Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

DAF/COMP/GF/WD(2026)8

Unclassified English - Or. English

4 November 2026

DIRECTORATE FOR FINANCIAL AND ENTERPRISE AFFAIRS
COMPETITION COMMITTEE

Global Forum on Competition

Assessing the impact of competition authorities' activities – Contribution from Ireland

- Session IV -

11 December 2026

This contribution is submitted by Ireland under Session IV of the Global Forum on Competition to be held to be held on 10-11 December 2026.

More documentation related to this discussion can be found at: oe.cd/gfc26.

Mr Antonio Capobianco [Antonio.Capobianco@oecd.org]

JT03597346

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Ireland

1. Executive summary

1. This contribution has been prepared by the Irish Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) for discussion at the OECD Global Forum on Competition meeting on 10 - 11 December 2026. Although there is no legislative requirement for the CCPC to undertake impact assessments, it has made a strategic decision to do so. The CCPC has committed to measure the impact of all its intervention activities (both competition enforcement and consumer protection) where methodology and data permit. To date, the CCPC has published two ex-ante impact assessment reports, conducted an informal ex-post review of the immediate effects of a prohibited merger, and commissioned an ex-post evaluation of its assessment of barriers to entry and expansion in previous merger decisions. The CCPC's experience demonstrates that impact assessment can be progressively embedded within a competition authority even in the absence of a statutory mandate. The CCPC is achieving this through sustained commitment, supported by a clear strategic objective, dedicated resources, and strong executive leadership support.

2. Implementing a culture of impact assessment has presented challenges. In the absence of a formal legal mandate, impact assessment activities have had to compete with core enforcement, advocacy, and regulatory functions for attention and resources. Progress was also constrained by limited specialist expertise, data availability requirements, and the practical difficulty of dedicating staff time to doing impact assessment alongside operational priorities.

3. To overcome these challenges, the CCPC has engaged with other competition authorities across the world to exchange experience on methodologies, constraints, and underlying assumptions. It has also drawn on international good practice and guidance published by the OECD, DG Comp, and UK CMA (OFT). The CCPC has adopted an approach that integrates impact assessment into its broader management and decision-making framework rather than treating it as a standalone reporting exercise. This has involved fostering an impact assessment mindset across the CCPC and developing analytical and data collection capabilities among case handlers. Enforcement teams have also been actively consulted in developing evaluation processes. Impact assessments are used to promote learning and continuous improvement, support accountability and advocacy, and strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

4. Several key lessons have emerged from the CCPC's experience. First, strong institutional commitment is essential where impact assessment is not a statutory function. Second, dedicated resources and analytical capacity are critical to sustaining progress over time. Most importantly, visible and sustained support from senior management is essential for success. Executive leadership sponsorship helps secure resources, reinforces the importance of the work across the CCPC, and embeds impact assessment within strategy formulation and work planning, and continuous improvement processes. Finally, independent external review is a valuable component of a robust impact assessment framework. External experts can examine the authority's data, assumptions, methodologies, and estimates, providing insights into areas for improvement and strengthening the credibility of the findings.

2. Activities of the CCPC and approach to impact assessment

5. The CCPC is the statutory body responsible for enforcing and promoting compliance with competition, consumer protection, and product safety laws in Ireland. The CCPC's mission is to use its knowledge, skills and statutory powers to promote competition and enhance consumer welfare. To achieve this, the CCPC undertakes a wide range of activities, including enforcement actions, merger control, consumer awareness and financial education initiatives, market studies, and policy advocacy. The CCPC also performs statutory regulatory functions including the authorisation and registration of credit intermediaries and has an increasingly important role in overseeing certain aspects relating to digital markets and data.[1]

6. The CCPC has proactively and strategically chosen to assess the impact of its intervention activities, even though it is under no legal obligation to do so. To support this approach, the CCPC has allocated dedicated resources to impact assessment and encouraged directors to embed it within their workstreams. This enables the CCPC to measure the benefits its interventions deliver for consumers and the wider economy, and to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions. It also helps ensure that resources are directed towards areas where they can deliver the greatest impact. This approach demonstrates the CCPC's commitment to transparency, accountability, value for money, and continuous improvement.

7. The CCPC assesses impact at different stages of the intervention cycle. For example, before deciding which market study to undertake, the CCPC conducts an ex-ante assessment to evaluate the potential benefits and/or avoidable detriments of an intervention. Where possible, this assessment quantifies the direct financial savings for consumers and/or the losses that consumers would likely have incurred in the absence of the intervention. In addition, following the completion of an intervention, such as a merger review, the CCPC may also undertake an ex-post assessment to determine whether predictions were realised and to identify lessons that can inform future improvements to the merger review regime.

8. The CCPC has completed and published two ex-ante impact assessments[2] and has committed to conducting four-yearly moving-average reviews.[3] The CCPC has also undertaken an informal ex-post review of a prohibited merger decision[4] and commissioned an ex-post study examining entry and expansion outcomes in previous merger decisions.[5] This study is currently underway and is expected to be published later this year.

9. In 2024, the CCPC published its study to understand consumer detriment in Ireland.[6] The study estimated the magnitude of financial detriment experienced by consumers across different sectors and provided an insight into non-financial benefits such as preventing or reducing consumer detriments. These include physical harm, stress and

[1] https://www.ccpc.ie/about-us

[2] See, https://www.ccpc.ie/about-us/advocacy-and-research/research/publication-details/ccpc-impact-assessment-report-2017-2020

[3] See, https://www.ccpc.ie/about-us/advocacy-and-research/research/publication-details/ccpc-ex-ante-impact-report-2021---2024

[4] See, https://www.ccpc.ie/about-us/our-impact/daa-carpark-block-case-study

[5] See, https://www.etenders.gov.ie/epps/cft/prepareViewCfTWS.do?resourceId=7771467

[6] See, CCPC-Understanding-Consumer-Detriment-in-Ireland.pdf

loss of confidence in products and brands that could result from illegal and unfair commercial practices by traders.

3. Usefulness of impact assessment

10. Quantifying the direct financial benefits to consumers arising from the CCPC's interventions provides a strong basis for assessing the impact of its activities. The results of the impact assessment have been used to: (i) raise awareness of the value for money of the activities of the CCPC; (ii) engage with key stakeholders and advocate for change to make markets work better; (iii) identify areas for improvement; and, (iv) support the case for better resource funding for the CCPC to ensure effective and sustained service delivery by the CCPC. In essence, this demonstrates to policymakers the significant contribution the CCPC makes to improving consumer welfare in Ireland.

11. The CCPC's 2017 to 2020 impact assessment report estimated the benefits arising from its competition enforcement interventions.[7] The report was published on the CCPC website, shared with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and presented to a European Commission workshop.

12. The CCPC's 2021-2024 impact assessment report expanded the scope of the 2017 to 2020 study to include consumer enforcement interventions, as well as the provision of information and advice to consumers. The report significantly increased awareness of the breadth and impact of the CCPC's work and has supported its advocacy and engagement efforts with policymakers. It was jointly launched by two Ministers from the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment[8], discussed at an Oireachtas committee (an Irish parliamentary committee)[9], and published on the CCPC's website.[10] The report's findings also contributed to broader European Commission estimates of the financial benefits delivered to consumers across Europe due to competition law interventions.[11]

4. Methodologies, assumptions, and data limitations

13. As noted earlier, a key element of the CCPC's strategic direction is to measure the impact of its interventions. Achieving this requires robust methodologies, realistic assumptions, and reliable data. This section outlines, in turn, the methodologies, assumptions, and data used to estimate the ex-ante direct financial benefits to consumers

[7] See, https://assets.ccpc.ie/data/docs/default-source/about-us/rai-publications/2026/research-report-impact-assessment-2021-2024.pdf

[8] See, https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/news-and-events/department-news/2026/january/20260130.html

[9] See, https://www.ccpc.ie/news-and-media/news/article/2026/04/15/ccpc-opening-statement-to-the-joint-oireachtas-committee-on-enterprise--tourism-and-employment

[10] Ibid, 3.

[11] https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/document/download/36f6eb40-6174-4e9e-b3bb-0d99d8519131_en?filename=kd0126010enn_competition_policy_brief_estimating_customer_savings.pdf

arising from the CCPC's interventions. It also highlights the data limitations that constrained the scope of the assessment.[12]

4.1. Competition Interventions

14. The CCPC's 2017 to 2020 impact assessment report estimated the benefits arising from competition enforcement interventions. The methodology and assumptions used were informed by the OECD 2014[13] guidance and guidance published by the United Kingdom's Competition and Market Authority (UK CMA) (OFT 2010).[14]

15. Since publication of the 2017 to 2020 report, an increasing number of competition authorities have undertaken ex-ante impact assessments, contributing to the development of international good practice. In 2025, the CCPC participated in the OECD's review of member states' approaches to impact assessment, which was undertaken to inform an update of the OECD 2014 guidance. The review identified growing convergence around several key principles, including methodological simplicity, the use of conservative estimates, reliance on case-file evidence, and avoiding undue emphasis on monetary estimates alone.[15]

16. Against this backdrop, the CCPC applies the core methodology used in the 2017 to 2020 report while incorporating case-specific information where available. The CCPC approach also reflects the OECD's emphasis on methodological simplicity and conservative estimation. Benefits are estimated on an ex-ante basis and complemented by benefit-to-cost ratios to demonstrate value for money.

17. In line with these principles, the CCPC applies the standard formula shown in Box 1 to estimate the ex-ante direct financial benefits to consumers arising from competition law enforcement interventions. This approach is consistent with methodologies used by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Competition (DG Comp), the UK CMA, and other competition authorities.

Box 1. Assessing the Impact of Competition Law Enforcement Interventions

Consumer Benefit = Affected Turnover × Price Increase Removed (or Negative Effect Avoided) × Expected Duration of the Negative Effect

18. The CCPC recognises that robustness of any ex-ante assessment depends on the availability of case-specific information. Where evidence on price effects or duration is available, it is used directly. However, the CCPC may not have empirical data on the actual

[12]The methodologies, assumptions, and data used in ex-post evaluations will be set out in a separate report, which is currently under study.

[13] OECD, 2014, Guide for helping competition authorities assess the expected impact of their activities.

[14] OFT, 2010, A guide to OFT's impact estimation methods, [ARCHIVED CONTENT]

[15]https://www.oecd.org/en/events/2025/06/assessing-the-impact-of-competition-authorities-activities.html

price effects and duration and will mainly rely on the case type specific assumptions set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Assumptions used for assessing impact of competition interventions

Intervention	Affected Turnover	Price effect (Low)	Price effect (High)	Expected Duration (Low)	Expected Duration (High)
Cartel Cases	Total turnover of investigated companies	10%	15%	3 yrs	6 yrs
Antitrust cases, i.e., Abuse of Dominance/RPM/non-cartel horizontal cases	Turnover of investigated companies	5%	10%	3 yrs	6 yrs
Merger Cases	Turnover of companies in the affected market(s)	3%	5%	2 yrs	3 yrs

Source: The CCPC

19. The assessment applies a duration of three years for all merger cases included in the study, as, absent the CCPC's intervention, the concerns regarding substantial lessening of competition would have persisted beyond two years. Similarly, for antitrust cases, a duration of three years is used, except where case file information indicated otherwise.

4.2. Consumer Enforcement

20. Both competition and consumer protection interventions are intended to enhance consumer welfare. Competition interventions do so by preventing harm arising from restrictions on competition, while consumer protection interventions promote compliance with consumer law and empower consumers to exercise their rights. These interventions include enforcement measures, such as compliance notices, fixed payment notices, and prosecutions, as well as the provision of information and guidance.

21. Although competition and consumer protection interventions operate through different tools, both seek to prevent consumer detriment and enhance consumer welfare. Given the more established methodology for assessing the impact of competition law enforcement, the CCPC considered whether a similar approach could be adapted to estimate the benefits of consumer protection interventions.

22. Relying on this analogy is supported by the shared objective of both regimes. In both cases, interventions seek to prevent consumer detriment and improve market outcomes. Unfair commercial practices may lead consumers to make purchasing decisions that they would not otherwise have made. Likewise, exploitative abuses of dominance can result in consumers paying higher prices or being subjected to unfair terms and conditions. Therefore, the CCPC considered whether the methodology used to estimate benefits arising from abuse of dominance cases could be adapted for interventions addressing unfair commercial practices.

23. Recognising that unfair commercial practices may not generate effects directly comparable to abuses of dominance, the CCPC adopted conservative assumptions regarding the magnitude and duration of the harm avoided. Having reviewed the case sample and consulted the CCPC external expert reviewer, the CCPC concluded that assumptions aligned with the lower end of merger control estimates provide an appropriately conservative basis for estimation. Accordingly, a two-year duration is applied, while affected turnover is measured by reference to the turnover of the infringing

trader in the relevant market or product category. The adapted methodology is set out in Box 2.

Box 2. Consumer Benefits from Interventions Against Unfair Commercial Practices

Consumer Benefit = Expected Price Effect × Affected Turnover × 2 Years

4.3. Consumer information and advice

24. In relation to benefits arising from provision of information and advice, the CCPC adopted the methodology developed by OFT (2009).[16] This methodology is simple, transparent, and capable of being adapted using available CCPC data. The methodology comprises four elements: (i) the number of consumers provided with information or advice (N); (ii) the proportion reporting that the advice helped resolve their issue (0.58); (iii) the average reported monetary benefit (£584); and (iv) a one-year benefit period.

25. The CCPC adapted this methodology because it aligns closely with available Irish data and can be applied in a transparent and replicable manner. It is also conservative, as benefits are attributed only where consumers report a satisfactory outcome. Combining various data sources produces a simple and conservative estimate of consumer benefits. The adapted methodology is provided in Box 3.

Box 3. Consumer Benefits from Information and Advice

Consumer Benefit = N × 0.51 × €263.60

4.4. Cost-benefit analysis

26. Having estimated the benefits associated with each intervention category, the assessment compares those benefits with the resources required to deliver them. Intervention costs are calculated using data provided by the CCPC's Finance Unit, and the Human Resources Division. The data comprise payroll and overhead costs apportioned according to staff involvement. Benefit-to-cost ratios are then calculated by dividing the estimated benefits by the corresponding intervention costs.

4.5. Inflation adjustment and discounting

27. The CCPC has adopted a more evidence-based approach to inflation and discount rate adjustments. Specifically, benefits are not adjusted where the difference between the average inflation rate and the discount rate is not significantly different from zero. Consequently, the estimated benefits in the 2021-2024 impact assessments were not adjusted for either inflation or discounting. The CCPC also noted that the OECD does not explicitly require such adjustments for ex ante assessments, and that neither DG COMP nor the Italian Competition Authority (AGCM) applies them.

[16] Trading Standards impact (OFT) (2009), An evaluation of the impact of the fair trading work of local authority Trading Standards Services in the UK, [ARCHIVED CONTENT]

4.6. Constraints

28. The CCPC intends to expand the scope of its next ex-ante impact assessment report to include additional intervention areas. As with most ex-ante assessments, the scope of the CCPC review was constrained by methodological and data limitations. These constraints were particularly significant in relation to research and market studies, as well as market surveillance and product safety interventions.

29. Since the publication of the 2021-2024 impact assessment report, the CCPC has worked with its external expert reviewer to develop methodologies for extending impact assessment to these and other intervention areas. Significant progress has been made, including the collection of relevant data and the development of preliminary estimates. These methodologies and estimates remain subject to further review and validation before they can be incorporated into future assessments.

5. Key challenges and lessons learnt

5.1. Mandate and strategic commitment

30. A key challenge for competition authorities is that impact assessment often falls outside their formal statutory functions. As a result, it can struggle to attract attention and resources when competing with core enforcement, regulatory and advocacy activities. The CCPC's experience highlights the importance of making a deliberate strategic decision to embed impact assessment within normal business operations. Making impact assessment a core measurement tool helps ensure that it is viewed as an integral part of the CCPC's work rather than an optional or ad hoc exercise.

5.2. Institutional set-up, leadership and case-handler engagement

31. Strong leadership support is critical to the successful implementation of an impact assessment framework. In the absence of a statutory obligation, sustained commitment from senior management was necessary to establish the importance of impact assessment and secure buy-in.

32. The CCPC's experience demonstrates that impact assessment gets support when it is viewed as a management tool rather than only as a reporting requirement. Senior management sponsorship helped to create a shared understanding of its purpose, supported the integration into strategic and work planning, and facilitated access to the required resources.

33. Engagement from case handlers and operational teams is equally important. These staff often hold critical knowledge about case objectives, theories of harm, evidence gathered during investigations, and the practical context in which interventions were undertaken. Their involvement can improve the quality and accuracy of assessments and help ensure that lessons learned are incorporated into future case work. At the same time, securing engagement can be challenging where staff are focused on current enforcement priorities or where evaluation activities are perceived as additional administrative burdens. Clear communication of the purpose and benefits of impact assessment is therefore essential to encourage participation.

5.3. Resources and data constraints

34. Resourcing and access to data are significant practical challenges. Effective impact assessment requires dedicated time, analytical expertise, and access to reliable data, all of which must compete with other operational priorities. These challenges can be particularly acute where specialist knowledge is concentrated among a small number of staff, data collection and access systems were not originally designed to support this type of work.

35. A key lesson from the CCPC's experience is that meaningful progress is difficult to achieve without dedicated resources. While impact assessment had long been recognised as a priority, significant progress was only made once dedicated staff time and analytical expertise were allocated to the work. Considerable effort was also required to work with case handlers to identify, collect and make relevant data accessible for evaluation purposes. For authorities considering the introduction of impact assessment, early planning for resource requirements and data availability and access are essential to support effective implementation.

5.4. External expert review and independent scrutiny

36. Independent review can strengthen the credibility and robustness of impact assessments by providing an external perspective on methodology, assumptions and findings. External scrutiny can help identify methodological weaknesses, challenge underlying assumptions, and highlight opportunities for improvement. It can also enhance stakeholder confidence in the results, particularly where assessments are intended to demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions or support accountability and advocacy objectives.

37. The CCPC's experience suggests that, where resources permit, independent expert review can be a valuable complement to internal expertise and can contribute to the continual refinement of impact assessment methodologies and practices.