

# Financial consumer protection responses to COVID-19

## Support for financial consumers

25 March 2020

The COVID-19 emergency will affect the lives of many people around the globe. There are a number of ways that policy makers, public authorities and financial services providers can safeguard the interest of financial consumers who may be experiencing financial difficulties and help them to manage their personal finances. These options are not recommendations but can assist policy makers in their consideration of appropriate measures to help financial consumers, depending on the contexts and circumstances of individual jurisdictions, during this difficult period. These options are consistent with the G20/OECD High Level Principles on Financial Consumer Protection that set out the foundations for a comprehensive financial consumer protection framework.



**FLEXIBILITY ON LOAN REPAYMENTS:** financial consumers facing financial hardship as result of COVID-19 could be offered flexibility relating to their loan obligations, including options such as deferral of repayments (e.g. mortgage payment holidays), extension of loan terms and/or waiving of fees and charges, together with clear information about the implications of such options for the loan overall.

**SUSPENSION OR DEFERRAL OF DEBT COLLECTION ACTIVITIES:** policy makers and public authorities could work with banks and other lenders to consider suspending or deferring debt collection activities, including repossession and foreclosure procedures, in relation to financial consumers facing financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19.



**EMERGENCY ACCESS TO FUNDS:** policy makers and public authorities could work with banks, fund managers and other financial services providers to consider granting emergency access to funds held in term deposits and other savings and investments products for financial consumers experiencing financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19. Where relevant, this could include emergency access to funds held in retirement savings funds, taking account of the longer term implications of doing so.



**ACCESS TO BANKING SERVICES:** policy makers and public authorities could work with banks to ensure continued access to banking services using a range of options (including where available branches, telephone, internet and mobile banking), taking account of the access needs and limitations of some financial consumers.



**INSURANCE POLICY EXCLUSIONS:** policy makers and public authorities could work with insurance companies to ensure that exclusions in insurance cover relating to COVID-19 are clearly communicated to existing and new policyholders, including at renewal.



**INSURANCE CLAIMS:** policy makers and public authorities could work with insurance companies to ensure that insurance claims are treated fairly, recognising changes in circumstances that financial consumers may be facing.



**INFORMATION FOR FINANCIAL CONSUMERS AND RETAIL INVESTORS:** policy makers and public authorities could provide information for financial consumers about how to manage their personal finances and investments, and what actions they need to take if they are facing financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19.



**WARNINGS AGAINST SCAMS:** policy makers and public authorities could work with the financial services industry, law enforcement and other agencies to warn financial consumers against financial scams, such as phishing scams, operating in the context of the COVID-19 emergency and advise financial consumers how to protect themselves.



**CLEAR COMMUNICATION:** the implementation of any of the above or other measures should be clearly communicated to financial consumers by various channels, so they know what options are available to them and what the implications or consequences may be for their overall financial situation.



Find out more about OECD work on financial consumer protection at [www.oecd.org/finance/financialconsumerprotection.htm](http://www.oecd.org/finance/financialconsumerprotection.htm)

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