



Best Practices in Consumer Protection

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A regulator's perspective from Ibero-America

In Ibero-America, protecting the consumer is no longer a service — it is a legal mandate of the regulator

16

regulators from 16 countries

Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panamá, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay y Honduras.

13

have a statutory duty to protect energy consumers

The mandate sits in constitutions, electricity laws and consumer codes — rarely in a single instrument

100%

operate a dedicated unit for consumer queries and complaints

In the Dominican Republic this is PROTECOM, created by the General Electricity Law No. 125-01

The mandate exists everywhere. The difference between regulators is what they do with it.

Thirteen countries, one complaint agenda: the bill and the interruption

Reported main causes of consumer complaints in electricity

1

Billing and metering

High or erroneous bills, disputed readings, unbilled-energy recovery, improper charges. Reported by every country in the survey.

2

Continuity and voltage quality

Supply interruptions and voltage deviations — the leading cause reported by the Dominican Republic, together with high billing.

3

Commercial service and damages

Delays in new connections and reconnections, and compensation for damage to household appliances.

Why this matters

Liberalised and vertically integrated markets, high-income and middle-income economies, report the same grievances.

Consumer protection instruments are therefore far more transferable between jurisdictions than tariff or market design.

Complaint data is our most underused supervisory instrument

What regulators do with the information generated by consumer claims

83%

of regulators use complaint data for both rule-making and enforcement — not only to close the individual case

8%

have permanent access to the utility's commercial system. The large majority see it only during an inspection.

Where the rules already return money directly to the consumer



Source: ARIAE GTC study, sections 3.2 and 6.5. Percentages refer to the share of participating regulators whose rules provide for each type of direct refund or compensation.

The Dominican second instance, in numbers



Claims filed with PROTECOM and ruled upon by the regulator, 2020–2025

324,000+

consumer claims processed and decided by the regulator in second instance over six years

+76%

growth in cases resolved — from 42,593 in 2020 to 75,012 in 2025, through digitalisation and case-tracking reform

What consumers actually dispute

Excessive or estimated billing, and tariff misclassification



Irregularity reports and alleged power theft



Meter failures, voltage and service quality



Source: Superintendencia de Electricidad (SIE) — PROTECOM, Electricity Sector Claims in the Dominican Republic, August 2026. Claims distributed across the three distribution companies: EDEESTE 51%, EDESUR 32%, EDENORTE 16%.

The root cause is not the bill. It is the absence of trust.



Quality of service is the first step — trust is the second, and it has to be built

Step 1 — Quality of service

Reliable supply is a precondition. Without it nothing else is credible.

Step 2 — Trust

Nobody gives trust to a utility or a regulator. It is earned, and it is built.

Trust is not declared — it is constructed. The regulator sets the conditions under which that construction is possible.

Trust is built on four regulatory pillars

1

Education

The consumer must understand the bill, the tariff and their own consumption, and also his rights and duties — rulings and information should be taught, not only decided.

2

Transparency

Real-time access to information relevant to consumers, and public reporting on each company's performance. This means understanding the different types of customers in the country and creating channels that give them easy access.

3

Enforcement

Measurable obligations the regulator can supervise and sanction — otherwise transparency is only disclosure.

4

Social accompaniment

Not every consumer can use a digital channel. Where trust is weakest it is rebuilt face to face — field engagement, bill literacy in the community, agreements before enforcement..

The instrument: Example a digital file for every consumer

One design choice that serves transparency, trust and supervision at the same time

What it is

Every transaction between the consumer and the company — readings, bills, payments, claims, inspections, disconnections — visible to that consumer in real time.

The consumer stops depending on the company's account of what happened. The record is shared and the capacity to have a clear accountability of the relation with the provider.

Why it works on both sides



For the consumer → trust

Visibility removes the asymmetry that turns every disputed bill into a confrontation. Fewer disputes are born.



For the regulator → supervision

The same data yields clear KPIs to verify, in real time, whether the company complies with the rules we set.



For the sector → less conflict

Trust is what converts a claims-handling system into a functioning commercial relationship.

Transparency → Trust → Less conflict · and the same data gives the regulator the KPIs to enforce

What I would ask this room to consider



1

Claims are a symptom, conflict is the illness

Measure the conflict, not the throughput. A rising caseload resolved efficiently is still a failing relationship.

2

Regulate the relationship

Technical quality governs the electrons. Commercial quality governs where the conflict is actually generated.

3

Build trust by design

Education, transparency and enforcement are regulatory instruments — not communication objectives.

The question I bring to this panel

How can digitalisation and artificial intelligence reduce conflict between consumers and providers — raising commercial service quality and strengthening consumer protection at the same time?

How can we include the different types of consumers in this new digital reality to protect their rights?



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Thank you!