

# Development of a **consumer protection policy for telecommunications**



<p><b>What we were asked to do</b></p>	<p>We were asked by the telecommunications regulator in Qatar to draft a consumer protection policy applying to telecommunications operators in their relationships with their customers.</p> <p>These rules, in the form of a formal policy, would bind operators to a set of minimum standards covering a wide range of issues. The policy includes rules on advertising standards, sales practices, minimum requirements for consumer contracts, billing processes and clarity, access to emergency services, disconnection of customers, privacy, provisions for customers with disabilities, access to customer premises, and operator internal complaints processes.</p>
<p><b>How we approached the project</b></p>	<p>This project was undertaken in several stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A review of obligations on operators from the existing law. The policy we developed reflected, and in some cases built upon existing obligations</li><li>• A review of consumer protection rules in comparable jurisdictions to develop a view of good practice</li><li>• The drafting of the rules themselves, including a public consultation process with operators, and</li><li>• Advice on how best to implement the policy, including advice on formal enforcement mechanisms, and how to improve the existing consumer protection system.</li></ul> <p><i>continued over</i></p>

<b>Our findings</b>	<p>Best practice consumer protection frameworks typically have four parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a core set of consumer protection rules that are set by the regulator for operators to meet</li><li>• a complaints system that enables individual consumers to seek redress and lets the regulator see trends in compliance and take enforcement action where appropriate</li><li>• regular monitoring and reporting of important industry statistics and service quality measures</li><li>• periodic review of the rules themselves.</li></ul> <p>In this particular case, existing consumer protection rules were spread across multiple legal instruments. There was value for operators and for consumers in a single statement of the consumer protection rules that apply.</p> <p>It was also helpful for the regulator to signal a regular review of the rules based on how they are operating in practice and on trends in consumer complaints, and the areas in which the regulator intends to develop rules in the future.</p>
<b>Link to the policy</b>	<p><a href="http://www.ictqatar.qa/en/documents/document/consumer-protection-policy">www.ictqatar.qa/en/documents/document/consumer-protection-policy</a></p>