Iceland (7.1).

On average, ‘choice’ is considered least important in the northern regions of Europe (except in Lithuania), while it is considered by far most important in countries of western Europe. In some of the smaller countries like Cyprus and Malta, consumers also gave ‘choice’ a high score in importance. For these countries in particular, the latest Eurostat data demonstrate that a much higher proportion of consumers tend to engage in cross-border online purchases from other EU Member States. They probably do this to overcome the more limited supply of goods in their domestic markets.

#### 1.1.5. Problems & detriment

##### ***Defining detriment***

Consumer detriment arises when market outcomes fall short of their potential, resulting in welfare losses (financial, health, etc.) for consumers. The assessment of ‘detriment’ entails identifying and measuring the nature and magnitude of consumer detriment or harm avoided.

Two distinct forms of consumer detriment can be distinguished: ‘structural detriment’ and ‘personal detriment’. Structural detriment is directly linked to the loss of consumer welfare at the aggregate level (as measured by the *ex-ante* consumer surplus) due to a market failure or a regulatory failure. Personal detriment is determined on the basis of the difference between the value that consumers reasonably expected to get from a good or service, and the value that they actually derive from it, taking into account problems experienced by consumers post-purchase.

Personal detriment is particularly relevant for consumer-protection rules, since these are aimed at preventing or mitigating negative outcomes for consumers.

To measure ‘detriment’ suffered in a market, two aspects need to be taken into account: the prevalence of problems and the severity of these problems. The scope of ‘detriment’ will depend on the prevalence of problems, but also on the severity of these problems, i.e. the actual detriment suffered by the consumer that encountered the problem. In the sections below, the two aspects are first discussed separately before reporting on overall ‘detriment’ figures in the markets.

##### 1.1.5.1. Problems

The ‘problems’ sub-component expresses the proportion of consumers who experienced at least one problem with a service/product or the supplier/retailer in a given market.

##### ***In the majority of the markets surveyed in 2017 the proportion of consumers who encountered problems decreased compared to 2015***

On average, approximately 8.5 % of respondents encountered problems across the 40 markets surveyed in 2017. The proportion of consumers who encountered problems decreased when compared to 2015 (-1.1 pp.) and to 2013 (-1.2 pp.). As with previous survey years, a higher proportion of consumers reported having experienced problems in services markets (9.3 %) than in goods markets (7.2 %).

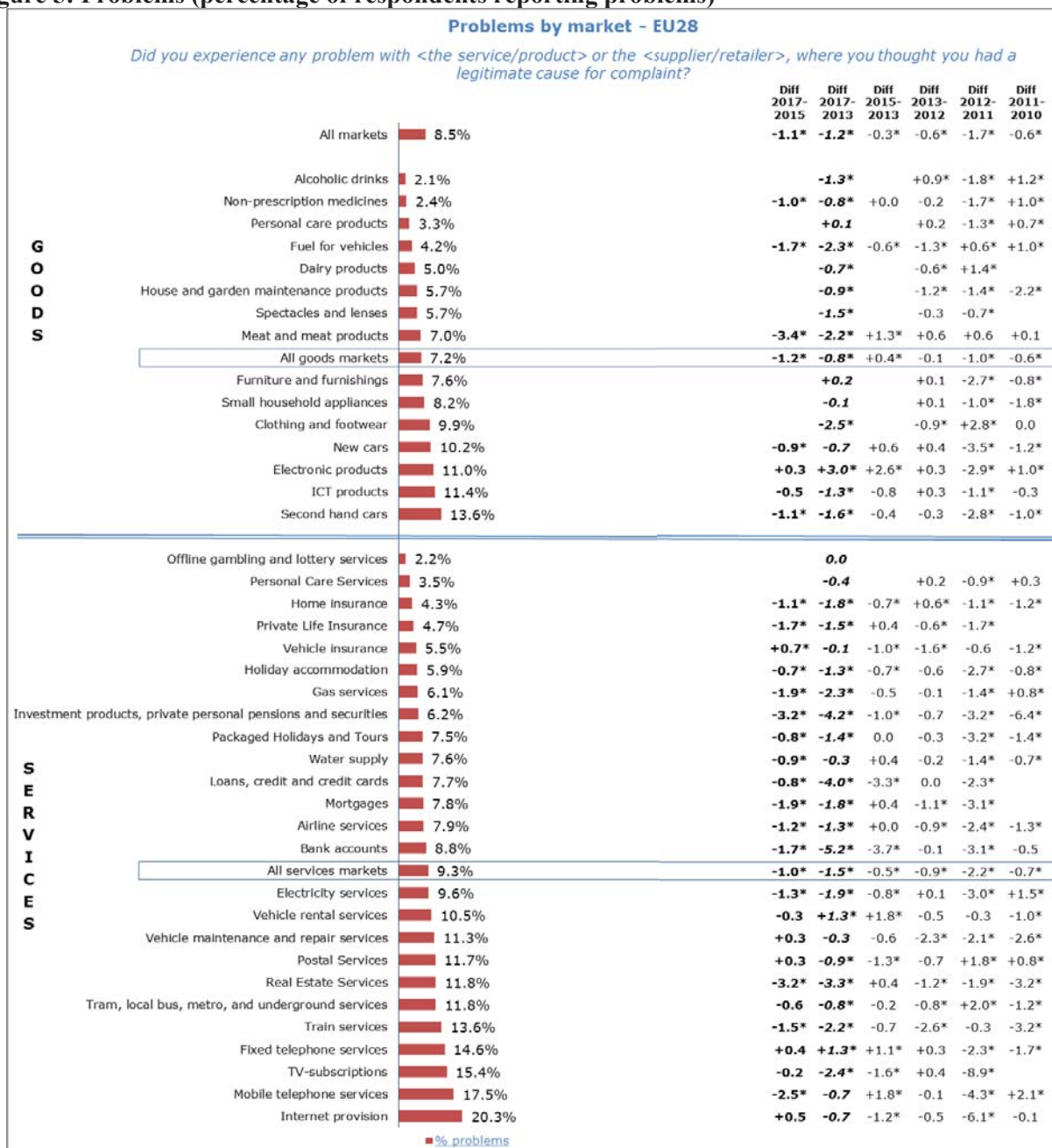


For goods markets, ‘second-hand cars’, ‘ICT products’, ‘electronic products’ and ‘new cars’ are the markets with the highest proportion of consumers having experienced problems. This was also the case for these markets in 2015. ‘Meat and meat products’ is the market that improved the most since the previous survey (-3.4 pp. of consumers reporting problems), which seems to indicate that the market has recovered since the 2013 horse meat scandal. Compared to 2013, the market for ‘clothing and footwear’ registered the largest improvement on ‘problems’ of any market (-2.5 pp.), whereas the market for ‘electronic products’ saw the highest deterioration (+3.0 pp.).

Among the services markets, the markets forming the ‘telecoms’ cluster are those for which a higher proportion of consumers experienced problems, a trend which is consistent with previous Scoreboard editions. Only the market for ‘mobile telephone services’ saw a decrease in ‘problems’ between 2015 and 2017 (-2.5 pp.); in the other three telecom markets no statistically significant change can be observed in this period. The services markets that improved the most overall were ‘investment products, private personal pensions and securities’ and ‘real estate services’, which both registered a decrease in ‘problems’ of -3.2 pp. On a positive note, there was only one of the 25 services markets surveyed where more consumers reported problems in 2017 than in 2015 (namely ‘vehicle insurance’, +0.7 pp.), which indicates improved market conditions overall.

The southern, eastern and northern regions of Europe report a higher-than-average proportion of consumers having experienced problems (11 % on average), while consumers from western Europe (6 %) are the least likely to report having experienced problems. Croatia, Bulgaria and Spain (all at 15 %) are the countries with the highest proportion of consumers on average who report problems across all 40 markets surveyed. The lowest proportion is reported in Luxembourg, Germany, France and Austria (all 2 %), followed by Hungary (5 %).

Figure 5: Problems (percentage of respondents reporting problems)



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

### 1.1.5.2. Severity of detriment

The 'detriment' question was added to the survey in 2015. It inquires about the extent to which the consumer suffered financial loss or other detriment as a result of experiencing a problem. The question is only asked to those respondents that said they experienced a problem in the surveyed market. A high value on this indicator indicates a negative experience.

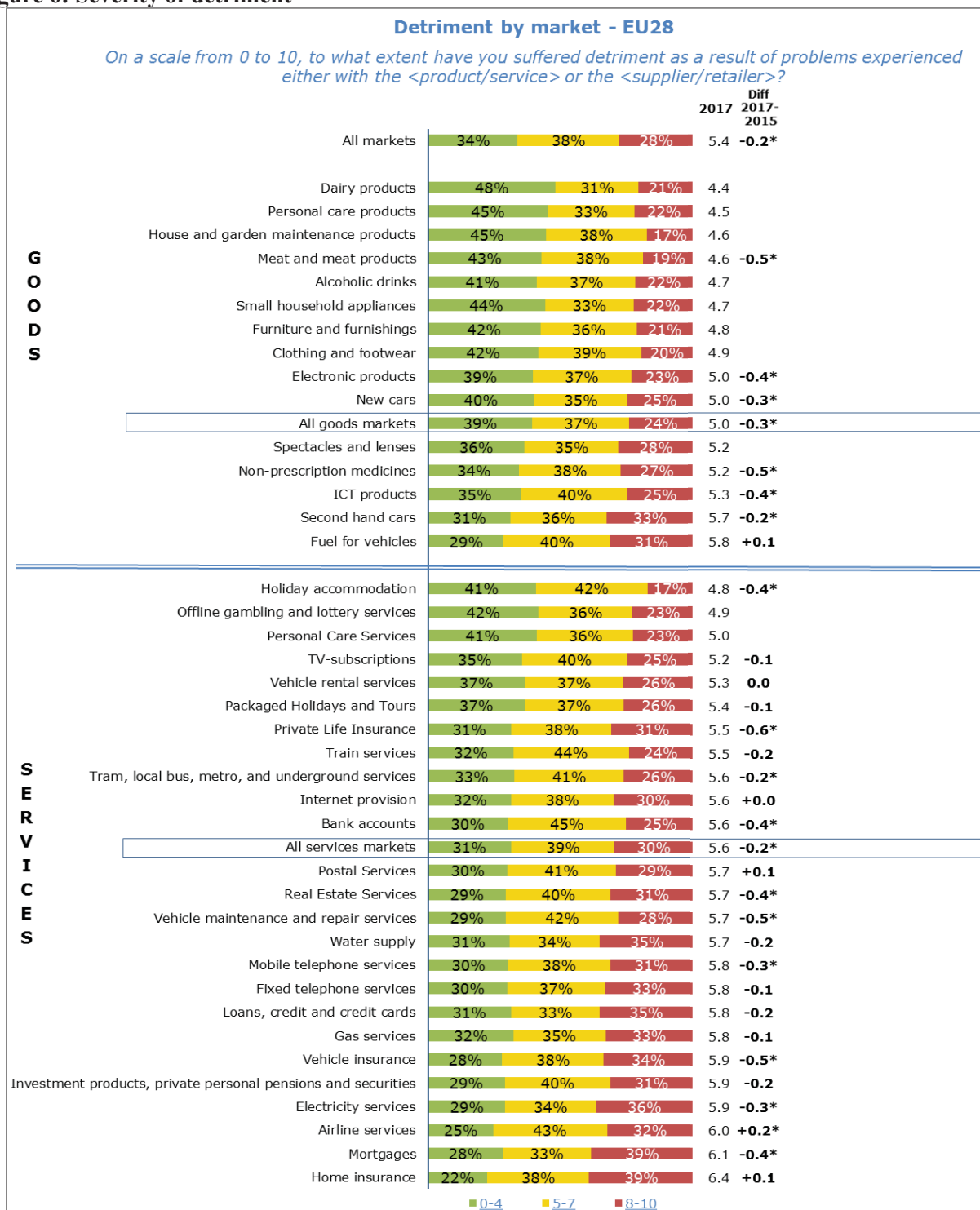
***The detriment consumers associated with a problem decreased in half of the markets surveyed — it remains highest for the majority of ‘insurance services’ and ‘banking services’ as well as for automotive goods***

The average ‘detriment’ score for all markets is 5.4 points, down by 0.2 points compared to 2015. The proportion of consumers who suffered high ‘detriment’ as a result of a problem (those that gave a score of 8-10 to this component) decreased by 3 pp. since 2015 (to 28 %), whereas the proportion of consumers experiencing low ‘detriment’ (those that gave a score between 0-4 points) increased by 3 pp. (to 34 %). ‘Financial loss or other detriment’ suffered is higher for the services markets (5.6) than for the goods markets (5.0).

Among the goods markets, consumers reported the highest average level of ‘detriment’ in the markets for ‘fuel for vehicles’ and ‘second-hand cars’ (5.8 and 5.7 respectively). These are the two markets which either did not see any decrease in ‘detriment’ level (‘fuel for vehicles’) or which saw the smallest decrease in ‘detriment’ level (‘second-hand cars’) since 2015. The largest decrease in ‘detriment’ was recorded in ‘non-prescription medicines’ and ‘meat and meat products’ (both -0.5 points). In general, all markets belonging to the ‘fast-moving retail’ cluster (except ‘non-prescription medicines’) showed a low level of ‘detriment’, which is consistent with the low-value products found in these markets.

Among services markets, the highest level of ‘detriment’ was reported in ‘home insurance’, ‘mortgages’, ‘airline services’, ‘electricity services’, and ‘investment products, private personal pensions and securities’. The largest decrease in ‘detriment’ was seen in ‘private life insurance’ (-0.6 points), ‘vehicle maintenance and repair services’ and ‘vehicle insurance’ (both -0.5 points). On the other hand, ‘airline services’ was the only market where the ‘detriment’ level increased (+0.2 points).

Figure 6: Severity of detriment



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

The EU-28 average for ‘detriment’ is 5.4. Reported ‘detriment’ levels are well below this average in northern Europe (4.4 points), and slightly below this average in the eastern and western regions (both 5.2). The highest average level of ‘detriment’ can be observed in southern Europe (6.0), in particular in Cyprus (6.5), Greece (6.4), Spain (6.3) and Malta (6.2). Elsewhere in Europe, the consumers reporting the highest level of ‘detriment’ were from Luxembourg (6.1), while the lowest levels are noted in Denmark (3.9) and Sweden (4.1).

In May 2017, the Commission published the results of a study<sup>12</sup> on consumer detriment in the EU. The aim of the study was to improve the quality and consistency of assessing personal consumer detriment by developing a simple, state-of-the-art methodology to identify and quantify its incidence and magnitude. Protecting consumers, especially vulnerable ones, against significant personal detriment is a matter of fairness. But it is also a critical part of improving the overall functioning of the market. If consumers are confident that they have some protection against unforeseeable negative outcomes, they will be more likely to engage actively in markets (for example by switching to new suppliers or products, or by drawing attention to problems in the marketplace through their complaints).

The methodology in the study was tested in the markets for ‘mobile telephone services’, ‘clothing, footwear and bags’, ‘train services’, ‘large household appliances’, ‘electricity services’ and ‘loans, credit and credit cards’, in four EU Member States<sup>13</sup>. On this basis, an extrapolation of personal consumer detriment was done for EU-28. It is estimated that across these six markets consumers in the EU-28 suffered detriment between EUR 20.3 billion and EUR 58.4 billion over the last 12 months. These estimates refer to the sum of total post-redress financial detriment and monetised loss of time. The highest incidence of problems was registered in the mobile telephone services market (as also confirmed in the previous section). Average pre-redress financial detriment per problem was highest for large household appliances, with a value ranging from EUR 302.7 to EUR 323.4. This was followed by ‘loans, credit and credit cards’ with a value between EUR 139.0 and EUR 224.9. On average, consumers who experienced problems received the highest level of redress in the ‘clothing, footwear and bags’ market, recovering between 50 % and 61 % of their initial costs and losses. In contrast, in the ‘mobile telephone services’ market respondents recovered only about 14 % of their initial costs and losses. In the ‘electricity services’ market, respondents recovered between 12 % and 21 % of their initial costs and losses.

#### 1.1.5.3. Problems & detriment<sup>14</sup>

The previous two sections discussed separately about the proportion of consumers experiencing problems and the severity of these problems in terms of average personal detriment. This section seeks to analyse the combined picture by looking at problems and detriment as whole. It also discusses the extent to which this combined ‘problems & detriment’ component differs across the different markets or countries surveyed.

The ‘problems & detriment’ component is calculated based on the incidence of problems that consumers experience and the level of ‘detriment’ they report. It is one of the five components that are used to estimate the overall MPI. Like the other components of MPI, it is coded so that a higher score means better overall performance. More specifically, if no problem has been experienced, then a score of 10 is assigned to the component. If the respondent did encounter a problem, the ‘problems & detriment’ component reflects the amount of ‘detriment’: the higher the ‘detriment’ rating, the lower the ‘problems & detriment’ score.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/study-measuring-consumer-detriment-european-union\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/study-measuring-consumer-detriment-european-union_en)

<sup>13</sup> France, Italy, Poland and the UK.

<sup>14</sup> In the 2016 edition (12<sup>th</sup> Consumer Markets Scoreboard), this is referred to as ‘overall detriment’.

***The ‘telecoms’ cluster continues to display the lowest problems & detriment score — ‘internet provision’ stands out as the worst market, whereas ‘mobile telephone services’ is the only ‘telecoms’ market whose performance has improved since 2015***

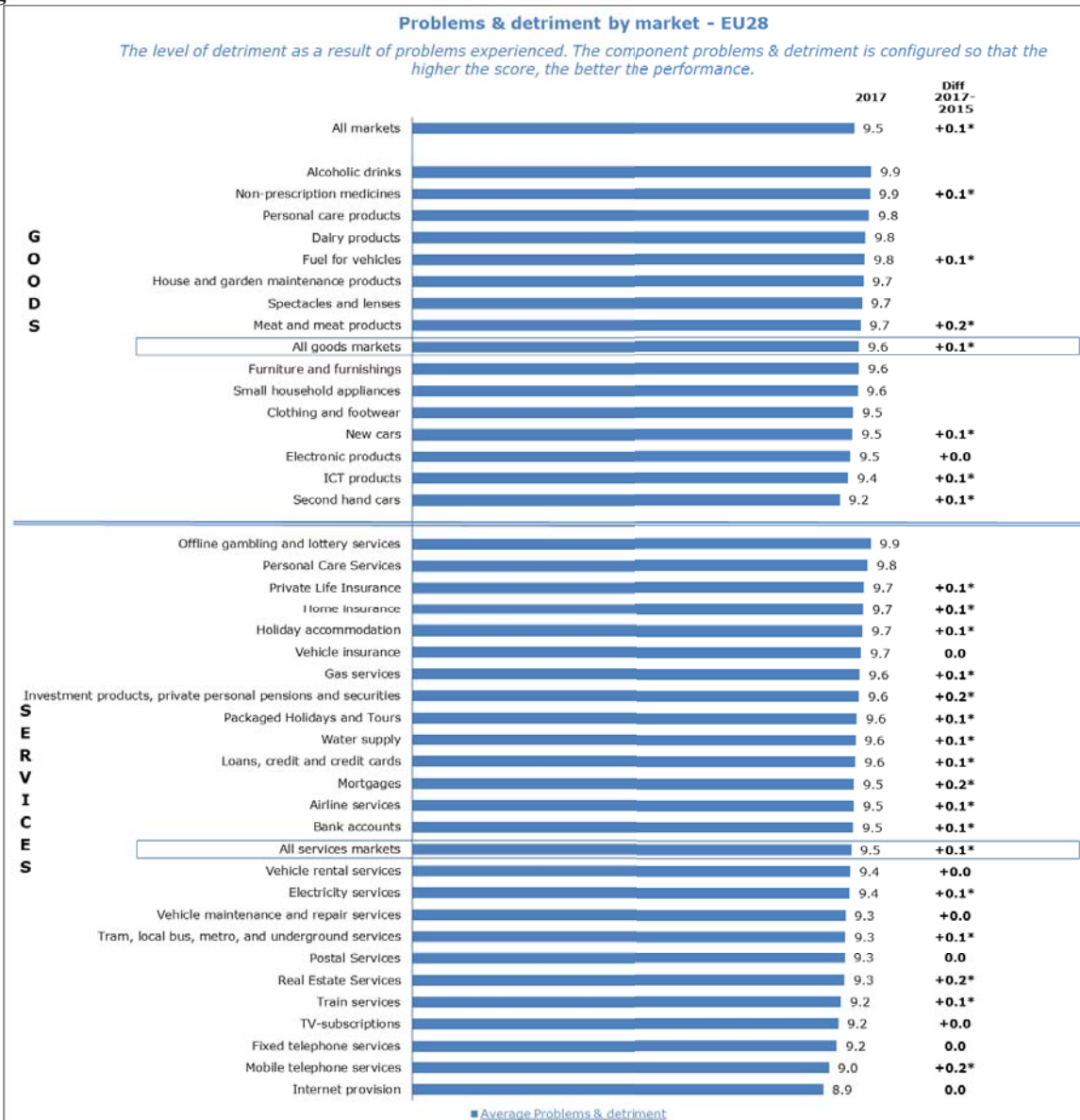
The average score reported for all markets is 9.5, an improvement of 0.1 point since 2015. As in the previous Scoreboard edition, there was a slightly higher score — i.e. lower overall ‘detriment’ as a result of the problems experienced — for goods markets (9.6) than services markets (9.5). The lowest ‘problems & detriment’ score is registered for the four markets in the ‘telecoms’ cluster, with a range of scores from as low as 8.9 points for ‘internet provision’ (the lowest of all 40 markets assessed) to 9.2 for ‘TV-subscriptions’ and ‘fixed telephone services’. Other markets with a low score for the ‘problems & detriment’ component include ‘train services’ and ‘second-hand cars’ (both 9.2).

Looking at the separate market rankings for goods in: (i) ‘problems’, (ii) ‘detriment’ due to problem(s), and (iii) ‘problems & detriment’, the market for ‘personal care products’ performs well overall. It is ranked within the top three places for all three dimensions discussed. In contrast, the ‘second-hand cars’ market is ranked at the bottom place for ‘problems & detriment’, with the highest proportion of consumers who experience problems and the second-highest level of ‘detriment’ due to the problem(s). Among the other goods markets, although the markets for ‘non-prescription medicines’ and ‘fuel for vehicles’ perform well on the ‘problems’ indicator, they are both ranked among the bottom markets in ‘detriment’ levels. The relatively good rankings for ‘problems & detriment’ must therefore be handled with some caution.

Among the services markets, ‘offline gambling and lottery services’ and ‘personal care services’ are both ranked within the top three places for either ‘problems’, ‘detriment’, or ‘problems & detriment’. This indicates a uniformly good performance. The fact that the four markets that belong to the ‘telecoms’ cluster are ranked in the four lowest places in ‘problems & detriment’ reflects the high proportion of consumers who experience problems more than the average level of ‘detriment’ caused by these problems. The largest discrepancy between the three dimensions discussed is in the market for ‘home insurance’, which ranks in the third-best place for ‘problems’ and in the bottom place for level of ‘detriment’ due to the problem(s) encountered. A similar situation can be seen for ‘vehicle insurance’, where there is a difference of 15 places between the two dimensions. Here again, despite the relatively good overall ranking for these two insurance markets, one should not overlook that when problems arise the resulting ‘detriment’ can be rather significant for consumers.



Figure 7: Problems & detriment



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

Looking at regional differences, the highest score for the ‘problems & detriment’ component is in western Europe (9.7), while the lowest score is in the southern regions (9.3). Consumers from eastern Europe experience a lower-than-EU-average score for ‘problems & detriment’ (9.4), whereas those residing in the northern European region are in line with the EU average (9.5). The highest ‘problems & detriment’ score (i.e. the lowest level of ‘detriment’ resulting from the problems experienced) is reported in Germany, France, Luxembourg and Austria (9.9). The lowest ‘problems & detriment’ score (i.e. the highest level of ‘detriment’ resulting from the problems experienced) is in Spain (9.1), followed by Croatia and Bulgaria (both 9.2).

The ‘problems & detriment’ component is considered by consumers as the most important of all five MPI components, together with ‘expectations’. Consumers award higher importance to it in services markets as opposed to goods markets. Northern Europeans give a much higher relative importance to ‘problems & detriment’ than consumers in the rest of Europe, followed by consumers from the south of Europe who rate the importance of this component higher than EU-28 average. Certain western European countries such as France, Germany, Austria



and Luxembourg give a much lower importance score to ‘problems & detriment’ than in the rest of Europe.

## 2. ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

### 2.1. Complaints

Consumer complaints are a useful tool for businesses to improve their performance, as they point to issues that dissatisfy consumers or prevent the creation of long-term customer relationships. They are also a helpful indicator for national authorities, as they point to areas where public intervention may be needed, either in the form of enforcement activities or legislative action.

#### ***The proportion of consumers who complained when encountering problems is lower than it was in 2015, but higher than in 2013***

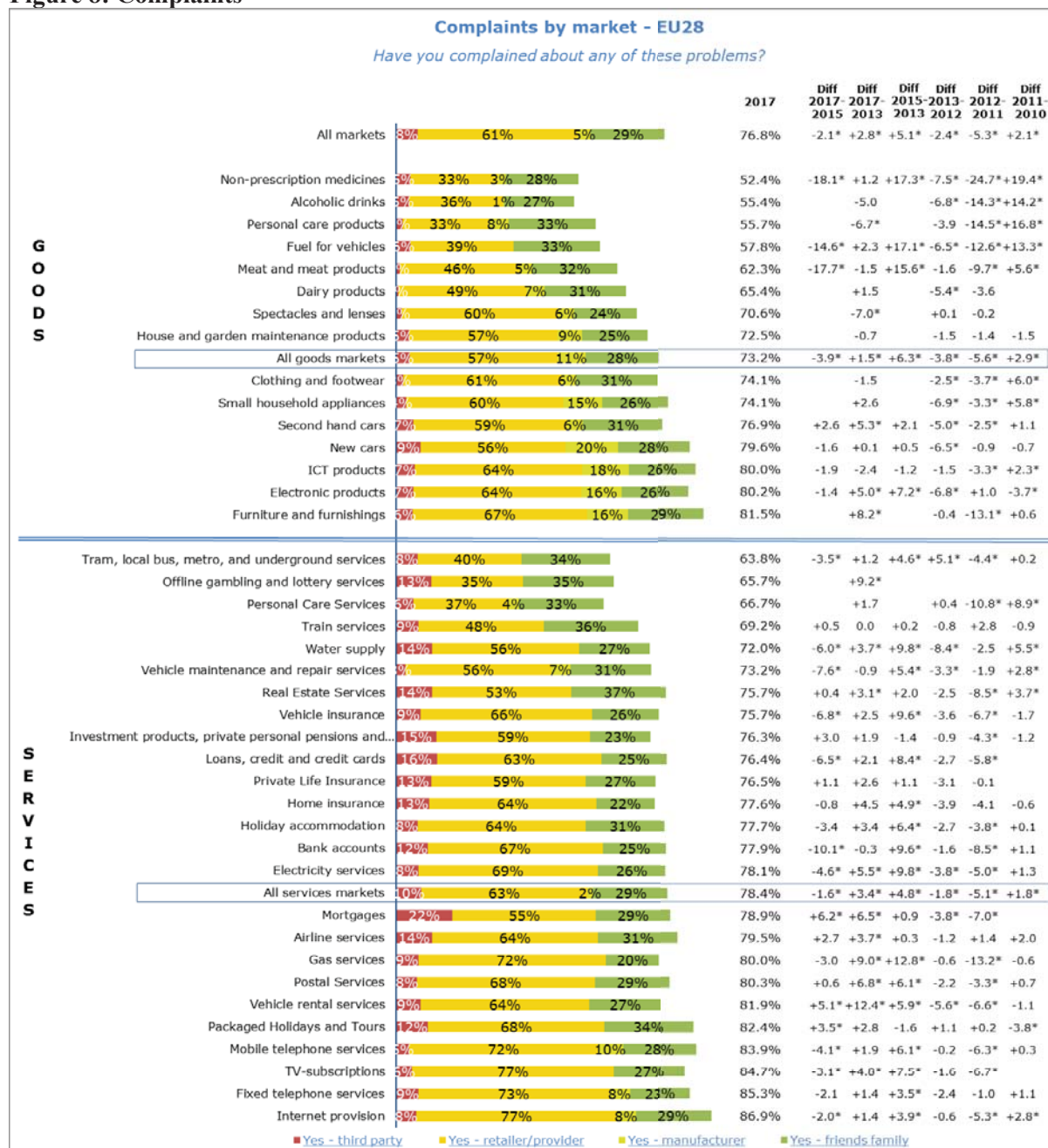
In 2017, most consumers (76.8 %) who reported having experienced a problem complained about it. The propensity to complain declined compared with 2015, both for goods (-3.9 pp.) and services (-1.6 pp.) markets. However, consumers in 2017 that experienced a problem were still more likely to complain than in 2013 (+1.5 pp. more for problems with goods, and +3.4 pp. for problems with services).

Among the seven goods markets surveyed in both 2015 and 2017, the share of consumers who complained when they experienced a problem decreased significantly in three markets, namely ‘non-prescription medicines’ (-18.1 pp.), ‘meat and meat products’ (-17.7 pp.) and ‘fuel for vehicles’ (-14.6 pp.). The share of consumers who complained when they experienced a problem remained stable in the other four markets. Consumers are most likely to complain about problems in the markets for ‘furniture and furnishings’, ‘electronic products’ and ‘ICT products’. They are the least inclined to complain for ‘non-prescription medicines’, ‘alcoholic drinks’ and ‘personal care products’.

A more mixed picture emerges when looking at the 23 services markets surveyed both in 2015 and 2017, where the proportion of consumers who complained decreased in 10 markets compared to 2015, increased in 3, and remained stable in the remaining 10. The share of consumers who complained increased in the markets for ‘mortgages’ (+6.2 pp.), ‘vehicle rental services’ (+5.1 pp.) and ‘packaged holidays and tours’ (+3.5 pp.), while the most notable decreases can be observed for ‘bank accounts’ (-10.1 pp.), ‘vehicle maintenance and repair services’ (-7.6 pp.) and ‘vehicle insurance’ (-6.8 pp.).

The lowest proportions of consumers who report making complaints were in the markets for ‘tram, local bus, metro and underground services’, ‘offline gambling and lottery services’, ‘personal care services’, ‘train services’, ‘water supply’ and ‘vehicle maintenance and repair services’. In contrast, the market for ‘internet provision’ has the highest proportion of persons who complained, followed by the markets for ‘fixed telephone services’, ‘TV-subscriptions’, ‘mobile telephone services’, ‘packaged holidays and tours’ and ‘vehicle rental services’.

Figure 8: Complaints



Source: GfK — Market Monitoring Survey 2017 — Base: consumers who have experienced a problem

**Consumers complain primarily to the seller and service provider and consumers in the southern region complain the most**

Consumers were also asked to whom they had complained<sup>15</sup>. Looking at the average for all markets, consumers are most likely to complain to the seller or service provider (61.2%), as already observed in previous surveys, followed by complaints to friends and family (28.8%). Roughly 5.0% of respondents complained directly to the manufacturer, but this option is only

<sup>15</sup> Multiple answers are allowed.

available in some markets where this party can be identified<sup>16</sup>. The proportion of respondents that complained directly to the manufacturer in 2017 is comparable to the proportion observed in 2015, but higher (+0.6 pp.) than in 2013.

The share of complaints addressed to third-party bodies, such as a public authority, a consumer organisation or the ombudsman, also remained the same as in 2015, but increased (+0.5 pp.) compared to 2013. Consumers are more inclined to complain to a third-party body for problems experienced when purchasing services (9.7 %) than when buying goods (5.1 %).

**Table 1: Percentage of consumers who complained by channel<sup>17</sup>**

	COMPLAINTS											
	2017			Difference 2017-2015			Difference 2017-2013			Difference 2015-2013		
	All	Goods	Services	All	Goods	Services	All	Goods	Services	All	Goods	Services
Yes - official third-party	8.3%	5.1%	9.7%	+0.1	+0.3	0.0	+0.5*	+0.4	+0.6*	+0.4	+0.3	+0.5
Yes - retailer/provider	61.2%	56.5%	63.4%	-0.3	-2.5*	+0.3	+2.8*	+2.0*	+3.3*	+3.0*	+3.7*	+2.9*
Yes - manufacturer	5.0%	10.7%	2.3%	-0.1	+0.4	-0.2	+0.6*	+1.6*	+0.1	+0.6*	+1.3*	+0.2
Yes - friends/family	28.8% A	28.5% A	28.9% A	-6.2*	-6.2*	-6.2*	-2.5*	-2.2*	-2.6*	+3.6*	+4.4*	+3.4*
No	23.2%	26.8%	21.6%	+2.1*	+3.9*	+1.6*	-2.8*	-1.5*	-3.4*	-5.1*	-6.3*	-4.8*
Yes (excluding friends/family)	67.2%	63.1%	69.1%									

	COMPLAINTS								
	Difference 2013-2012			Difference 2012-2011			Difference 2011-2010		
	All	Goods	Services	All	Goods	Services	All	Goods	Services
Yes - official third-party	+0.5*	+0.6*	+0.4	-0.2	+0.1	-0.2	-0.5*	-0.5*	-0.5
Yes - retailer/provider	-2.9*	-4.6*	-2.2*	-6.8*	-8.4*	-6.1*	+8.3*	+6.9*	+8.9*
Yes - manufacturer	0.0	+0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-1.2*	+0.1	-3.4*	+1.3*	-5.4*
Yes - friends/family	-0.8*	-0.4	-0.9*	-0.1	+2.5*	-1.1*	+5.6*	+4.2*	+6.1*
No	+2.4*	+3.8*	+1.8*	+5.3*	+5.6*	+5.1*	-2.1*	-2.9*	-1.8*
Yes (excluding friends/family)									

Source: GfK Market Monitoring Survey 2017 — Base: consumers who experienced at least one problem with the service/product or the supplier/retailer in a given market. Differences are expressed in percentage points.

Some regional differences can also be observed. The proportion of consumers that complain is below the EU-28 average in the eastern (-5.3 pp.), northern (-4.4 pp.) and western (-2.0 pp.) regions, while it is higher than average in the southern region (+6.5 pp.).

**Table 2: Percentage of consumers who complained by regional groupings<sup>18</sup>**

	COMPLAINTS (2017)	
	2017	Difference Region - EU28
EU28	76.8%	
Region North	72.4% A	-4.4%*
Region East	71.5% A	-5.3%*
Region South	83.3%	+6.5%*
Region West	74.8%	-2.0%*

Source: GfK Market Monitoring Survey 2017 — Base: consumers who experienced at least one problem with the service/product or the supplier/retailer in a given market.

<sup>16</sup> Please note the base for this figure is all markets where this answer was available. The answer option 'to a manufacturer' was only possible for the following services markets: 'house and garden maintenance services', 'vehicle maintenance and repair services', 'fixed telephone services', 'mobile telephone services' and 'internet provision'. Among goods markets, the question applied to all the markets except for 'fuel for vehicles'.

<sup>17</sup> Differences are expressed in percentage points.

<sup>18</sup> Differences are expressed in percentage points.

## 2.2. Switching

A good indicator to measure the performance of services markets characterised by long-term subscription contracts is the possibility to switch provider easily. Consumers are more likely to search for the most advantageous offers in markets where switching provider is easy. This in turn is good for competition, as providers are encouraged to offer services at prices and levels of quality that satisfy consumers' demands.

However, it is not easy to establish what would be the optimal proportion of consumers switching provider in a specific well-performing market. There can be many different reasons not to switch provider. Firstly, consumers may be satisfied with their current service and/or provider. Secondly, they may simply not be aware of the possibility of switching. Thirdly, consumers may perceive switching as too difficult or costly and hence not worthwhile. Switching rates can also be influenced by the level of regulation and/or competition in a certain market.

The question on switching was slightly refined in the 2017 survey to better capture some of the contextual issues described above. In particular, respondents were asked to provide the reasons for switching or not switching (where appropriate) and/or to clarify whether they simply changed the services they purchased or also changed provider.

### *Compared to 2015, fewer consumers switch provider in most of services markets surveyed*

Overall, 9.4 % of consumers in the 13<sup>19</sup> services markets surveyed switched provider in 2017. This figure represents a decrease of 1.1 pp. from 2015, in line with the falling tendency observed between 2010 and 2013, but in contrast with the increase (+1.7 pp.) seen between 2013 and 2015. Between 2015 and 2017, there was no increase in the proportion of consumers switching provider in any of the 13 markets surveyed.

**Table 3: Switching provider by market cluster<sup>20</sup>**

	2017	diff 2017-2015	diff 2017-2013	diff 2015-2013
Telecoms	9.9%	-1.6	0.4	2.1
Insurance services	9.9%	-1.2	0.3	1.5
Utilities	9.4%	0.2	1.8	1.7
Banking services	8.6%	-1.2	0.0	1.3

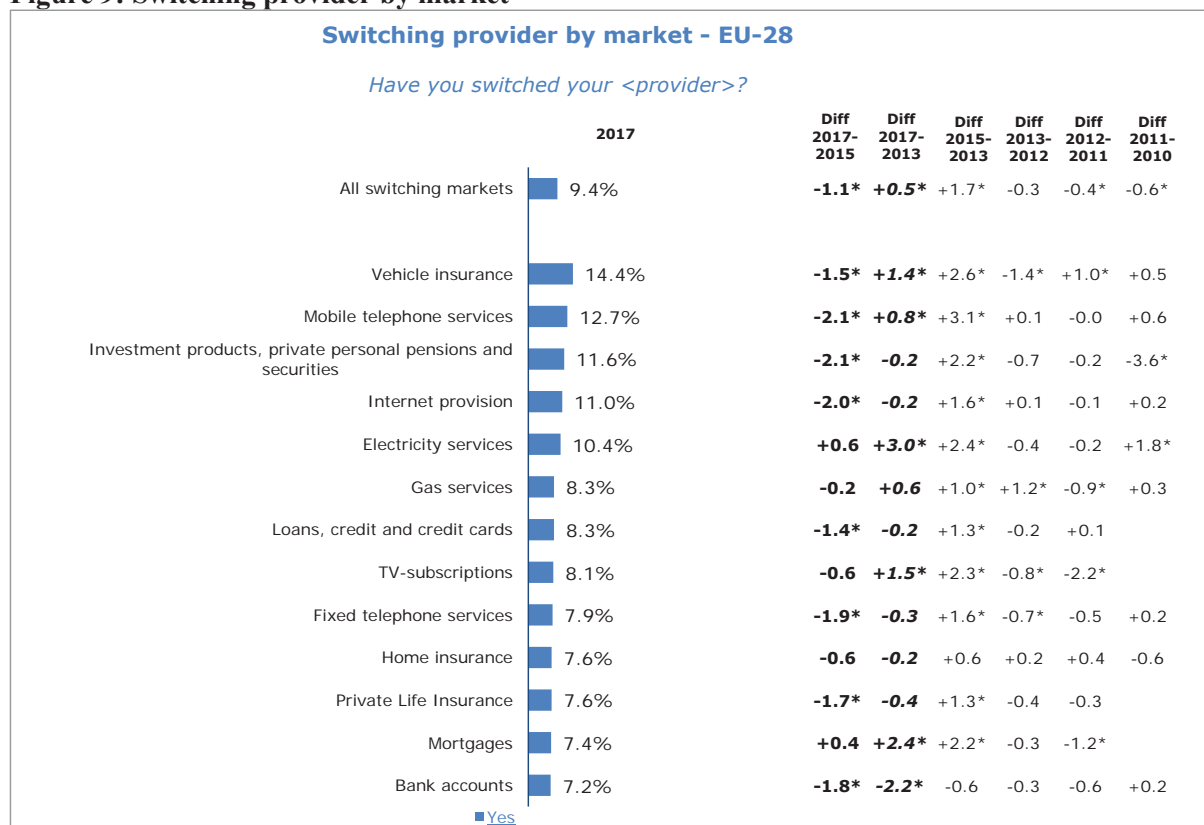
Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

Consumers are most likely to switch supplier in the markets for 'vehicle insurance', 'mobile telephone services' and 'investment products, private personal pensions and securities'. They are least likely to switch supplier in the markets for 'bank accounts', 'mortgages', 'private life insurance' and 'home insurance'.

<sup>19</sup> The questions on switching were asked only for the following 13 markets: 'bank accounts', 'electricity services', 'fixed telephone services', 'gas services', 'home insurance', 'internet provision', 'investment products, private personal pensions and securities', 'loans, credit and credit cards', 'mobile telephone services', 'mortgages', 'private life insurance', 'TV-subscriptions' and 'vehicle insurance'.

<sup>20</sup> For the 'utilities' cluster, the proportion of consumers who switched provider was assessed only for the 'electricity services' and 'gas services' markets, while it was not assessed for the 'water services' and 'postal services' markets.

**Figure 9: Switching provider by market**



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

The proportion of respondents who have switched providers is higher than average in southern (12.0 %), northern (11.1 %) and eastern (10.3 %) Europe, but below average in western (7.6 %) Europe. The UK (14.4 %), Belgium (14.0 %) and Spain (13.9 %) have the highest proportions of consumers who switched provider, whereas the lowest proportions of consumers who switched provider can be found in Luxembourg (2.4 %), France (3.5 %) and Austria (3.6 %).

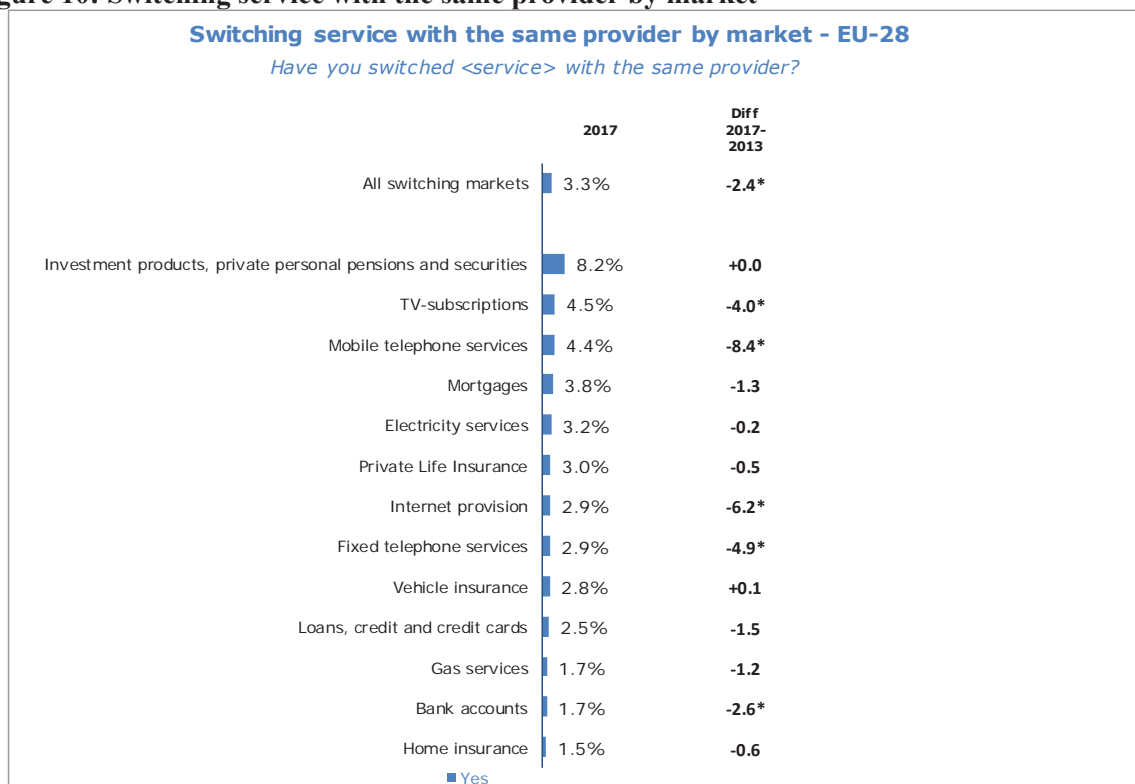
### ***Fewer consumers switched a service with the same provider compared to 2013***

In addition, 3.3 % of all respondents switched service with the same provider in 2017. This figure decreased by 2.4 pp. compared to 2013<sup>21</sup>. The share did not increase in any of the services markets surveyed.

Consumers are most likely to switch services but not provider in the markets for ‘investment products, private personal pensions and securities’, ‘TV-subscriptions’ and ‘mobile telephone services’, whereas they are least likely to switch for ‘home insurance’.

<sup>21</sup> The question on switching service with the same provider was asked only in 2013 and 2017.

**Figure 10: Switching service with the same provider by market**



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

Whereas most services showed no statistically significant change, the largest decreases since 2013 in the proportion of people who switched service but not provider are for ‘mobile telephone services’ (-8.4 pp.), ‘internet provision’ (-6.2 pp.) and ‘fixed telephone services’ (-4.9 pp.). The first two markets rank high for the share of consumers having switched provider, but this increase does not make up for the drastic decrease in switching service with the same provider.

### 2.2.1. Ease of switching

#### ***Ease of switching increases in only 4 out of 13 services markets surveyed***

Consumers who had switched within the reference period were also asked to evaluate their experience and rate how easy it was to switch. The average score (7.7 points out of 10) improved only slightly since 2015 (+0.1), whereas the overall improvement since 2013 was higher (+0.2). Approximately two thirds (65 %) of consumers found it easy to switch (giving their experience of switching a score between 8 and 10 points) while only 11 % found it difficult (giving a score between 0 and 4 points).

In some services markets the ease of switching improved significantly between 2015 and 2017. This was the case for ‘mortgages’ and ‘mobile telephone services’ (in both markets, the ease of switching improved by +0.5). On the other hand, switching became more difficult between 2015 and 2017 for ‘TV-subscriptions’ (-0.3).

**Table 4: Ease of switching provider by market cluster<sup>22</sup>**

	2017	diff 2017-2015	diff 2017-2013
Insurance services	8.2	0.1	0.1
Utilities	7.8	0.1	0.1
Banking services	7.5	0.1	0.3
Telecoms	7.4	0.1	0.2

Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

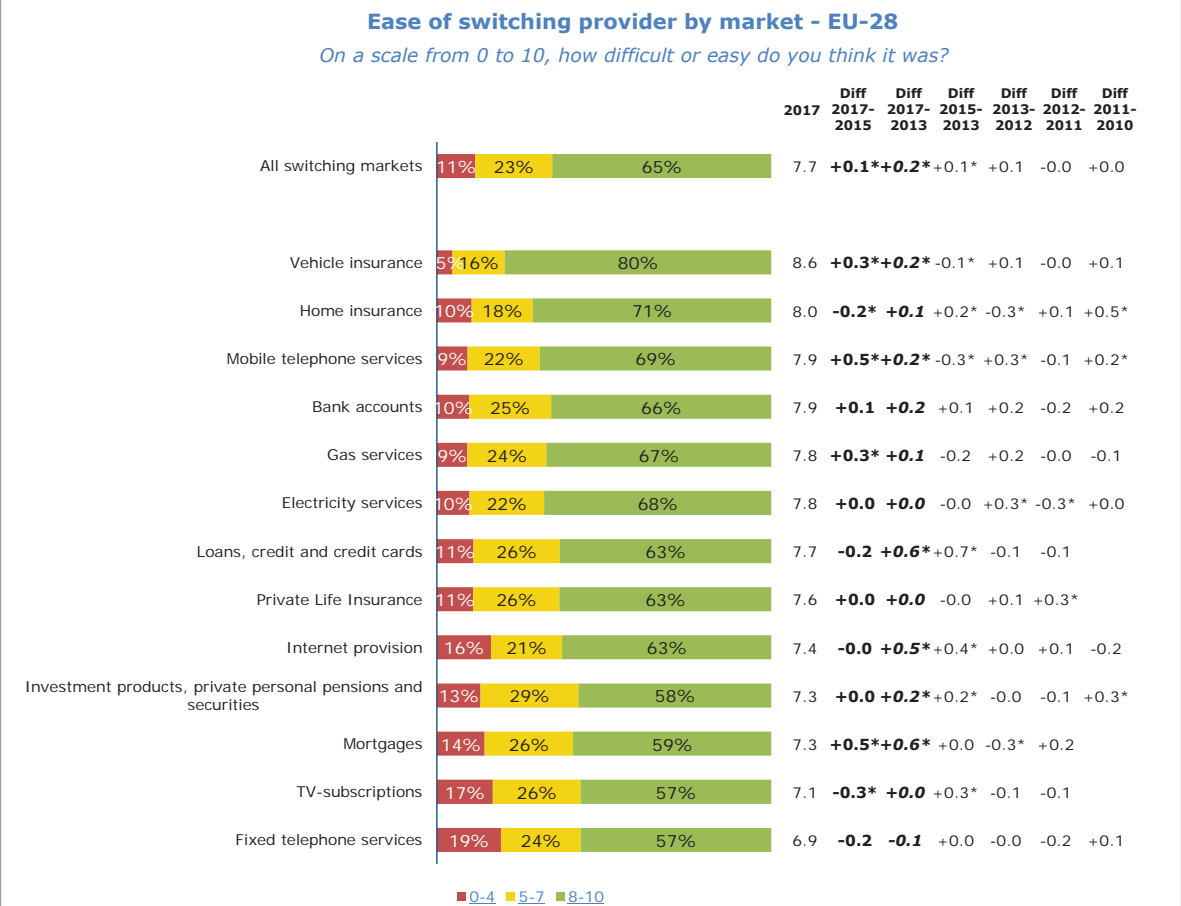
Looking at market clusters, switching provider is assessed as being easiest for consumers in the ‘insurance services’ cluster. The two markets which received the highest score for this indicator are ‘vehicle insurance’ and ‘home insurance’. On the other hand, consumers found it particularly difficult to switch provider in ‘telecoms’ and ‘banking services’, with ‘fixed telephone services’, ‘TV-subscriptions’, ‘mortgages’, ‘investment products, private personal pensions and securities’ and ‘internet provision’ ranking at the bottom of the scale. The services offered in the ‘fixed telephone services’ and ‘TV-subscriptions’ markets, where approximately 2 in 10 respondents find it difficult to switch provider, are often part of a bundle, which is likely to complicate the switching process.

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<sup>22</sup> For the ‘utilities’ cluster, the proportion of consumers who switched provider was assessed only for the ‘electricity services’ and ‘gas services’ markets, while it was not assessed for the ‘water services’ and ‘postal services’ markets.



Figure 11: Ease of switching provider by market



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

The average across the EU for ease of switching across the markets where switching took place in 2017 was 7.7. Respondents in eastern (8.2) and northern (8.1) Europe gave higher-than-average ratings for the ease of switching, while western Europeans also gave above-average ratings, albeit at a slightly lower level (7.8). Consumers from southern regions of Europe gave by far the lowest assessments for ease of switching (7.2). Consumers from Norway and from the three Baltic countries find switching the easiest, whereas Spanish and Austrian consumers evaluate switching as the least easy.

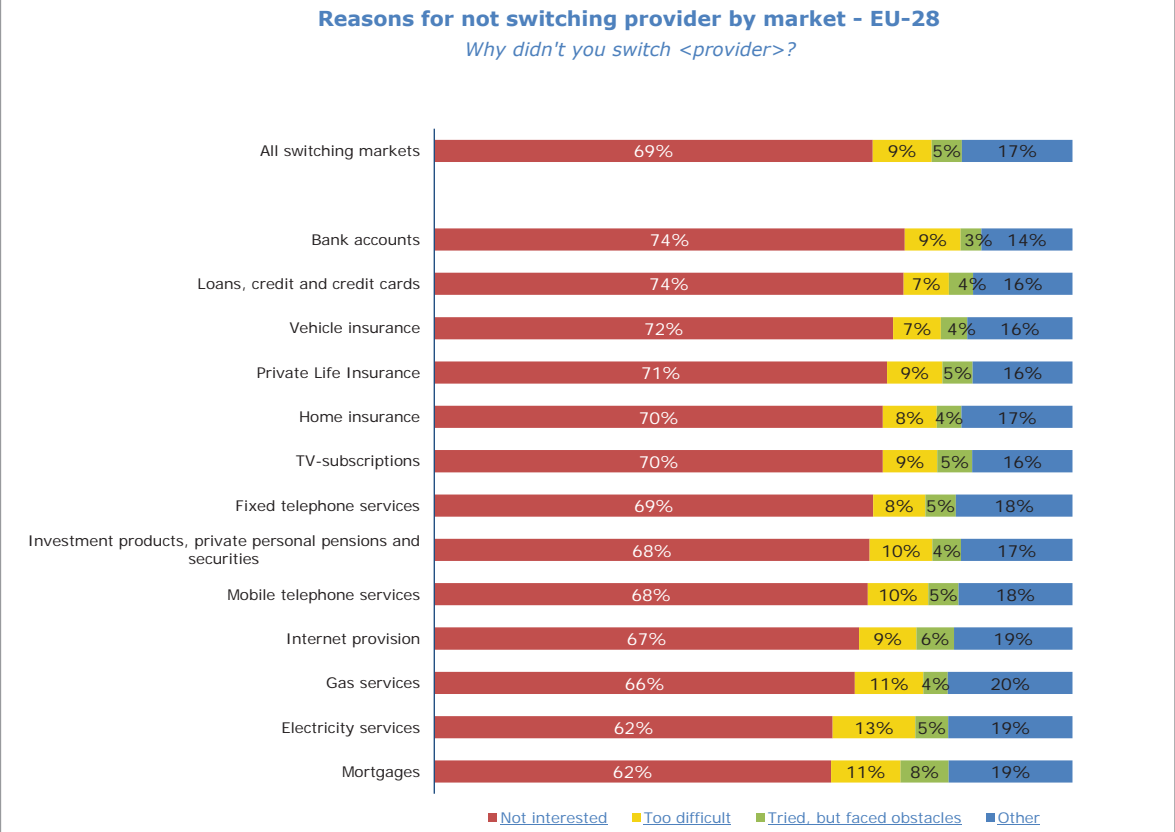
2.2.2. Reasons for not switching

**Lack of interest remains the predominant reason for not switching provider — few are concerned about difficulties or actually struggled while switching**

The Scoreboard editions before 2015 showed that, among consumers who switched provider and those who did not, those who did not switch gave systematically lower scores when assessing the ease of switching. In order to understand whether this consistently lower assessment was due to a worse experience while attempting to switch or due to sheer perceptions about the difficulties foreseen, the last two surveys have included a question about the reasons for not switching to those respondents who had not switched.

Among the subgroup of consumers who did not switch either provider or service with the same provider, most respondents (69 %) said they were not interested in switching. Some 9 % did not attempt to switch because they thought it might be too difficult, whereas 5 % actually tried but gave up because of the obstacles that they encountered. Another 17 % evoked ‘other reasons’ for not having switched, without specifying what these reasons were.

**Figure 12: Reasons for not switching provider by market**



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017 — Base: Respondents who did not switch provider and did not switch service with the same provider

At individual market level, consumers are most likely to say they are not interested in switching for ‘bank accounts’ and ‘loans, credit and credit cards’ (for both these markets, 74 % of consumers say they are not interested in switching), followed by the three insurance services, i.e. ‘vehicle insurance’, ‘private life insurance’ and ‘home insurance’ (72 %, 71 % and 70 % of consumers respectively say they are not interested in switching). The excessive difficulty in switching was the reason cited for consumers of ‘electricity services’ (13 %), ‘mortgages’ and ‘gas services’ (both 11 %). ‘Mortgages’ (8 %) was the market with the largest proportion of consumers who say that they tried to switch but faced obstacles, followed by ‘internet provision’ (6 %).

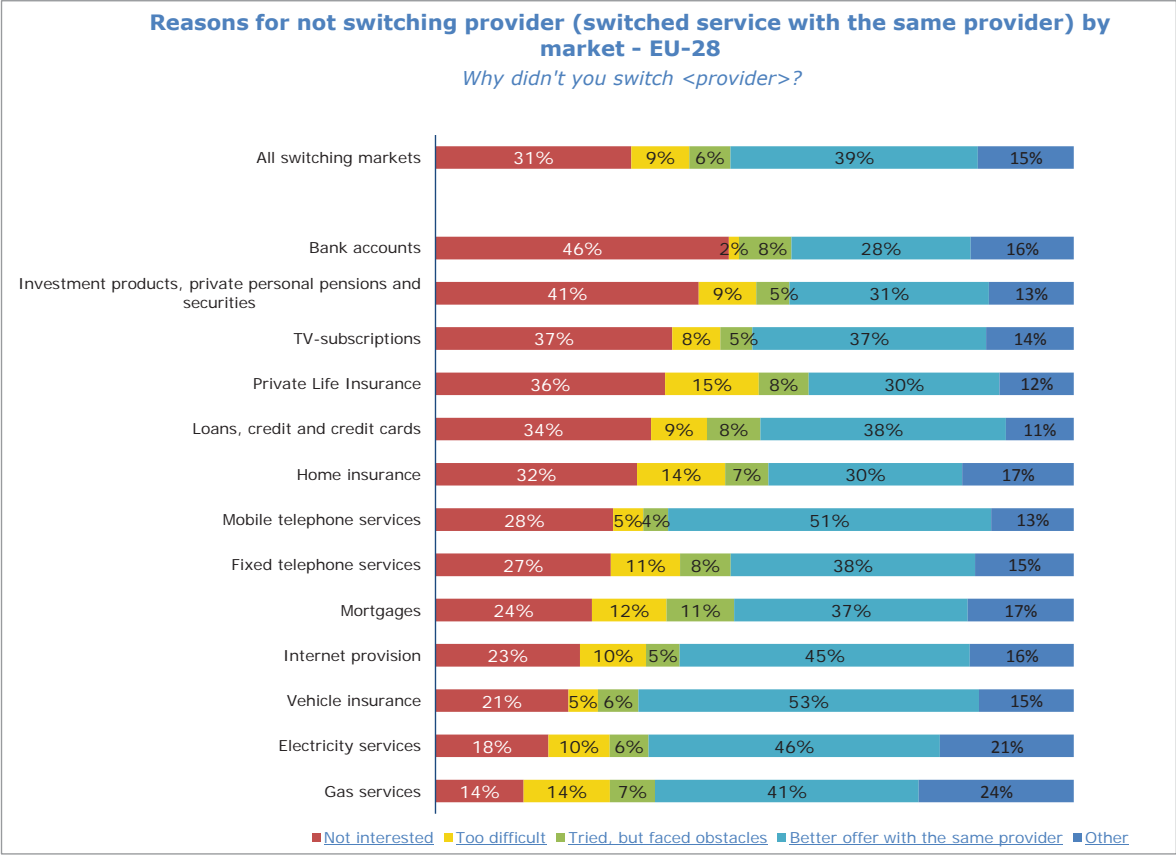
Looking across the various regions of Europe, northern Europeans (79 %) are by far the most likely to mention a lack of interest in switching provider, followed by southern and eastern Europeans (both 75 %). Consumers from western Europe are the least likely to mention lack of interest as the reason for not switching (62 %) and they are the group most likely to report that they think that switching might be too difficult (13 % of consumers from western Europe fear it might be too difficult, compared to an average of 5 % across respondents from all the

other three regions). Consumers from western Europe are also most likely to have tried to switch but faced related obstacles (6 % versus only 2 % among northern Europeans).

**Four consumers out of 10 did not switch provider because they received a better offer from their current provider**

Most consumers who did not switch provider had either received a better offer from their provider (39 %) or were not interested in changing provider (31 %). Still, almost one tenth of this group of respondents that did not switch provider (9 %) indicated that they thought that switching provider might be too difficult, and 6 % said that they tried to switch but gave up because of the obstacles faced. Some 15 % of respondents referred to other reasons for their decision.

**Figure 13: Reasons for not switching provider (among consumers who switched service with the same provider) by market**



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017 — Base: respondents who did not switch provider but did switch service with the same provider

The markets where people are most likely to say that they are not interested in switching provider are ‘bank accounts’ (46 %) and ‘investment products, private personal pensions and securities’ (41 %). A much lower proportion of consumers say that they are not interested in switching provider for utility markets like ‘gas services’ (14 %) and ‘electricity services’ (18 %). Consumers are more likely to say that it is too difficult to switch provider for ‘private life insurance’ (15 %), ‘home insurance’ (14 %) and ‘gas services’ (14 %). The largest proportion of consumers who say that they actually tried to switch provider but faced obstacles is in the ‘mortgages’ market (11 %).

The markets where people are most likely to indicate that they received a better offer with the same provider are: ‘vehicle insurance’ (53 %), ‘mobile telephone services’ (51 %), ‘electricity services’ (46 %) and ‘internet provision’ (45 %). In contrast, the lowest proportions of consumers saying that they received a better offer from their own provider were in ‘bank accounts’ (28 %), ‘private life insurance’ (30 %) and ‘home insurance’ (30 %). As discussed earlier, a smaller-than-average proportion of consumers in the markets for ‘fixed telephone services’ and ‘TV-subscriptions’ say that the reason they did not switch provider is because they received a better offer for a service with the same provider. This is in line with the finding that choice in these two markets (hence market competition) is less than optimal.

### 2.3. Market penetration

For the purposes of this Scoreboard, market penetration<sup>23</sup> should be understood as the percentage of the population who purchased a good or service in the given market during the reference period<sup>24</sup>. In the figure below, it can be seen that penetration rates differ greatly between markets (starting from as low as 21 % to as high as 91 %). In some instances, there are large differences in market penetration between the Member States for a given market, although to a lesser extent than across markets. Looking more carefully at market penetration can provide valuable insights on market changes and consumer engagement over the years in the EU-28.

At first glance, it appears that the markets in the ‘fast-moving retail’ and ‘utilities’ clusters tend to display relatively high market penetration, while ‘financial services’ and ‘automotive goods’ have relatively low market penetration. The markets with the highest penetration levels include ‘dairy products’ (91 %), ‘meat and meat products’ (88 %) and ‘clothing and footwear’ (87 %), whereas those with the lowest penetration include ‘real estate services’ (21 %), ‘new cars’ (22 %) and ‘vehicle rental services’ (24 %).

Compared to 2015, there were declines in the market penetrations of the financial markets ‘loans, credit and credit cards’ (-8 pp.), ‘investment products, private personal pensions and securities’ (-4 pp.) ‘mortgages’ (-1 pp.), and ‘home insurance’ (-5 pp.). But despite these decreases, the market penetrations for these four markets are still higher than in 2013 (by +6 pp., +1 pp., +4 pp. and 2 pp. respectively). In addition, ‘fixed telephone services’ (-2 pp.) and ‘packaged holidays and tours’ (-2 pp.) also displayed a lower market penetration compared to 2015. Compared to 2013, market penetration decreased only for ‘house and garden maintenance’ (-3 pp.).

All other markets showed either a stable level or an increase in market penetration. Compared to 2015, the most noticeable increase in market penetration occurred for markets belonging to the ‘telecoms’ cluster, such as ‘TV-subscriptions’ (+8 pp.), ‘internet provision’ (+5 pp.) and ‘electronic products’ (+5 pp.)’. Compared to 2013, seven markets increased their penetration by 10 pp. or more. These include: ‘furniture and furnishings’ (+16 pp.), ‘internet provision’ (+14 %), ‘electronic products’ (+14 pp.), ‘mobile telephone services’ (+12 pp.), ‘vehicle insurance’ (+11 pp.), ‘dairy products’ (+10 pp.) and ‘vehicle rental services’ (+10 pp.).

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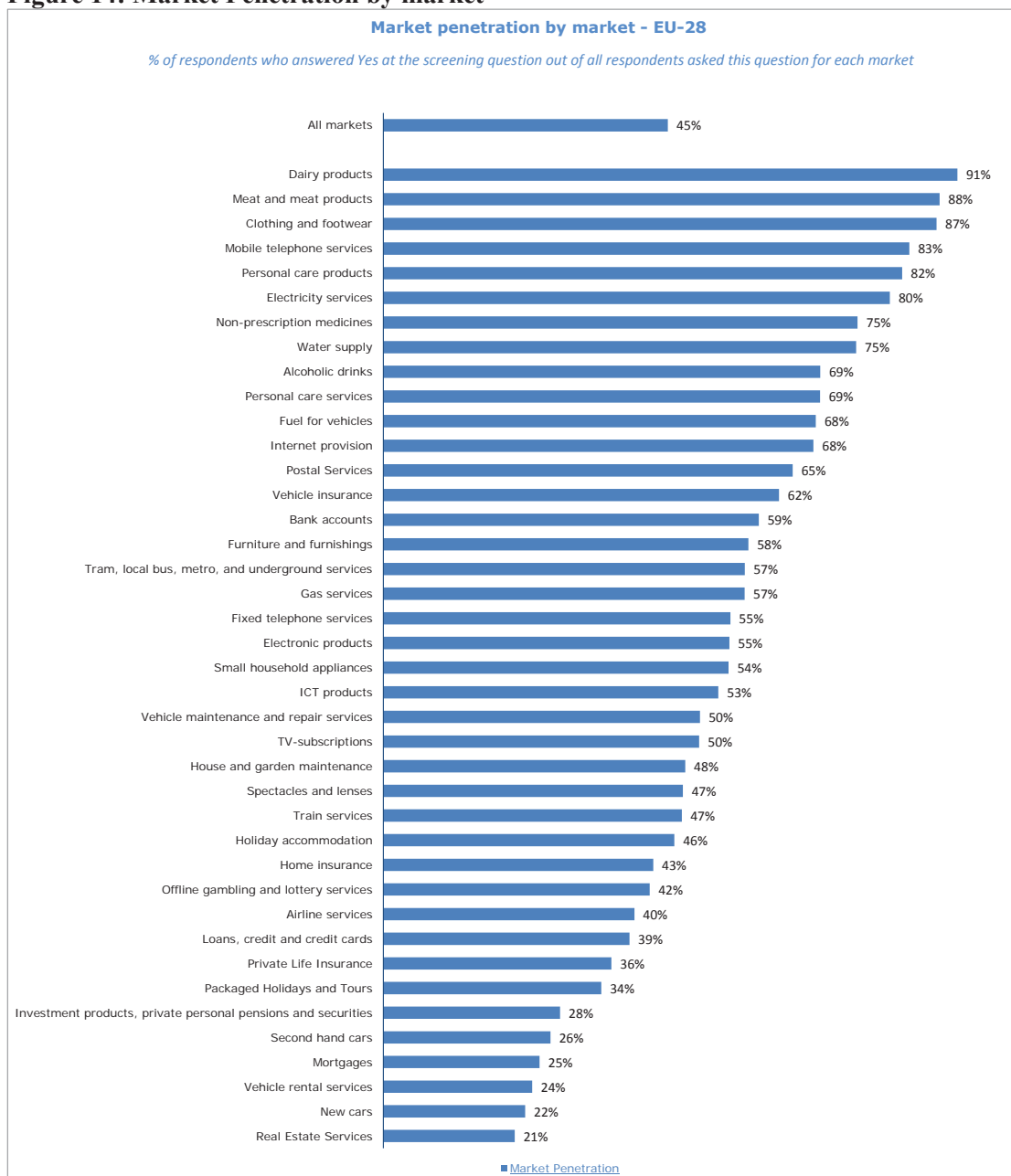
<sup>23</sup> This began to be measured in the 2013 edition of the Market Monitoring Survey.

<sup>24</sup> As a proportion of all consumers who were screened for the respective market.

Factors that drive market penetration include the purchase frequency and the budget available, but also the relative necessity and availability of each product. It is therefore rational to see markets that cover consumers' primary needs (such as 'dairy products' or 'meat and meat products') having a high penetration, as opposed to 'luxury' or more specialised markets such as 'new cars', 'investment products, private personal pensions and securities' or 'packaged holidays and tours'.

Market penetration for each of the 40 markets was also calculated across all countries to measure the magnitude of cross-country variations. For some of the markets that meet consumers' daily needs, a considerably narrower range in market penetration was observed, for example in 'dairy products' (a range of only 11 pp., with market penetration varying between 85 % and 96 %) or in 'meat and meat products' (a range of only 14 pp., with market penetration varying between 80 % and 94 %). In contrast, for other markets that tend to depend on the level of disposable income, a much wider dispersion in market penetration can be seen across countries. These other markets include services such as 'airline services' (a range of 46 pp., with market penetration varying between 16 % and 62 %) or 'offline gambling and lottery services' (a range of 45 pp., with market penetration between 18 % and 63 %). Lastly, for markets which depend on infrastructure or technological advances, dispersion is unsurprisingly wider than normal, as can be seen in 'gas services' (a range of 45 pp., with market penetration varying between 21 % and 66 %) or in 'fixed telephone services' (a range of 42 pp., with market penetration varying between 24 % and 66 %). For 'fixed telephone services', it is often the case that the use of mobile phones has led to a decrease in the need to also maintain a fixed telephone service within a household.

**Figure 14: Market Penetration by market**



Source: Market Monitoring Survey 2017

When looking at the correlation between market penetration and the MPI score across the EU-28 for all markets surveyed in 2017, a modest positive correlation (0.35) can be observed. At first glance, this may suggest that consumers tend to award a higher score for overall performance to markets where more consumers engage. However, at the level of individual markets there is weak correlation between market performance and market penetration in some markets where the penetration rate is high, such as the markets for ‘meat and meat products’ and ‘clothing and footwear’. The strongest correlations can be found among lower-penetration markets such as ‘offline gambling and lottery services’ and ‘real estate services’. For each of these markets the correlations are slightly above 0.5.

## 2.4. Prices

Price comparisons are good indicators of integration and market performance. In a single market, where goods and services move freely, prices (in particular for tradable goods) should converge over time, although some differences will always persist<sup>25</sup>.

A closer look at price-level indices (EU-28 = 100)<sup>26</sup> in Member States (as compiled by Eurostat) for actual individual consumption and its main components (Table 15) reveals the following three conclusions:

- Price levels still vary significantly across countries, with price levels for actual individual consumption ranging from 43.3 to 140.6 (a spread comparable to that observed in the previous edition).
- Price dispersion is much less pronounced for goods (0.16) than for services, for which the coefficient of variation across Member States is the highest (0.41)<sup>27</sup>. Among goods, prices vary more for non-durable goods (0.19) than for durable and semi-durable goods (both 0.12).
- In countries where prices tend to be higher, the prices for services are, in relative terms, higher than those for goods. There is a strong positive correlation (close to 1) between the price-level indices for actual individual consumption and the difference between price-level indices of consumer goods and services.

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<sup>25</sup> Factors such as geography, demographics, population density, and topography mean that cost structures between Member States will differ.

<sup>26</sup> The price-level index (EU-28 = 100) for country *i* and a given expenditure-aggregate provides a comparison between the average level of prices in the country *i* for that aggregate and the average level of prices for the same aggregate in the EU. If the price-level index is higher than 100, the country concerned is relatively more expensive than the EU and vice versa.

<sup>27</sup> Likely to be due to different levels of tradability.



**Table 5: Price-level indices (EU-28 = 100) for actual consumption and its components (2016) by Member States<sup>28</sup>**

	Actual individual consumption	Consumer goods	Non-durable goods	Semi-durable goods	Durable goods	Consumer services	Diff. Consum. Services vs. Consumer Goods
BE	110.5	108.5	108.7	112.3	106.7	109.9	1.4
BG	43.3	70.0	67.4	78.8	77.2	32.5	-37.5
CZ	61.1	80.7	79.7	89.8	79.8	52.1	-28.6
DK	140.6	133.5	138.3	129.7	124.8	143.6	10.1
DE	103.0	104.6	107.6	102.5	98.3	102.4	-2.2
EE	71.4	88.8	85.8	105.2	90.0	62.9	-25.9
IE	125.6	118.1	125.0	107.2	103.7	130.8	12.7
EL	82.3	97.4	98.3	98.1	96.0	75.1	-22.3
ES	92.1	93.9	94.3	95.4	93.9	90.9	-3.0
FR	106.2	105.1	106.2	105.1	102.6	108.0	2.9
HR	63.1	86.5	84.6	95.2	92.0	53.5	-33.0
IT	101.1	106.5	108.4	103.9	104.8	98.4	-8.1
CY	88.5	99.3	101.1	99.1	94.5	80.1	-19.2
LV	66.6	87.4	86.0	98.7	86.0	55.8	-31.6
LT	58.3	80.8	77.7	94.5	85.4	45.3	-35.5
LU	138.4	103.7	103.5	105.5	104.5	144.2	40.5
HU	55.5	76.3	74.3	83.8	82.8	45.8	-30.5
MT	81.6	104.4	105.9	101.5	104.3	67.3	-37.1
NL	112.8	105.4	104.2	108.5	109.1	116.9	11.5
AT	110.3	107.6	110.7	105.0	102.3	106.1	-1.5
PL	50.7	68.4	65.4	80.3	75.8	41.2	-27.2
PT	81.4	98.7	97.5	100.1	105.9	72.9	-25.8
RO	48.2	68.9	65.4	85.4	83.2	37.9	-31.0
SI	82.9	93.6	93.5	99.7	90.8	76.6	-17.0
SK	64.0	84.8	83.5	98.2	82.5	52.6	-32.2
FI	122.0	114.7	117.0	115.8	107.7	127.5	12.8
SE	134.7	119.5	122.1	129.1	103.6	136.6	17.1
UK	122.3	101.3	104.5	92.1	102.2	138.4	37.1
EU-28	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
<b>Coefficient of variation</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.16</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>0.41</b>	

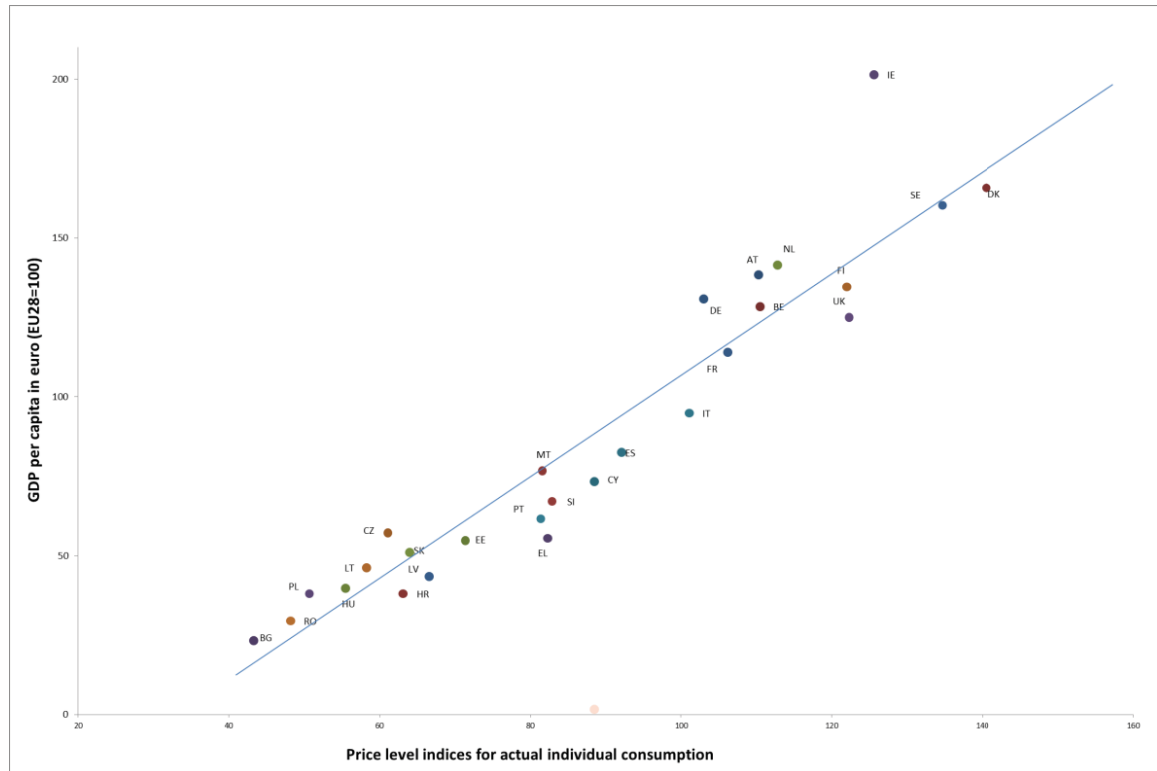
Source: own estimates based on Eurostat data (Purchasing Power Parities, [prc\_ppp\_ind] updated on 14.12.2017)

<sup>28</sup> The coefficient of variation was computed as the ratio between the standard deviation and the average across the EU countries (both on data not weighted by country size).

### *Prices are higher in more affluent countries*

Price dispersion in the EU largely reflects differences in the cost of labour. Figure 31 shows that there is a strong positive correlation (0.95) between price-level indices for actual individual consumption and GDP per capita in euro (used as a proxy for salary levels).

**Figure 15: Price-level indices for actual individual consumption and GDP per capita in euro (2016)<sup>29</sup>**



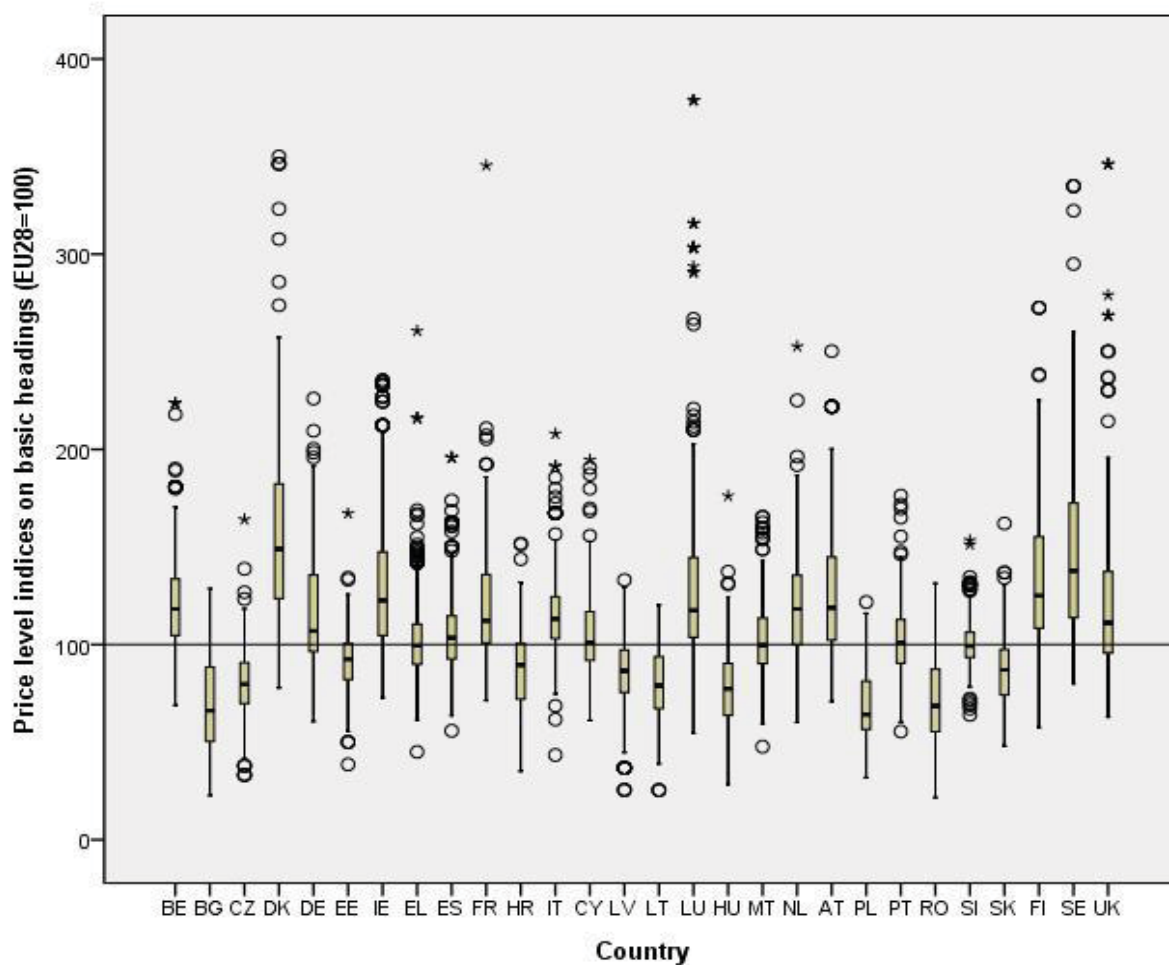
Source: Eurostat (Purchasing Power Parities and National Accounts, [prc\_ppp\_ind] updated on 14.12.2017 and [nama\_10\_pc] updated on 19.03.2018)

Furthermore, Figure 32 shows the distribution of prices by country. Price-level indices for at least 75 % of basic headings<sup>30</sup> are above the EU level in Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland and Sweden, but below the EU level in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

<sup>29</sup> Luxembourg has been omitted both from the graph and the computation of the regression line because it is an outlier.

<sup>30</sup> For the purpose of PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) calculation, the main expenditure aggregates (including GDP) are broken down into 276 basic headings. The basic heading is the lowest level of aggregation, at which products are sampled and product prices collected. It is the lowest level for which countries should provide numerical expenditure weights. Below the basic heading level are the individual items of the product sample. For example, cheese is a basic heading and cheddar, camembert, feta, gorgonzola, gouda, etc. are individual products within it.

Figure 16: Price-level indices (2016) by Member States — distribution across basic headings (box plot<sup>31</sup>)



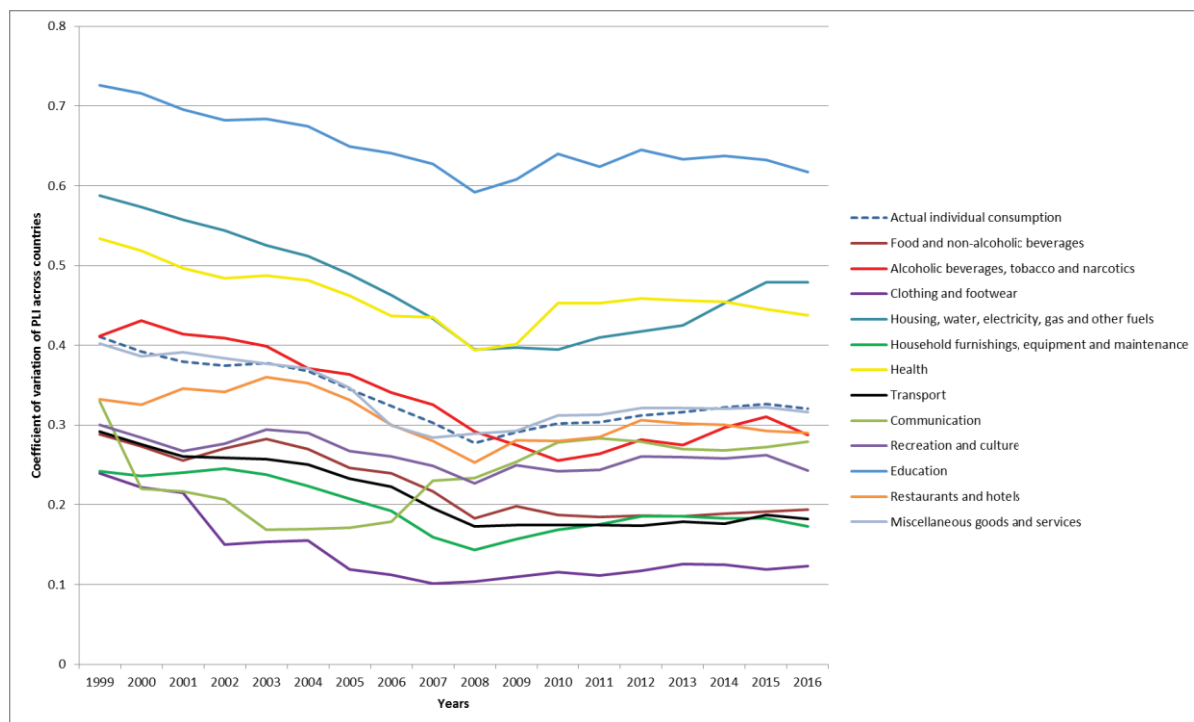
Source: own estimates based on Eurostat data (Purchasing Power Parities)

### ***Price dispersion might be receding again after increasing for years***

In 2016, price dispersion in consumer markets was lower compared to the previous year for the first time since 2008. Although overall price dispersion in these markets decreased over the period 1999-2016 (Figure 33), the coefficient of variation had been increasing since 2008 after years of decline. The changes observed are likely to (at least partly) reflect the different speeds of recovery of EU economies after the economic crisis in 2008. If confirmed in the coming years, the decrease in 2016 might mark a turning point towards more convergence again. Of all markets observed, the sharpest decrease of price dispersion (in relative terms) occurred for ‘clothing and footwear’, for which the coefficient of variation almost halved in the period 1999-2015, probably due to strong (international) competitive pressure.

<sup>31</sup> For each country, the top of the box represents the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, the bottom of the box the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile, and the line in the middle represents the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (the median). The ‘whiskers’ (the lines that extend from the top and the bottom of the box) represent the highest and lowest values that are not outliers or extreme values. Outliers and extreme outliers (values above 1.5 times and 3 times the interquartile range) are represented, respectively, by circles and stars beyond the whiskers. Since the box plot describes dispersion among individual price-level indices, the median in the middle of the box does not necessarily correspond to the (weighted) average price level presented in the other tables and figures in section 4.4.

**Figure 17: Coefficient of variation (EU<sup>32</sup>) on price-level indices (PLI<sup>33</sup>) for Actual Consumption (AIC) and its components**



Source: own estimates based on Eurostat data (Purchasing Power Parities, [prc\_ppp\_ind] updated on 14.12.2017)

Table 16 below shows the correlations between the level of the price index and the following four data sets: consumer assessments of market performance, the ‘comparability’ component, the ‘choice’ component, and the assessment of ease of switching.

In some cases, prices appear to be somewhat linked to consumers’ assessment of market performance, even if the available evidence is rather mixed and conclusions difficult to draw. Nevertheless, there are some interesting correlations.

For instance, in some services markets (‘personal care’, ‘postal services’ and ‘fixed telephones services’), prices are negatively correlated<sup>34</sup> with perceived market performance. A negative correlation between the price-level indices and the MPI comparability scores can be observed in the following markets: ‘alcoholic drinks’, ‘clothing and footwear’, ‘electronic products’, ‘fuel for vehicles’, ‘personal care products’, ‘personal care services’, all ‘insurance services’ and ‘communication services’ (except for ‘mobile telephone services’), ‘vehicle rental’, ‘TV-subscriptions’, ‘train services’ and ‘tram, local bus, metro and underground services’.

<sup>32</sup> The coefficient of variation (CV) is computed as the ratio between the standard deviation and the arithmetic simple (un-weighted) average of the PLIs of the EU countries. In the computation of the CV, data for Croatia are not included from 1999 to 2002, except for actual individuals’ consumption (for which there is full data coverage for all the years).

<sup>33</sup> As opposed to the rest of the figures and tables reported in section 4.4, in order to ensure comparability across all years reported in figure 33, EU-27 = 100 for the PLI was instead used.

<sup>34</sup> In Table 16, correlations were considered statistically significant when the p-value was 0.10 or below. Correlations which are statistically significant at the 0.05 level (p values  $\leq 0.05$ ) are marked with two asterisks (\*\*), while those significant at the 0.10 level (p values  $\leq 0.1$ ) are marked with one asterisk (\*).

In addition, the average prices of services tend to be lower where switching is easier (the correlation coefficient being equal to -0.32, on average). This was observed in a third of the markets surveyed in 2017.

Finally, prices correlate negatively with the MPI component 'choice' in the markets for 'electronic products', 'non-prescription medicines', 'fuel for vehicles', 'personal care services', and all 'communication services' (except for 'internet provision'). These correlations suggest prices are lower where consumers are satisfied with the comparability of offers or the actual offer available on some markets. Unsurprisingly, ease of switching contributes to this as well.

**Table 6: Correlation between consumer assessments (2017) and price-level indices (2016)<sup>35</sup>**

Market	MPI		Comparability		Ease of switching		Choice	
	corr		corr		corr		corr	
Meat and meat products	0.331 *		0.059				0.048	
Alcoholic drinks	0.259		-0.434 **				-0.119	
Clothing and footwear	-0.177		-0.435 **				-0.195	
Maintenance products	0.059		-0.17				-0.158	
Furniture and furnishings	0.199		0.102				-0.147	
Electronic products	-0.222		-0.326 *				-0.55 **	
Small household appliances	-0.023		-0.188				0.015	
ICT products	-0.163		-0.235				-0.11	
New cars	0.095		0.182				-0.055	
Second hand cars	0.458 **		0.459 **				0.41 **	
Fuel for vehicles	-0.023		-0.41 **				-0.362 *	
Personal care products	-0.193		-0.366 *				-0.083	
Personal care services	-0.369 *		-0.587 **				-0.411 **	
Vehicle maintenance and repair	0.455 **		0.06				0.365 *	
Home insurance	0.069		-0.418 **		-0.11		-0.018	
Vehicle insurance	-0.105		-0.587 **		-0.383 **		-0.312	
Postal services	-0.623 **		-0.641 **				-0.605 **	
Fixed telephone services	-0.426 **		-0.51 **		-0.13		-0.426 **	
Mobile telephone services	-0.251		-0.084		-0.381 **		-0.386 **	
Internet provision	-0.275		-0.342 *		-0.1		-0.284	
Tram, local bus, metro	-0.037		-0.385 **				0.021	
Train services	-0.068		-0.37 *				0	
Airline services	0.097		0.291				0.023	
Vehicle rental services	-0.183		-0.501 **				0.169	
Holiday accommodation	0.082		-0.141				0.057	
Packaged holidays and tours	0.047		-0.249				-0.207	
Water supply	0.467 **		0.026				0.474 **	
Electricity services	-0.024		-0.2		0.132		0.164	
Gas services	-0.151		-0.247		-0.362 *		0.144	
Non-prescription medicines	-0.067		-0.142				-0.427 **	
Private life insurance	-0.001		-0.323 *		-0.268		-0.219	
TV-subscriptions	0.001		-0.366 *		-0.185		-0.015	
Dairy products	0.183		-0.113				-0.055	
<b>Goods markets</b>	<b>0.224</b>		<b>-0.155</b>				<b>-0.16</b>	
<b>Services markets</b>	<b>0.06</b>		<b>-0.309</b>		<b>-0.319 *</b>		<b>0.028</b>	

Source: Own estimation based on data from the Market Monitoring Survey (GfK) and from Eurostat (Purchasing Power Parities, [prc\_ppp\_ind] updated on 14.12.2017)<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Shaded cells highlight statistically significant correlations that also have the expected sign: e.g., one would expect to observe a lower price-level index in markets where comparability, choice and ease of switching are assessed more positively.

<sup>36</sup> To be able to link data at market level according to a common market definition, Eurostat data on price-level indices have been aggregated using expenditure categories as weights. For example, the market 'fuel for vehicles', as defined in the Market Monitoring Survey (MMS), is matched with an aggregate which entails the following products as defined by Eurostat at basic heading level: diesel, petrol and other fuels for personal transport equipment. In some cases it was not possible to find a correspondence between MMS markets and products/services at basic heading level (therefore these markets are not shown in the table).

## 2.5. Safety

Ensuring that products on the market are safe for consumers is a key concern of consumer policy. The EU has therefore built a solid regulatory framework over the years<sup>37</sup> to ensure that products sold to European consumers are safe. Common safety rules are there to protect consumers and help the functioning of the single market.

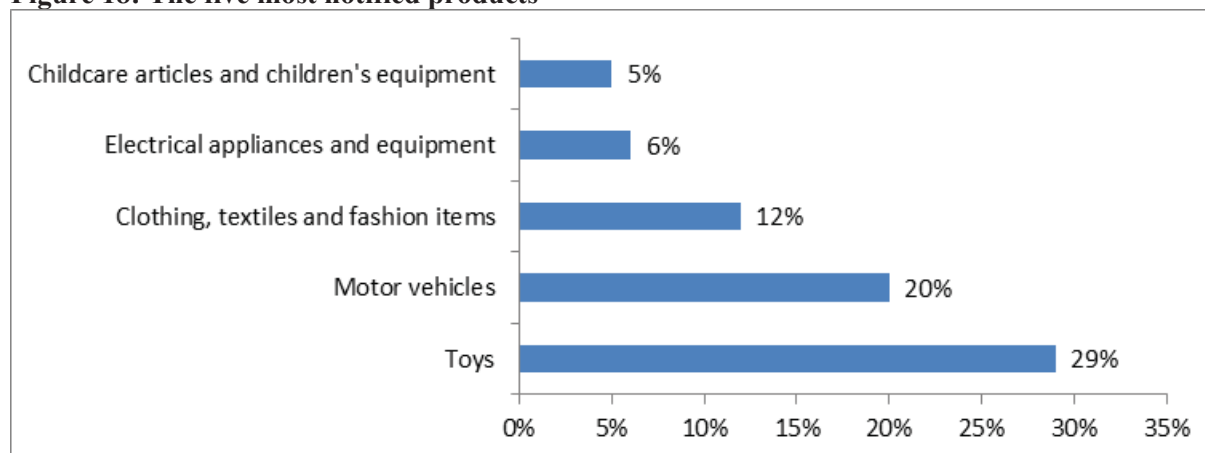
To ensure a high level of safety across the EU, the legislation creates a framework for national market surveillance authorities to cooperate and share information on unsafe products that have been detected. The aim is to prevent or contain risks to the extent possible and to establish common practices on how to respond when dangerous products are found.

A cornerstone of this cooperation is the Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products (RAPEX), in which national authorities<sup>38</sup> responsible for market surveillance in the countries forming the network<sup>39</sup> exchange information on unsafe products.

There is very limited comparable data on product safety available in the EU. However, the outcome of the market surveillance activities and measures taken on dangerous products notified in the Rapid Alert System can provide some indication on the safety of products. Some 2 000 alerts on unsafe products are circulated every year through the Rapid Alert System (2 201 alerts in 2017). This amounts to more than 25 000 alerts since RAPEX was first set up in 2003.

Since 2008, the most notified product categories include ‘toys’, ‘motor vehicles’, ‘clothing, textiles and fashion items’, ‘electrical appliance and equipment’ and ‘childcare articles and children’s equipment’. Typical risks notified are risks of injuries, risks related to chemicals and the risk of choking.

**Figure 18: The five most notified products**



Source: *Rapid alert for dangerous products — 2017 Annual Report*

<sup>37</sup> General Product Safety Directive, and Union harmonisation legislation which is applicable to so called ‘harmonised products’ (e.g. toys, electrical appliances etc.).

<sup>38</sup>

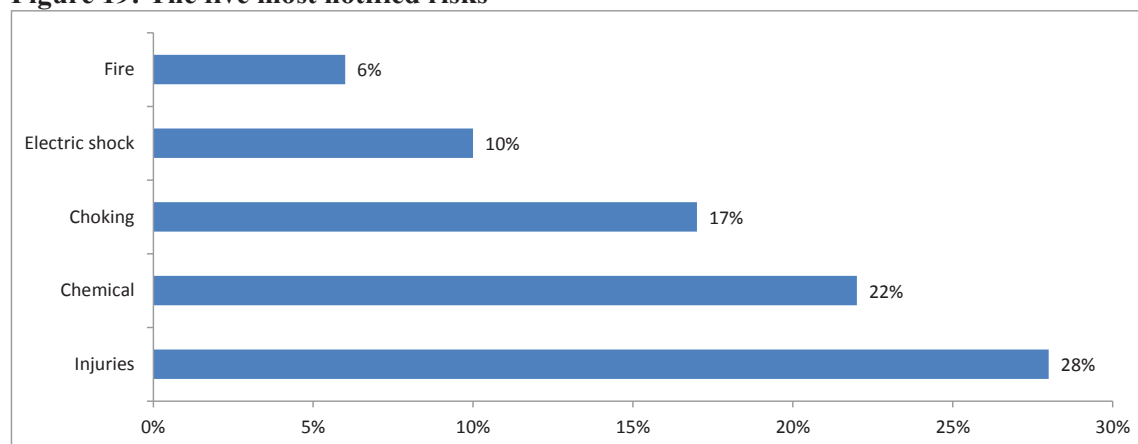
[https://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers\\_safety/safety\\_products/rapex/alerts/repository/content/pages/rapex/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumers_safety/safety_products/rapex/alerts/repository/content/pages/rapex/index_en.htm)

<sup>39</sup> 31 countries including the EU’s 28 Member States, plus EEA/EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.



National authorities have an obligation to follow-up on alerts about dangerous products<sup>40</sup> circulated in the Rapid Alert System, and to respond appropriately when they detect the same product on their national market. Authorities can then decide what action to take. For example, depending on the circumstances they can order the withdrawal of the unsafe products from the market, order the product's destruction, or recall products from end-users. Companies can also decide to take voluntary measures themselves if they discover a safety problem in one of their products already on the market.

**Figure 19: The five most notified risks**



Source: Rapid alert for dangerous products — 2017 Annual Report

For selected priority products, joint enforcement actions are coordinated every year. These joint enforcement actions are co-financed by the European Commission. During these actions national authorities visit manufacturers, importers or retailers to inspect and collect products. A sample of products is then tested in accredited laboratories and followed up by authorities on the basis of a common risk assessment jointly discussed by authorities. Every year, roughly five product-specific joint market surveillance actions are carried out<sup>41</sup> as well as transversal activities in which market surveillance authorities discuss emerging issues or common practices.

Finally, initiatives are also underway to adapt the product safety system to new channels of distribution as more and more European consumers buy products online. Online sales in the EU represented 20 % of total sales in 2016<sup>42</sup>. This percentage is likely to increase further in the coming years. In 2017, the Commission published a Notice on the market surveillance of products sold online that provides guidance to national authorities for the enforcement of existing product safety rules. The Commission is also engaged in setting up cooperation mechanisms with key online marketplaces to improve the safety of products sold online.

<sup>40</sup> The alerts are published on the website of the European Commission.

<sup>41</sup> In 2017, reports were released on the joint actions for safety barriers for children, toys, LED and CFL lighting, and power tools.

<sup>42</sup> Source: Eurostat [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/E-commerce\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/E-commerce_statistics)

### 3. ANNEX

#### 3.1. Market names

Market name	Definition
Airline services	Airlines
Alcoholic drinks	Alcoholic drinks — spirits, wine, beer
Bank accounts	Banking — current account, debit cards
Clothing and footwear	Clothing (including tailor-made goods) and footwear — children's clothing, women's clothing, men's clothing, sportswear, hats, clothing material, furs, protective clothing, handbags and accessories, children's footwear, women's footwear, men's footwear, sports footwear, other
Dairy products	Food — dairy products – milk, cheese, butter, yoghurt, cream, other
Electricity services	Electricity
Electronic products	Electronic goods (non-ICT/recreational) — DVD players-recorders, VCRs, TVs, CDs, Hi-Fis, non-portable CD players, media players, portable radios, cameras, video cameras, photographic equipment, CDs (blank), DVDs (blank), audio and video tapes (blank), other
Fixed telephone services	Fixed telephony services, other
Fuel for vehicles	Fuel for vehicles, petrol and diesel
Furniture and furnishings	Furnishings, furniture (upholstered furniture, non-upholstered furniture, beds and mattresses, kitchen furniture, fitted furniture, bathroom fittings, antiques, leather furniture, cots, high chairs, other nursery furniture, garden furniture, other), floor coverings (carpets, mats and rugs, laminates, ceramics, wood, linoleum, underlay, other), household textiles (bedding, cushions, curtains and blinds, furniture fabrics, other), glassware, tableware and household utensils (crockery, cooking and dining utensils, glassware, other)
Gas services	Gas
Holiday accommodation	Hotels and other holiday accommodation — hotels, other holiday accommodation (e.g. bed & breakfasts, youth hostels), caravan sites, camp sites
Home insurance	Insurance — dwelling

House and garden maintenance products	House maintenance and improvement goods, DIY materials, paint, wall coverings, fences, sheds, power tools (e.g. drill chainsaws), non-electrical tools, gardening equipment/tools (non-electrical), lawn mowers, other
ICT products	Information communication technology goods (ICT) — personal computers, self-built computers, computer accessories, printers and scanners, games consoles, portable games players, computer software, computer software upgrades, laptops, notebooks and tablet PCs, PDAs and smart phones, mobile phone devices, fixed phone devices, modems, decoders, other
Internet provision	Internet provision
Investment products, private personal pensions and securities	Banking — investments and securities, packaged investments, portfolio and fund management, private personal pensions, stockbroking and derivatives
Loans, credit and credit cards	Loans, banking — credit, credit cards, store cards, consumer credit, revolving credit
Meat and meat products	Food — meat, lamb, veal, pork, beef, poultry, goat, mutton, other
Mobile telephone services	Mobile telephony services, text messages, other
Mortgages	Banking — mortgages
New cars	New cars
Non-prescription medicines	Over the counter medication
Offline gambling and lottery services	Gambling and betting involving monetary value provided at a physical location — lotteries, casino games, poker games, bingo, sports betting (including horse and dog racing)
Packaged holidays and tours	Packaged travel & tours, other
Personal care products	Personal care — electrical appliances, cosmetics, toiletries (including diapers), wigs, hair care products, perfumes, electric razors and hair trimmers, hair dryers, curling tongs and styling combs, other
Personal care services	Personal care services — hairdressers, diet clubs/centres, beauty treatments, hair therapy, cosmetic therapy, nail shop services, spas, saunas, hammams

Postal services	Postal services — correspondence, packages, express mail and sale of postage stamps
Private life insurance	Life insurance — private life insurance that provides financial benefits to a designated person upon the death of the insured — including endowment insurance and annuities
Real estate services	Real estate agents and letting agents
Second-hand cars	Second-hand cars
Small household appliances	Small domestic household appliances — food-processing appliances, coffee machines, irons, toasters, grills, other
Spectacles and lenses	Spectacles, glasses, lenses, sunglasses, other
Train services	Railways
Tram, local bus, metro and underground services	Tram, local bus, metro and underground
TV-subscriptions	TV-subscriptions (not TV-licence fees) — cable TV-network-subscriptions, satellite-TV-subscriptions, digital terrestrial television subscriptions, telephone network/modem/internet/TV-subscriptions and other such services with an ongoing contract (subscription) (not including licensing fees for public service channels)
Vehicle insurance	Insurance — transport car, other road vehicle, boat, air
Vehicle maintenance and repair services	Maintenance and repair of vehicles and other transport — franchise garage/dealer, independent garage, road assistance, other
Vehicle rental services	Rental services — car rental, motorcycle rental, van rental, caravan rental, boat rental, other rental
Water supply	Water supply