

**INSTITUTO DO CONSUMIDOR-PORTUGAL  
CONSUMER INSTITUTE**

**ANNUAL REPORT ON CONSUMER POLICY  
2002**

**I – INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The **Consumer Institute (IC)** is the public institute responsible for promoting policy for the protection of consumer rights and co-ordinating and implementing the measures, which will protect them, informing and educating the public and supporting consumer organisations. It depends on the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Minister Assistant to the Prime Minister.

(Website site: [www.consumidor.pt](http://www.consumidor.pt))

The IC developed the following activities according to the Government Programme:

- Drawing up of proposals for legislative measures to protect consumer interests;
- Participation at international level in the definition and harmonisation of policy for consumer protection within the framework of the European Union and within the context of market globalisation;
- Support of individual consumers, particularly providing information services and receiving and forwarding complaints;
- A Centre of Documentation available to the public;
- Campaigns to inform and create awareness among the general public;
- Promotion of training programmes and the production of didactic-pedagogical resources;
- Promotion of self-monitoring and self-regulation;
- Technical and financial support for consumer organisations;
- Technical support for Consumer Conflict Arbitration Centres and for Local Consumer Information Centres (CIAC);
- Analysis, monitoring and control of advertising.

The **Consumer Institute** provides technical, administrative and logistic support to the **National Consumer Council (CNC)**, created by Article 22 of Law No. 24/96, of 31<sup>st</sup> July and regulated by Decree-Law No.154/97, of 20<sup>th</sup> June.

The CNC is an independent body within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, responsible for pedagogical and preventative consultation and action, and acting in all matters related to consumer interests. Its task is to operate as a forum of permanent debate and dialogue between the government, the consumers and the organisations representing other interest groups in the Consumer area.

The Minister Assistant to the Prime Minister presides over the CNC, that is composed by the President of the Consumer Institute, by representatives of consumer associations, consumer co-operatives, trade union associations, the National Association of Municipalities, family associations and entrepreneurial associations from the agricultural, commercial, industrial and service sectors.

Activities of this Council are available in the following Website: [www.consumidor.pt](http://www.consumidor.pt)

The Consumer Institute gives also technical, administrative and logistic support to the **Safety Commission**, created under Decree-Law No.311/95, of 20<sup>th</sup> November, which transposed Council Directive No.92/59/EEC of 29<sup>th</sup> June 1992, on the general safety of products, to internal Portuguese law.

## II – SAFETY OF PRODUCTS

1. The **Safety Commission (CS)** is competent to take decisions on the danger of products put on the market; to control compliance with general safety obligations; make proposals to the member of the government responsible for the area of consumer protection about measures needed to improve prevention of and protection against risks which may be presented by products put on the market; inform the competent entity about dangerous products which are put on the market or supplied, for legal action, and give opinions on questions regarding the safety of products, submitted to the Commission by the member of the government responsible for consumer protection.

In 2002, the cases submitted for the appraisal of the Safety Commission were related to: lighters; candles; articles of decoration; air fresheners; packaging; cleaning fluids and detergents; inflammable and corrosive liquids; carbon monoxide; carnival articles and fireworks; medicines; pesticides; articles for children; automobiles; medium-voltage power transmission lines; scooters; products for cooling drinks; physiological saline solution; articles for practising martial arts; imitation firearms; cosmetics and burns from hot liquids.

A leaflet was published on toys and stickers were produced on the prevention of burns by hot liquids, to inform and alert consumers. Based on information on accidents, collected in the EHLASS system between 1987 and 1999, a study was made on the Evolution of Accidents at Home and during Leisure activities.

2. The Consumer Institute did comparative tests in the area of consumer health and safety protection, and tested and communicated results on the following products: research on the residues of pesticides in carrots; GMO research on sausages; on the quality of pre-packaged smoked cod; the safety of gas heaters; the safety of children's high chairs and the quality of all-purpose cleaning products.

## III- PROTECTION OF THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF CONSUMERS

### 1) Legislative Bills

In 2002, the Consumer Institute drew up and proposed to the government various legislative bills in the following areas: prohibitive action, guarantees in the contracts signed by consumers, imitation firearms, sales to consumers and the distribution of toys in slot machines.

### 2) Transposition of Directives

The Consumer Institute monitored the revision of the Directive on the safety of toys and of the directive on consumer credit and the proposal for the regulation of sales promotion in the internal market.

3) **Notes** were issued to the Media about subjects, which included the Observatory on Advertising, World Consumer Day, and the dangers of summer, toys and carbon monoxide.

4) In the **Insurance** area, the Consumer Institute signed an agreement for technical co-operation with the Portuguese Insurance Institute and collaborated with this Institute to publish "Car Insurance".

The Consumer Institute also published the "Insurance Consumer Guide" and "Insurance Vocabulary – Understand the language of your insurance company".

### 5) Observatory on Advertising

The Consumer Institute fulfilled its role as controller of advertising activity by creating the Observatory on Advertising, which began its activities in October 2001, in collaboration with Superior School of Social Communication.

The Observatory monitors the advertising messages put on the national market, through the different means of support (written press, television, radio, cinema, direct mailing, Internet and outdoors), and compares them with the legal provisions on form and content.

This monitoring is transformed into periodical reports, and makes it possible to detect advertising trends, identify new forms of advertising, assess the conformity of advertising to the legal regulations which are applicable and carry out the psycho-sociological analysis of advertising.

A weekly analysis was made of different advertising messages on varied themes, in particular: health allegations about foodstuffs; medicines not subject to medical prescription; sales and rental of premises for habitation; telesales; food products for children and young people; advertising for motor vehicles; educational courses; alcoholic beverages; identification of advertising on the Internet; advertising involving behaviour which is prejudicial to the safety and health of the consumer; the use of minors in advertising and courses in alternative medicine.

In 2002, in the course of its activity, it observed 4143 advertising messages carried in the mass media, Internet and outdoors, and 446 advertising leaflets. In this field, were monitored 735 hours of television, 144 hours of radio, 630 headlines in the national press, 279 national websites and portals and 223 outside advertising supports.

This work detected various infractions of the advertising regulations, the most important being those on the principle of advertising identifiability, the requirements of advertising courses, the general prohibition of advertising for gambling and rules for advertising on television.

The Advertising Observatory of the Consumer Institute also received 273 complaints about issues relating to advertising.

In the area of advertising control, legal proceedings were initiated for 204 cases of illegal advertising offences.

#### **6) Observatory on Consumer Endebtmnt (OEC)**

The main objective of monitoring the activities of the Observatory is to research the problematic of consumer endebtmnt and the over-endebtmnt.

Among the Observatory's competencies are the gathering and analysis of economic and socio-legal information on consumer credit and the carrying out of technical studies, which make it possible to characterise and learn about the main trends in family endebtmnt and over-endebtmnt.

The work of the Observatory focuses particularly on the Portuguese reality, but also studies the same phenomena in other countries.

The Observatory also publishes a newsletter and its latest work and recommendations are available on the website: <http://www.oec.fe.uc.pt>

7) In the area of **financial products and services**, the Institute published the Taxation Guide for 2002 on financial products, to inform consumers about the tax benefits available to them, which produce effects on the income declared in the respective year. A study was also carried out on mortgage credit, to assess the quality of information provided and the extent to which credit institutions comply with the European Code of Voluntary Conduct with regard to pre-contractual information in mortgages.

### **IV – INFORMING AND EDUCATING CONSUMERS**

The education and training of consumers are essential components of consumer protection policy.

The following activities are relevant:

### **1) Consumer Education Network**

The Consumer Education Network gives priority to co-ordinating efforts, sharing resources, preparing teaching materials and promoting the dissemination of information to the different bodies and members of the Network, for promoting the education of the consumer. The founders of the Network are the Consumer Institute, which is its co-ordinator, the Ministry of Education, the Portuguese Association for Consumer Protection (DECO), the General Union of Consumers (UGC) and the National Federation of Consumer Co-operatives (FENACCOOP).

In 2002, many public sessions of work and thematic training were held among the members of the Network and various specific decentralised programmes were organised.

New educational material was developed on Food and Product Safety, with a view to their use in schools and several types of pedagogical material were produced.

### **2) Internal and external training programmes**

Training programmes were held on over-indebtedness, on the legal aspects of advertising, essential public services, sustainable consumption and the education of the consumer. Many of these programmes were held in primary and secondary schools.

### **3) Production and dissemination of informative and pedagogical material**

The following Guides were published: Guide to choosing healthy food - reading the label; Guide to the safe use of gas in the home; User Guide – the Access of consumers to Justice; Guide to Essential Public Services – Some answers to frequently asked questions, and lastly the Study called Failure to Comply with the Sales Agreement. Brochures were published “Toys – There’s playing and playing – There’s laughing and...crying?” and “Growing up safely to grow up happily”.

## **V – RESOURCE AND COMPLAINT MECHANISMS**

1. Structures for resolving consumer conflict include the **Consumer Conflict Arbitration Centres**, some of which have general competence within a specific geographical area and others, which work in specific areas of activity.

They have a common characteristic of being structures which aim to solve differences rapidly, directly and economically, either by informing the consumer, by mediating between parties with a view to conciliation or, in cases which are not resolved in any other way, through an arbitral judgement taken by the judge-arbitrator, with the same legal power as a legal judgement in a magistrates court. They include:

Vertical Arbitration Centres (with national scope):

- Arbitration Centre for the Car Sector;
- Car Insurance Information, Mediation and Arbitration Centre

Horizontal Arbitration Centres (with regional, district or municipal scope):

- Lisbon Consumer Conflict Arbitration Centre,
- Coimbra Consumer Conflict Arbitration Centre;
- Porto Consumer Information and Arbitration Centre;
- Vale do Ave Consumer Conflict Arbitration Centre;
- Vale do Cávado Consumer Information, Mediation and Arbitration Centre;
- Algarve Consumer Information, Mediation and Arbitration Centre;

Arbitration centres are not the only bodies for resolving conflicts, and there are other ways which may be used by consumers such as the “**Judge of Peace**” (tribunals with the same powers as the courts) or, in more serious cases, the courts themselves.

2. In the other field, and specialising only in mediation between parties, **Consumer Conflict Mediation and Monitoring Unit (UMCAC)** of the Superior Law School of the "New University of Lisbon" works in close co-operation with the Consumer Institute.

3. The **Observatory on Consumer Conflict** gathers data on conflict from the Consumer Institute and the Municipal Consumer Information Services.

4. In 2002, the Consumer Institute received 5875 requests (requests for information, alerts and complaints): 1814 in writing (letter or e-mail), 2574 by telephone and 1487 in person.

Complaints in writing mainly concern: Essential Public Services (water; gas; electricity and telephone), Cable Television, Insurance, Financial Services, Mobile Communication Service, Repairs, Transport, Home sales, Vehicles and Accessories and problems with the use of the Internet.

### **5. The European Consumer Centre (CEC)**

The European Consumer Centre of Portugal, created on the joint initiative of the Consumer Institute and the European Commission, belongs to a European Network of Information Centres whose main objectives are to:

- Provide information and answer questions on consumption in Europe;
- Mediate in transnational conflict.

The CEC provides information on consumer rights in every Member State and, in cases of need, mediates transnational consumer conflict. In 2002, 333 requests for transnational information were satisfied and several cases were submitted for mediation.

The CEC produced different types of informative material, such as the "Guide to Consumer Rights", the CD-Rom "Electronic Commerce – Everything you need to know to buy safely on-line", and the leaflet "Legalising a Car in Portugal".

For further information see <http://www.consumidor.pt/cec/>

### **6. The European Extra-judicial Network for Consumer Conflict Resolution (EEJ-NET)**

EEJ-NET is a network of bodies for the extra-judicial resolution of consumer conflict, created jointly by the European Commission and the Member States and also by Iceland and Norway, with the objective to solve consumer conflict between a consumer of a Member State and a supplier of goods or services established in another Member State.

The objective of this Network is to motivate and make easy consumer access to the justice system, that is to say, access to the effective exercise of their rights through connection to a "Network" of bodies for the extra-judicial resolution of litigation which use mechanisms for resolution that are simple, fast, efficient and not very expensive.

The European Extra-judicial Network, consisting of "Points of Contact" established in each Member State, provides information and assistance to consumers through national points of contact called Clearing Houses - CH. Through the European Consumer Centre, the Consumer Institute was named as the national clearing house (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 18/2001, of 21<sup>st</sup> February 2001).

EEJ-NET is complemented by the Fin-Net, that is the European Network responsible for the resolution of consumer litigation concerning financial products and services, being the Portuguese Clearing House the Lisbon Consumer Conflict Arbitration Centre.

In November 2002, jointly with the Arbitration Centre for the Car Sector, the network held a Conference on Extra-judicial Consumer Conflict Information and Resolution, an event in which various Clearing Houses (CH) from other countries of the EU participated and created the national website of the Network.

7. The Consumer Institute is a representative on the **Arbitration Committee** of the **Directorate-General for Tourism**, under Decree-Law No.12/99, of 29<sup>th</sup> February, regarding “Travel Agencies”.

8. Created on the initiative of the local authorities, within their specific competencies, with the support of the Consumer Institute the **Local Consumer Information Centres (CIAC)** promote information locally on consumer protection and on the mediation of consumer conflict, which take place in their area of action.

These structures are a good way to obtain information on different subjects related to consumer relations, to give advice on practical matters, and to ensure mediation in the resolution of conflicts.

9. Consumer organisations have different structures used by citizens to defend their specific interests as consumers. They are non-profit organisations with independent legal status, and their main objective is to protect the rights and interests of consumers in general, and of their members in particular. In Portugal, the following associations are of general interest: the Portuguese Consumer Protection Association (DECO), the General Union of Consumers (UGC) and the National Federation of Consumer Co-operatives (FENACOOOP), equivalent to consumer associations.

## **VI – RELATIONSHIP OF CONSUMER POLICY TO OTHER POLITICAL AREAS**

Consumer policy has interdisciplinary relationship with other political areas, particularly with justice, tourism, the environment, health, food safety and economics, reinforcing its horizontal nature in this way and recognising the transversal nature of questions relating to consumer protection policy.

Within this framework, of note is the participation of the Consumer Institute in the “People Project” in October 2002. This is a European Project whose objective is to assess the levels of atmospheric pollutants in the outside environment and inside buildings, and the degree to which people who live and/or work in some European cities are exposed to them. The impact that various atmospheric pollutants will have on people’s health is in question here, and benzene was chosen for the first phase (for further information see [www.people-pt.net](http://www.people-pt.net)).

### **A) REGULATORY BODIES**

The regulatory bodies are responsible for monitoring a certain sector of activity and, in particular, for regulating any contradictory interests. It should be noted that some of these structures also function to control the market and its way of operating.

These institutions are recent in Portugal, which shows that a great qualitative increase has been taken in the way the public authorities, and the operators as well as consumers see their complementary presence in the same economic and social space. The creation and development of regulatory functions has brought undeniable benefits to consumers, being protected their rights, and has legitimated respect for their interests.

#### **1. The Regulatory Body of the Energy Sector (ERSE)**

This body regulates the electricity and natural gas sectors in Portugal. It functions as arbiter within the framework of the action of different operators, acting completely independently and guaranteeing the atmosphere of trust necessary for the functioning of the sector.

It is a corporate body under public law, has administrative and financial autonomy and owns its assets. Its objectives are to protect the interests of consumers regarding prices, services and

quality of provision and to inform them about the efficient use of energy, to stimulate competitiveness, and to guarantee objective regulatory rules which lead to transparency in the trading relations between operators.

ERSE receives complaints about the activity that regulates, and, in particular, complaints from consumers who consider that their fundamental rights have been violated in the contract they have signed for the supply of energy. It also has a service for “Competition and Consumers”. It also provides the necessary support to the Assembly of the Republic (Portuguese Parliament) and to the government for drawing up energy policy.

The Consumer Institute takes part in ERSE’s Advisory and Price Committees, and is responsible for co-ordinating the latter. In these bodies participate representatives of consumer associations, the municipalities and companies for the production, transport and distribution of energy.

For further information see the website: <http://www.erse.pt>

2. The **National Communications Authority (ANACOM)** is the entity, which regulates telecommunications and postal communication in Portugal, and is responsible for regulating, supervising and representing these two sectors.

A corporate body under public law, ANACOM is administratively and financially autonomous and owns its own assets.

In addition to assisting and informing the general public, it also has its own channels for dealing with specific matters of interest to consumers, such the audio text service ([audiotexto@anacom.pt](mailto:audiotexto@anacom.pt)).

The **Consumer Institute** participates in the Advisory Committee, as well as representatives from consumer associations, telecommunications operators and other government entities related to the sector.

For further information see <http://www.anacom.pt>

3. The **Bank of Portugal (BP)**, officially a central Bank since 1975, is the institution, which supervises the banking system in Portugal. It has been part of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) since June 1998, has pursued the objectives and responsibilities of that system in the country and, in particular, its most important objective – to maintain price stability through monetary policy.

Another important responsibility of the Bank of Portugal is to regulate, control and promote the smooth running of the payment systems within the scope of its participation in ESCB.

Though it does not intervene directly to resolve problems, which may arise between credit institutions and their clients, the BP accepts any complaints, which are submitted. In these cases, they are redistributed to the competent departments, which, in their turn, are responsible for interacting with the credit institutions.

The Bank of Portugal and the Consumer Institute are monitoring the process of revising the Directive on Consumer Credit.

For further information see <http://www.bportugal.pt>

4. The **Securities Market Commission (CMVM)** is the institution in charge of regulating and supervising the functioning of the securities markets and the activity of all entities that operate in these same markets.

It is a corporate body under public law, has administrative and financial autonomy and owns its own assets.

The CMVM regulates the functioning of the stock markets, the holding of public tenders, the activity of all agents in the markets and other material related to the stock markets, and also the agents that operate there. It is also responsible for co-operating with national and international authorities, particularly those that supervise and regulate the financial system, such as the Bank of Portugal and the Insurance Institute of Portugal.

The CMVM provides an Investor Support Service to provide any information necessary, receive complaints and reports and promote training initiatives.

For further information see <http://www.cmvm.pt>

5. The **Insurance Institute of Portugal (ISP)** is the Portuguese body, which controls and supervises insurance and reinsurance activity, pension funds and insurance mediation.

Two main responsibilities are important:

- Normative functions, which consist of drawing up technical regulations and collaborating in the creation of laws, which regulate the access, and exercise of the insurance pension fund activities;
- Supervisory functions, which mean monitoring the operators and overseeing compliance with the legislative and regulatory rules governing the sector.

The Consumer Institute collaborates with the Insurance Institute of Portugal to guarantee that the rights and interests of consumers are protected. The ISP has a Consumer Support Service which:

- Provides information on insurance activity;
- Issues opinions on the complaints, which are presented;
- Processes Civil Liability Car Insurance refused by insurance companies;
- Provides information on the name of insurers implicated in traffic accidents. In order to resolve conflict in this area, consumers may use the Car Insurance Information, Mediation and Arbitration Centre (CIMASA) and Arbitration Centre for the Car Sector (CASA).

For further information see <http://www.isp.pt>

6. The **National Civil Aviation Institute (INAC)** is the body that supervises, regulates and inspects the civil aviation sector in Portugal. It is responsible for guaranteeing that all activities in the area of civil aviation are in well planned, which means that it has to regulate and control the conditions under which these activities develop, guaranteeing the highest standards of quality.

Among the body's responsibilities, of note are those related to verify:

- Conditions of passenger comfort; and
- The well being of the users of air transport and the speed of the airport formalities.

When dealing specifically with passenger rights for air transport, INAC always has powers of intervention for conflict between the consumer and the transport company in cases of:

- . Overbooking;
- . Delays or cancellation of flights; and
- . Losses, miscarriage and interference with baggage.

The INAC has its own telephone line for the submission of complaints. Citizens may use the Directorate-General for Tourism or the Consumer Institute for the same purpose.

For further information see <http://www.inac.pt>

7. The **National Pharmacy and Medicines Institute (INFARMED)** is a public institute of the Health Ministry, which is competent to assess, regulate and control activities related to both human and veterinary medicines and products for the protection of public health.

As an authority, this body has several services to assess medicines which are to be put on the market, in terms of public health, and gives its opinion of the regulation of research, production, distribution, marketing and use of medicines.

This service is also responsible for monitoring accidents resulting from the use of other products such as medical devices or cosmetics.

Among INFARMED's other competencies is the control of advertising for medicines and medical services; the Consumer Institute participates in the National Medicine Advertising Board, the board also including representatives from consumer associations, industry, pharmaceutical, trade and health sector.

For further information see <http://www.infarmed.pt>

8. The **Water and Waste Regulating Institute (IRAR)**, was created in 1997 and was regulated by a law published the following year, and has broad responsibility for the promotion of the quality of multimunicipal and municipal water systems for public consumption, of urban waste water and of solid urban waste.

IRAR regulates and provides orientation in the urban water and solid waste sectors to protect the interests of the consumers of the systems, and also monitor the economic sustainability of these same systems.

In this context, the IRAR has an important role in gathering information about the way multimunicipal and municipal water and solid urban waste systems function, information which is sent in by the management bodies, and includes the following aspects:

- . Cover of the population or access to public systems;
- . Regularity of the services provided;
- . Quality of the water distributed;
- . Quality of liquid effluents and mud;
- . Quality of the final destination of solid waste; and
- . Environmental impact of the systems and their functioning.

The Consumer Institute takes part in the Advisory Committee of the IRAR, which also has representatives of consumer associations and economic activities, from the health, and environment sectors, companies contracted by municipal systems and municipalities, which use multimunicipal systems.

For further information see <http://ambiente.gov.pt>

## **B) CONTROLLING BODIES**

These are government bodies which legally control a certain area of activity important for consumers and which monitor strict compliance with the applicable legislation.

These bodies are an important point of reference for consumers, given the role they play for the functioning of institutions and of the market. They generally provide support directly to the consumer.

In some cases they even have powers of criminal policing, and are competent to investigate and begin criminal proceedings, particularly for the protection of public health, as is the case of the Inspectorate-General for Economic Activity.

The following are of note for their specific competence in areas with a greater connection to the interests of consumers:

1. The **Food Quality and Safety Agency (AQSA)** is a government body whose objective is to guarantee high standards of food quality and safety, through the rigorous and independent

scientific assessment of existing risk and its communication, with the active participation of consumers, economic and social agents and the scientific community.

It is a corporate body under public law, which is technically independent, has administrative autonomy and owns its own assets and, during the setting up phase, is directly accountable to the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, while also jointly supervised by the Minister Assistant to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Science and Higher Education within the areas of their specific competencies.

Included in its scientific assessment and communication of risks in the whole food chain during the setting up phase, the Agency is responsible for:

- Promoting programmes of a preventative and informative nature on risks to public health;
- Monitoring the management of the rapid alert network for food safety;
- Issuing recommendations, as national food authority, to the entities whose activities may contribute to the quality of food safety;
- Monitoring national technical participation in the different bodies of the European Union and in international organisations, for food safety and quality, of which Portugal is a member, specifically to control regulations and procedures;
- Promoting and supporting studies and scientific research work in science and technology connected to all of the sectors within the food chain in co-operation with universities and other national and foreign institutions for research and development;
- Collaborating with the European Authority for Food Safety in the area for which it is responsible.

The Committee setting up the Agency includes a Chairperson, a scientific committee, an advisory committee and a food safety risk information group.

2. The **Directorate-General for Energy (DGE)** is the Portuguese government body responsible for the creation, implementation and assessment of policy for the energy sector. The objectives of the Directorate-General naturally include the need to make citizens aware of the importance of energy issues, within the framework of economic and social development desired for the country, informing them about the instruments available for the implementation of political decisions and disseminating the results of their monitoring and implementation.

The DGE is responsible for drawing up the Regulation for the quality of service in the electricity sector and guarantees the technical qualification of those responsible for gas networks, for the installation, assembly and maintenance of lifts and for electrical installations.

For further information see <http://www.dge.pt>

3. The **Directorate-General for the Monitoring and Control of Food Quality (DGFCQA)**, which is part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Fisheries (MADRP), is a public body acting in the area of hygiene and sanitary control and the quality of agro-food products and the fisheries, for the protection of public health and consumers.

It is responsible for controlling compliance with regulations for the production, processing and marketing of foodstuffs, co-ordinating the official control of foodstuffs (in co-operation with the other competent entities) and supporting the standardisation, certification and guarantee of the quality of agro-food products. It has a technical testing laboratory for carrying out its functions.

The DGFCQA develops its activities either directly or in co-operation with the Regional Directorates of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Fisheries.

Further information can be found on the website: [www.min-agricultura.pt/](http://www.min-agricultura.pt/)

4. The **Directorate General of Tourism (DGT)** is a government body, within the Ministry of the Economy, which is responsible for defining and monitoring the execution of national policy on

tourism. The DGT is an administratively and financially autonomous central operational service for co-ordination and support.

The articulation of DGT activities with other bodies, especially those accountable to the same ministry, translates into a co-ordination of intervention with the General Inspectorate for Economic Activity for competencies in relation to carrying out inspections of tourist activity. In addition, of note are the wide competencies legally recognised for the Municipal Councils for all matters relating to the control of restaurants and drinking establishments and tourist and hotel undertakings.

In particular, the DGT has important competence for the licensing and control of hotel units.

An office for consumer support was created within the framework of the DGT competencies for tourist consumer protection, which is particularly responsible for:

- Centralising the complaints presented, directing them forward to the competent departments;
- Teaching tourist consumers about their rights;
- Developing forms of support to the consumer;
- Promoting the publication of guides and manuals considered important for consumer protection, to be distributed among national and foreign tourists.

For further information see: <http://www.dgturismo.pt>

5 – The **General-Inspectorate of Economic Activity (IGAE)** is a central service of the Ministry of the Economy which functions like the criminal police. In this role, it has important functions for the prevention and repression of anti-economic misdemeanours and especially the control of the general safety of products.

Among its competencies, it is the duty of the IGAE to co-operate with the legal authorities, investigate and begin proceedings for offences within its field of operation and to guarantee compliance with the laws on the requisition, distribution and utilisation of goods and services.

The IGAE has a vast range of responsibilities. In the food domain, it is particularly responsible for controlling the economic agents for the hygiene of establishments (restaurants, coffee bars and other establishments) to prevent situations involving dangerous products (food which has deteriorated).

The IGAE is also responsible for controlling the market in terms of unfair competition and counterfeit of registered labels.

The IGAE has its head office in Lisbon, and works over the whole continental territory through three regional directorates, which include delegations in all district capitals.

Complaints about any matters under the IGAE's competence may be presented personally or by telephone at the head offices of the district delegations and at posts in the Citizens Advice Bureau of Lisbon and Porto.

For further information see <http://www.igae.pt>