

ACM 2016 Highlights

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Dutch consumers save EUR 790 million

ACM wishes to take action in those areas where it can truly make a difference for consumers and businesses. That is why we calculate how much our work has saved Dutch consumers. In 2016, that figure was approximately EUR 790 million. In addition, we study the effects of our oversight efforts. In 2016, for example, we looked into the use of 'rapid interventions' and the consumer awareness campaigns of our consumer information portal ConsuWijzer. And we held a conference on 'impact'. Among the attendees were other regulators and scholars from home and abroad, who all shared valuable insights about the possibilities, challenges and limitations of impact studies.



2

'Cartels never go unnoticed'

ACM has gone on the offensive against cartel agreements, also in the ports and transport sector. Cartels are illegal agreements between businesses in order to eliminate the competition. With our campaign 'Cartels never go unnoticed,' we have raised people's awareness of cartel agreements. The idea behind this campaign was: cartel agreements are concluded by real, actual people. So there are always people who know about these illegal agreements. We have called on these individuals to report any abuses that they know of. The number of tip-offs we received went up right after the launch of the campaign.



3

Fines on online stores

In 2016, ACM took action against various online stores in order to ensure that consumers would get their money refunded after cancellation of their purchases. We imposed fines totaling EUR 505,000 on five online fashion stores. On their websites, they provided consumers with insufficient information about cancellations. In addition, ACM imposed fines totaling EUR 500,000 on online stores and their executives for violating the rules on refunds when cancelling orders.



4

Healthier competition in ready-mix concrete sector

In 2016, ACM's efforts resulted in healthier competition in the ready-mix concrete sector, which is an important commodity in the construction industry. A substantial number of firms in this sector made commitments to ACM. For example, they promised to scale down collaborations. The likelihood of exchanging competition-sensitive information has thus been reduced. In addition, the commitments make it easier for new competitors to enter the market. As a result of our actions, we have taken away anticompetitive concerns in the ready-mix concrete sector. That is good for prices, quality, service, and innovation, which will ultimately benefit governments, businesses, and consumers.



5

‘Debt collection? Only pay if the facts are correct’

In 2016, ACM launched an awareness campaign to empower consumers against unfair practices in the debt collection industry. In the campaign ‘Debt collections? Only pay if the facts are correct,’ ACM and the Netherlands Authority for the Financial Markets (AFM) called on consumers to take action against unjust, incorrect or aggressive debt collection. ACM and AFM explain and enforce the rules in the debt collection industry. ACM investigated this industry because consumers had reported a lot of problems to consumer information portal ConsuWijzer. Unfair commercial practices substantially harm consumer confidence. With this campaign, we have informed many consumers about their rights, so they do not overpay for no reason.



6

Lower prices for sustainable energy

In accordance with the Dutch Energy Agreement, 16 percent of the Dutch energy mix must come from renewable sources by 2023. That is why the Netherlands wishes to generate more wind energy, including from offshore wind farms. ACM certified Dutch transmission system operator TenneT as the operator of the offshore grid relatively quickly. TenneT was thus able to make a swift start to executing its tasks: ensuring that the future offshore windfarms are connected in an efficient and timely manner. We also set the rules for determining the maximum revenues of TenneT for the period of 2017 through 2021. As a result, market participants know where they stand. That is also how we help achieve lower prices for sustainable energy.



7

ACM's decisions upheld in court

ACM also defends its decisions in court. By defending our decisions in court, we contribute to the development of the law. In 2016, several important cases were upheld in higher proceedings. The District Court of Rotterdam and the Dutch Trade and Industry Appeals Tribunal (CBb) ruled on 77 ACM decisions in 2016. Almost 80% of these rulings were in ACM's favor, in that the court ruled in ACM's favor on the most critical points in the case.



8

Record number of individuals have switched energy providers

In 2016, a record share of 16.4% of all Dutch consumers switched energy providers. Never before have so many consumers switched providers in a single year. Consumers can save a lot by switching. By shopping around, consumers stimulate energy companies to keep their prices and service competitive. That is why we find it important that consumers are able to compare offers properly. We have helped introduce the 'personalized offer.' With such personalized offers, we made it easier for consumers to compare prices.



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ACM sets the tariffs wherever there is insufficient competition

In 2016, ACM set tariffs in the following sectors: telecommunications, postal services, aviation, rail, maritime pilotage, and energy. Customers in these sectors are not always able to choose from different providers, which means they sometimes pay too much. ACM oversees all of these markets, making sure that providers operate efficiently, that their operations meet specific quality requirements, and that they do not charge too high tariffs for their services.



10

Sufficient dedicated mobile-phone codes for consumers

If you want to place a call, you need a phone number. ACM manages the supply of phone numbers in the Netherlands. We make sure that telecom providers assign the right numbers to their customers' devices. For example, in 2016 we prevented firms from incorrectly allocating premium-rate phone numbers, and consumers from paying too high tariffs. As a result of our efforts, sufficient dedicated mobile-phone codes remain available to consumers.



11

Healthy cooperation between hospitals

In 2016, mergers and collaborations between hospitals attracted a lot of attention. ACM assessed several mergers between big hospitals. We also carried out studies to gain more insight into the effects of hospital mergers on quality. In addition, we sought to clarify that competition law offers room for cooperation between hospitals provided that such cooperation was in the interests of patients and the insured. For example, 3 hospitals have been allowed to collaborate in the treatment of several rare types of cancer. Furthermore, we explained the opportunities that hospitals and insurers have for collaboration in the procurement of prescription drugs. As a result, they are able to negotiate more effectively with pharmaceutical companies, which ultimately benefits consumers.



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ACM monitors the trends on the parcel market

Dutch consumers continue to shop online in even greater numbers. The number of parcel deliveries has therefore grown tremendously over the past few years. The parcel delivery market is changing at great speed. For example, providers have concentrated their efforts on developing innovative delivery methods. And the prices in various market segments are constantly evolving. In 2016, ACM carried out a study into the parcel market. We mapped the market structure and determined the competitive positions of the different parcel services providers. From now on, we will continue to monitor the sector, and we will include this market segment in our annual monitor of competition trends on the postal services market.

