A Potential Bilateral Consumer Enforcement Cooperation Mechanism for B2C E-Commerce between the UK and Türkiye

Introduction

As Türkiye and the United Kingdom pursue negotiations towards a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA), both Parties have a shared interest in deepening cooperation in digital trade and ensuring consumer trust in cross-border e-commerce.

With B2C (business-to-consumer) digital transactions expanding rapidly, protecting consumers from unfair practices, fraud, and low-quality goods or services is vital for the integrity and sustainability of digital commerce.

Despite significant growth in e-commerce between the UK and Türkiye, the absence of a structured bilateral enforcement mechanism leaves consumers vulnerable to unresolved complaints and undermines confidence in cross-border purchases.

Addressing this gap would not only enhance consumer trust, but also promote fairness and stability in the digital marketplace, benefiting legitimate businesses in both countries.

Objectives

Türkiye is interested in including in the FTA a framework for **mutual cooperation and coordination in consumer protection enforcement** related to **cross-border B2C e-commerce (with some possible sectoral exclusions)**. The goal is to build a **transparent, accessible, and fair digital trade environment** through shared institutional mechanisms that:

1. **Facilitate information exchange** between national consumer protection bodies on complaints, investigations, and systemic risks in cross-border e-commerce;
2. **Enable the referral of consumer complaints** to competent authorities in the other Party in a structured and timely manner;
3. **Promote mutual recognition or cooperation between Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) bodies (if needed after establishment of such bodies)** to ease access to redress for consumers;
4. **Support coordinated actions or awareness-raising campaigns** in response to common enforcement challenges (e.g. misleading advertisements, counterfeit goods, or unsafe digital products);
5. **Enhance trust** among consumers and traders by signaling that both countries uphold high standards of consumer protection in the digital space.

Proposed Mechanism: Key Features

Türkiye proposes the establishment of a **bilateral consumer enforcement cooperation mechanism**, embedded in the FTA's digital trade and/or consumer protection chapter, with the following elements:

- **Designated Contact Points**: Both Parties would nominate competent consumer protection authorities to serve as liaison bodies for the referral and coordination of cross-border complaints.
- **Information Sharing**: The mechanism would facilitate non-confidential exchange of information about consumer complaints, enforcement actions, and regulatory developments concerning cross-border e-commerce.
- **Complaint Referral Protocol**: A formal channel for the referral of unresolved consumer complaints between Türkiye's and the UK's consumer protection authorities, with agreed response timelines.
- **ADR Cooperation**: Encouragement of cooperation and, where appropriate, mutual recognition between the Parties' ADR bodies or online dispute resolution platforms.
- **Confidentiality and Legal Compliance**: All cooperation would be subject to each Party's national laws on data protection, privacy, and legal privilege.

International Best Practices and Precedents

The proposed mechanism is consistent with international best practices as promoted by the **OECD**, **UNCTAD**, and **ICPEN (International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network)**. Türkiye notes the precedent of **MOUs signed between the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and the UK Competition and Markets Authority** in enhancing cross-border enforcement cooperation in consumer protection.

Even though there is no exact counterpart institution of UK International Consumer Center (UKICC), Türkiye is also interested in exploring how UKICC cooperates with its counterparts in other countries (eg in the EU, Norway, Japan or Mongolia).

Conclusion and Next Steps

Türkiye views consumer trust as a cornerstone of inclusive and resilient digital trade. The proposed bilateral cooperation mechanism would demonstrate Türkiye's and the UK's joint commitment to protecting consumers and encouraging responsible e-commerce across borders.

Türkiye invites the UK to consider this non-paper as a foundation for discussion during the FTA negotiations and stands ready to work toward a mutually beneficial solution that strengthens consumer protection and enhances digital trade between our two countries.

Based on the intentions set out in this non-paper **Türkiye will prepare an official negotiating text for "Online Consumer Protection" Article** (the placement of which will be discussed further).

In order to intensify our work on such a text we would kindly ask the UK side to share with us the texts of any similar agreements/arrangements (including the mutual recognition agreements or service contracts of UKICC with its foreign counterparts).