

Annual Report 2009

UK European Consumer Centre

www.ukecc.net



UK European Consumer Centre

**Feel confident when you shop
in another Member State,
just as you do at home**

Introduction

2009 was an excellent year for the whole of the UK European Consumer Centre (UK ECC). It was a year in which we were both busy and productive and a year in which we collaborated and cooperated with other organisations to work for the benefit of consumers.


2009 was our second full year of operation. We are part of the European Consumer Centre Network (ECC-Net). It has 29 centres covering Europe, plus Iceland and Norway. In the UK, the service is delivered by the Trading Standards Institute (TSI), so providing a pan-European dimension for the TSI.

We know a lot more about UK consumers and their cross-border purchasing problems, as well as the problems European consumers experience when shopping in the UK, now that our service has completed its second full year. We have used this knowledge and insight as building blocks to expand our literature to reflect real problems and solutions which resonate with consumers and which give practical advice and guidance to all those who need it.

I hope that you find this Annual Report both useful and informative. These pages provide a flavour of the work we do, the achievements we have accomplished and the daily challenges we face in working with you to resolve your problems.

Throughout 2009, we strived to provide the best advice, support and assistance to as many consumers as we could. It was a year in which we are proud to say that we cemented our position as champion of UK consumers across Europe. Our staff are trained, dedicated and passionate about consumer advice. We know that every complaint is important to you - the consumer - and we always do our best.

2010 promises that with the UK European Consumer Centre, you can feel just as confident when you shop in another Member State, as you do at home. You are not alone, even when you cross borders!



Susan Tolman
UK ECC Information and Communications Officer



Executive summary

The UK ECC has experienced a shift in the balance of types of cases our advisors have handled between 2008 and 2009.

In 2009 we handled both a larger number and a bigger proportion of the more in-depth cases (Simple and Normal Complaints) over 2008, growing from 44% of our total number of cases to 57% – further details can be found on pages 9 to 11.

There are a number of subject areas worth mentioning specifically. Between 2008 and 2009, Simple Complaints about Restaurants, Hotels and Accommodation Services rose from just over 43% to just over 50% of the total – further details can be found on page 10.

And there was an increase in the number of Normal Complaints relating to Resale (of Timeshares and related/similar products). They rose from 9.87% of the total in 2008 to 14.14% in 2009 – further details can be found on page 14.

Normal Complaints about UK traders have shot up by just under 39% - see more on page 14.

A larger portion of all of the cases shared with the UK ECC involving European consumers are conducted by means of E-commerce (buying online), equivalent to almost three quarters.

Although the proportion of UK consumers using E-commerce as a means to shop in Europe rose from 2008 to 2009, this is less popular than with European consumers. Just over a quarter of complaints from UK consumers use E-commerce – further details can be found on page 19.

Our programme to educate consumers before they make purchases in an endeavour to try to prevent problems later on continued in 2009: we spread the word by providing travellers with advice and guidance at a promotional stand at Ebbsfleet International Train Station; engaged with Trading Standards officers by staging a seminar and information stand at TSI Conference and worked with our partner organisation the European Consumer Centre for Services (ECCS) to implement best practice to ensure consumer confidence when shopping cross-border. We also achieved a high level of media coverage - online, broadcast and newspapers - from the issue of media statements and press releases.

We also launched an e-newsletter, which is proving to be well-subscribed – further details can be found on page 28.

We have continued to support the European Commission and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) by taking part in workshops and projects targeted at addressing consumer problems and sharing best practice across the network.

Information on the UK ECC

The Network

The UK European Consumer Centre (UK ECC) is part of the European Consumer Centre Network (ECC-Net). It is composed of 29 centres covering the European Union, plus Iceland and Norway.

The ECC-Net is a vision which became reality. It was created by the Commission to provide a service to all European consumers who shop 'cross-border' within the EU. The Commission wants consumers to have as much confidence shopping anywhere in the whole ECC-Net area as they do at home.



Each centre provides advice and information to consumers in their home country, about the purchase of goods and services from a different Member State. If there is a dispute with a trader based in a different country, the home country European Consumer Centre can offer support and assistance in contacting the trader in an attempt to resolve the complaint amicably.

The aim of the UK ECC is to help as many UK consumers (who encounter problems with a trader based in Europe) to achieve a resolution as possible: a refund, replacement, repair, or cancellation of their contract. The main areas in which we operate include: buying goods and services, online shopping, internet auctions, holidays, timeshare and holiday clubs, air travel.

The collaborative nature of ECC-Net is illustrated by the fact that the UK ECC also receives cases from European consumers having problems with a UK trader. These cases are shared with the UK ECC by our European counterparts, and every effort is made to contact the trader in order to resolve the complaint.

The ECC-Net service is of an advisory nature. We provide information and advice on your rights as a consumer shopping in Europe and, where appropriate, we can offer further help by contacting the trader on your behalf. But unfortunately we do not have any enforcement powers, which consumers sometimes find disappointing. Therefore if a trader decides to ignore our communications or disagrees with our point of view, we are unable to force them into a particular course of action.

As our network has no enforcement powers, each centre works hard to form close relationships within its home country with organisations that do. The UK ECC provides Trading Standards with information which allows them to complete intelligence-led enforcement for UK consumers. We also work with the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) organisation in the UK - the Office of Fair Trading. The CPC exchanges information and cooperates with counterparts in other Member States in order to combat cross-border consumer fraud.

The UK ECC is co-funded by the European Commission and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. It is delivered by the Trading Standards Institute at its head office in Basildon, Essex.

Further information on the ECC-Net can be found on the European Commission's Europe website at

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/redress_cons/

The Team

UK ECC Manager	Jed Mayatt
UK ECC Executive	Elisabetta Sciallis
Information and Communications Officer	Susan Tolman
Consumer Advisor	Laura Fergusson
Consumer Advisor	Adam Mortimer
Consumer Advisor	Sonia Payne
UK ECC Administrative Assistant	Danielle Ancient

Our staffing was boosted in the middle of 2009 with the welcome addition of an Information and Communications Officer, an important role in raising the profile of the UK ECC with the public, providing literature for consumers and liaising with key stakeholder bodies.

At the end of 2009, our Administrative Assistant left to take up a role as Consumer Advisor with the newly formed European Consumer Centre for Services, which provides consumers with pre-purchasing advice when employing unfamiliar services providers in Europe - www.ukecc-services.net. We were fortunate to be able to fill this vacancy with someone who performed a similar role within the Trading Standards Institute.

The changes to the team offer fresh experience and input to the UK ECC, adding to the solid foundation from which we offer a professional and informative service for UK consumers, a service which gives consumers confidence that they can obtain correct and relevant advice for their particular situation.

Delivered by the Trading Standards Institute

The UK ECC is delivered by the Trading Standards Institute (TSI) at its head office in Basildon, Essex - effectively providing the Institute with a pan-European dimension. The Trading Standards Institute is the professional and membership body for trading standards professionals and Consumer Direct professionals, working across public, private, and third sectors.

TSI is the representative and influencing body for Trading Standards for the UK and Europe. It has a 128 -year pedigree and its members are predominantly throughout the UK, but there is also a steady international membership.

The Trading Standards Institute has a long-established history delivering solutions in the public sector, government and local authority regulatory services; providing ICT and online solutions; delivering information and secure communication for professionals; business and consumer advice; and education and training products. Some solutions have been developed through the investment of TSI, others through successful bidding for government funding.

Solutions delivered include: consumer rights leaflets and business publications on compliance with trading regulations and food safety hygiene laws; syndication to local authorities for supply to their citizens and the local business community; classroom training and e-learning for businesses and staff on compliance with trading laws and underage sales, protection of consumers and improved customer service delivery; and publication of product recalls and alerts.

Our work: cases

Data gathered in our first two full years of operation is enabling us to build up a picture of trends and contribute to a greater understanding of the problems consumers face. In this section we look at the statistical information from 2008 and 2009 about our cases and compare results.

All of our cases are recorded on the IT-Tool, a piece of software provided by the European Commission for use by each centre within the ECC-Net. We have examined statistics on the types of problems that involve UK traders as well as UK consumers.

The UK ECC deals with three different types of cases – Information Requests, Simple Complaints and Normal Complaints. All cases that are recorded are done so using a classification system called COICOP¹. There are three levels to COICOP - the top level provides an indication of the area of the complaint and the following two levels break it down further into a specific topic.

Information Requests

These cases are very basic enquiries from consumers - normally there is no specific complaint or trader involved, just a request for information. To complete an Information Request, the consumer is provided with information relevant to their case, which could be advice on a European Directive or perhaps contact details of another specialised organisation that could help them further (if the case is outside our remit).

In 2008 we handled 4,107 Information Requests. In 2009 this figure dropped sharply to 2,567 (a reduction of 37.50%), possibly a reflection of an increase in the number of both Simple Complaints and Normal Complaints. Information requests are, generally speaking, the fastest type of case to handle.

¹COICOP - Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose - is used to classify both individual consumption expenditure and actual individual consumption.



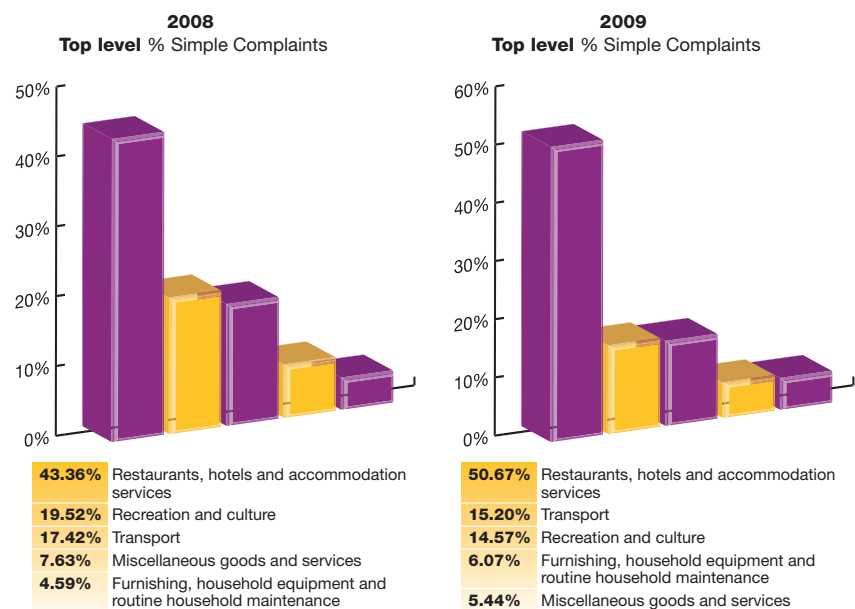
Simple Complaints

The next level of enquiry is a Simple Complaint. This is when a consumer is in dispute with a trader, but is not sure of his or her rights or what course of action to take. The UK ECC provides first-tier advice to the consumer so that they are able to proceed.

In 2008 we handled 2,546 Simple Complaints from UK consumers. In 2009 this figure had increased slightly to 2,684 (an increase of 5.42%).

Examining the top level of classification of our cases, we can see what type of enquiries the UK ECC received and the differences between 2008 and 2009.

Simple Complaints from UK consumers: top five areas covered



These figures show that the category which topped the chart for Simple Complaints - Restaurants, Hotels and Accommodation Services - was the same in 2009 as in 2008, but some of the other positions changed. Timeshares and Holiday clubs, contained within this classification, is one of our largest areas for enquiries and complaints. In 2009, Transport became the second highest area which consumers enquired about and Recreation and Culture slipped to third place. Furnishing, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance rose to fourth place, with Miscellaneous Goods and Services coming in fifth.

Normal Complaints

The top level of enquiry is a Normal Complaint. These are enquiries when the consumer has tried to resolve their problem but attempts have failed – the trader does not respond or does not agree. In these situations, the UK ECC will offer further assistance for the consumer and will share the case with the ECC where the trader is based.

The UK ECC advisors do not only handle Normal Complaints from UK consumers in dispute with a European trader, but also cases shared with them from another ECC where a European consumer is in a dispute with a UK trader.

Cases from UK consumers

In 2008 there were 671 Normal Complaints recorded on the IT Tool by the UK ECC. In 2009 this figure had risen to 785 (an increase of 16.99%).

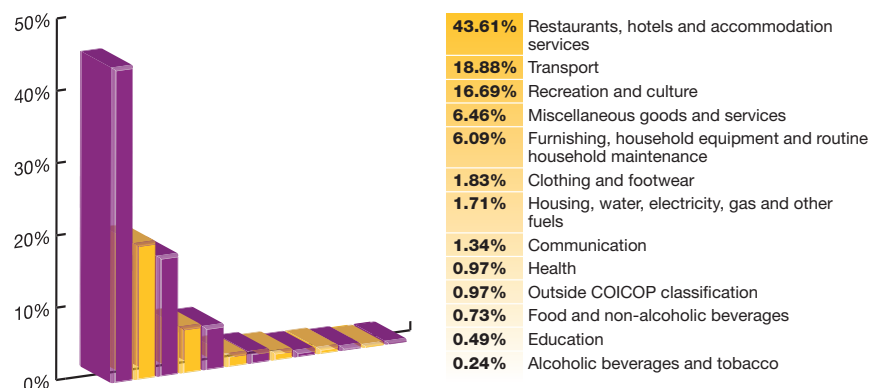
We have examined the types of Normal Complaints received from UK consumers by looking at the top level of classification and the more detailed third level. We have made comparisons between 2008 and 2009.



Normal Complaints from UK consumers: top level classification

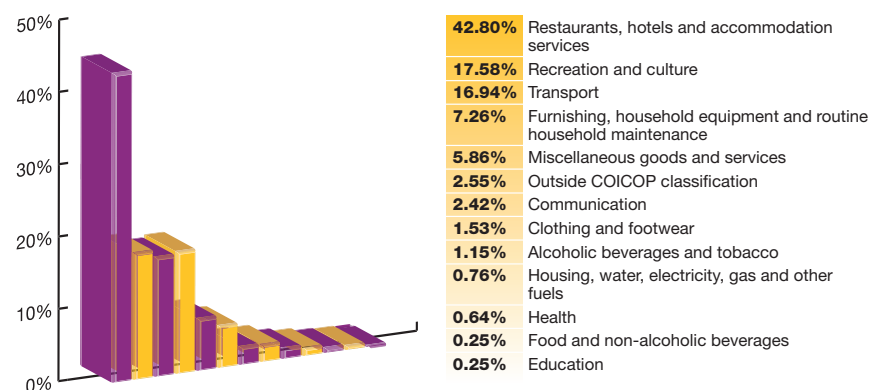
2008

Top level % Normal Complaints



2009

Top level % Normal Complaints



The main types of complaints from UK consumers varied slightly in 2009, compared to 2008, with some categories moving up - such as Recreation and Culture - and some moving down – such as Transport.

Normal Complaints from UK consumers: 3rd level of classification top ten 2008

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/similar products	Discount holiday clubs	21.68%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/similar products	Resale	9.87%
Transport	Transport services	Passenger transport by air	7.19%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	5.36%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services (not classified elsewhere)	No value available	5.24%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services : timeshare and related/similar products	Timeshare	3.65%
Furnishing, household equipment and routine household maintenance	Furniture and furnishing, carpets and other floor covering	Furniture and furnishing	3.29%
Recreation and culture	Audio -visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Photographic and cinematographic equipment and optical instruments	2.92%
Recreation and culture	Audio -visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Equipment for the reception, recording and reproduction of sound and pictures	2.80%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/similar products	Other related propositions	2.80%



Normal Complaints from UK consumers: 3rd level of classification top ten 2009

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/similar products	Discount holiday clubs	16.82%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation service	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/similar products	Resale	14.14%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Equipment for the reception, recording and reproduction of sound and pictures	7.64%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	7.26%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services (not classified elsewhere)	No classification available	6.88%
Transport	Transport services	Passenger transport by air	5.48%
Furnishing, household equipment and routine household maintenance	Furniture and furnishing, carpets and other floor covering	Furniture and furnishing	4.46%
Outside COICOP classification	No classification available	No classification available	2.55%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Photographic and cinematographic equipment and optical instruments	2.29%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/similar products	Other related propositions	2.29%

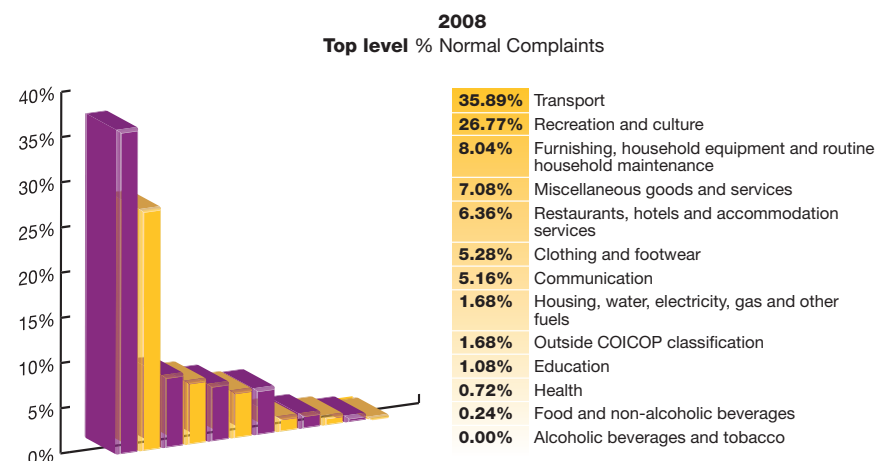
There are a couple of differences between 2008 and 2009 worth noting. Firstly, there is a decrease in the number of cases related to Discount Holiday Clubs, but at the same time there is a rise in the number of complaints related to Resale (of timeshare and related/similar products). Combined, these two figures were very similar in 2009 to 2008 (30.96% in 2009, compared to 31.55% in 2008). These two classifications retain the top two positions of the two most complained about categories by UK consumers in 2009.

Cases about UK traders

In 2008 there were 800 Normal Complaints recorded on the IT Tool concerning UK traders. In 2009 this figure increased to 1,111 (an increase of 38.88%).

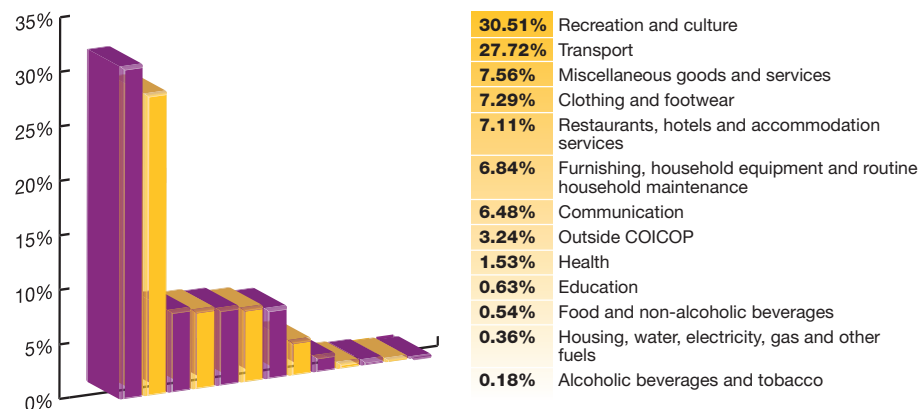
As with the Simple Complaints, Normal Complaints are encoded using COICOP. With Normal Complaints we are able to examine in detail all three levels of COICOP and provide comparisons between 2008 and 2009.

Normal Complaints about UK traders: top level of classification



Normal Complaints about UK traders: top level classification

2009
Top level % Normal Complaints



The main difference between 2008 and 2009 is that Recreation and Culture has moved to the top of the chart as the most complained about classification. It went up from 26.77% of the total number of Normal Complaints about UK traders in 2008 to 30.51% in 2009.

Normal Complaints about UK traders: 3rd level of classification top ten 2008

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Transport	Transport services	Passenger transport by air	15.40%
Recreation and culture	Audio -visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Equipment for the reception, recording and reproduction of sound and pictures	6.14%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: n.e.c.	No value available	5.66%
Transport	Transport services	Luggage transport by air	5.42%
Furnishing, household equipment and routine household maintenance	Furniture and furnishing, carpets and other floor covering	Furniture and furnishing	4.57%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Information processing equipment	4.57%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	4.09%
Transport	Operation of personal transport equipment	Spare parts and accessories for personal transport equipment	4.09%
Communication	Mobile telephone equipment	No value available	2.89%
Recreation and culture	Other recreational items and equipment, gardens and pets	Equipment for sport, camping and open-air recreation	2.53%

Normal Complaints about UK traders: 3rd level of classification top ten 2009

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Transport	Transport services	Passenger transport by air	9.00%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Photographic and cinematographic equipment and optical instruments	6.30%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services : n.e.c.	No classification available	5.58%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Equipment for the reception, recording and reproduction of sound and pictures	5.13%
Communication	Mobile telephone equipment	No classification available	4.23%
Transport	Operation of personal transport equipment	Spare parts and accessories for personal transport equipment	4.05%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Information processing equipment	3.51%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	3.42%
Outside COICOP		No classification available	3.24%
Transport	Transport services	Luggage transport by air	3.15%

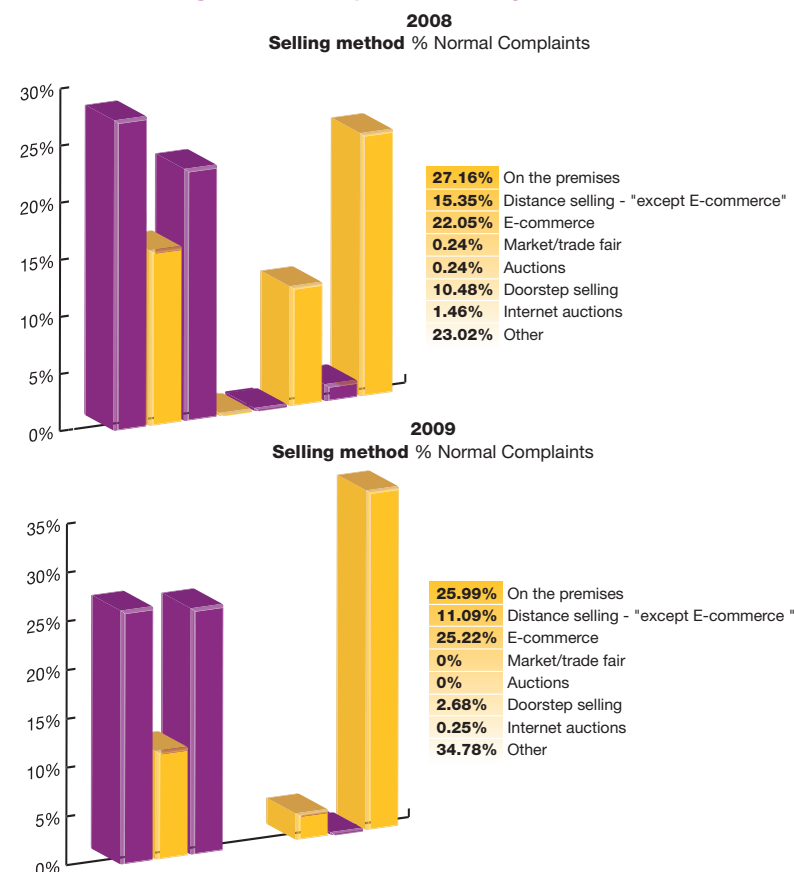
The number of European consumers complaining about Passenger transport by air remained the highest category in 2009, just as it did in 2008. But the number of complaints relating to Luggage transport by air fell to just 3.15% of the total number of complaints, compared to 5.42% in 2008.

Selling methods

As well as selecting the correct classification for every complaint that is recorded, we also record the selling method: that is, how the consumer purchased the item or service. By examining these results, we observe the most preferred way of buying.

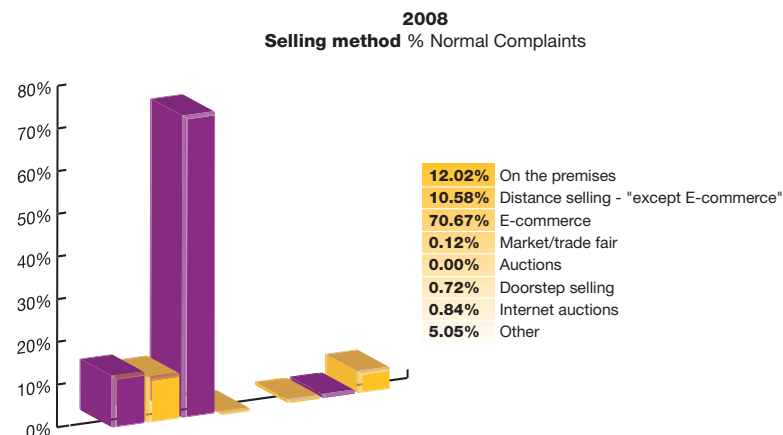
UK consumers

Selling methods preferred by UK consumers

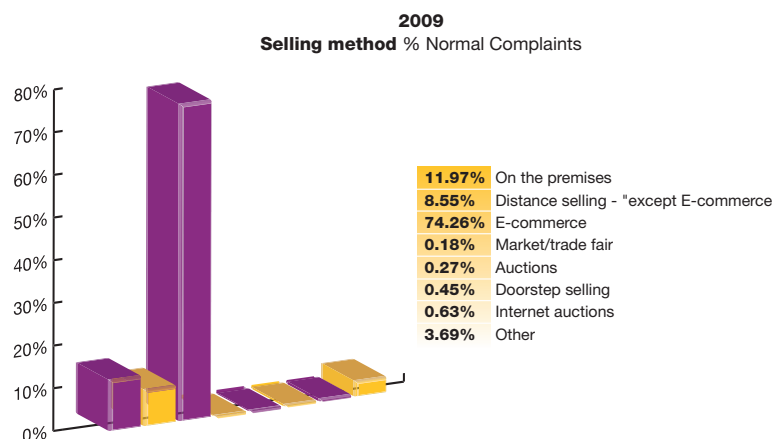


European consumers

Selling methods preferred by European consumers



Selling methods preferred by European consumers



Looking at these results, there is a marked difference between the selling methods preferred by UK consumers to those of European consumers.

Although UK consumers started to use E-commerce more in 2009 (it was the preferred selling method used by 25.22% of UK consumers buying in Europe in 2009, compared to 22.05% of UK consumers in 2008), it is clear that UK consumers have a long way to go before they use E-commerce as much as their European counterparts. The vast majority of European consumers choose E-commerce to complete their purchase (74.26% in 2009).

Based on this information, it seems that UK consumers are just as happy completing their transactions face-to-face, with less emphasis on E-commerce than European consumers.

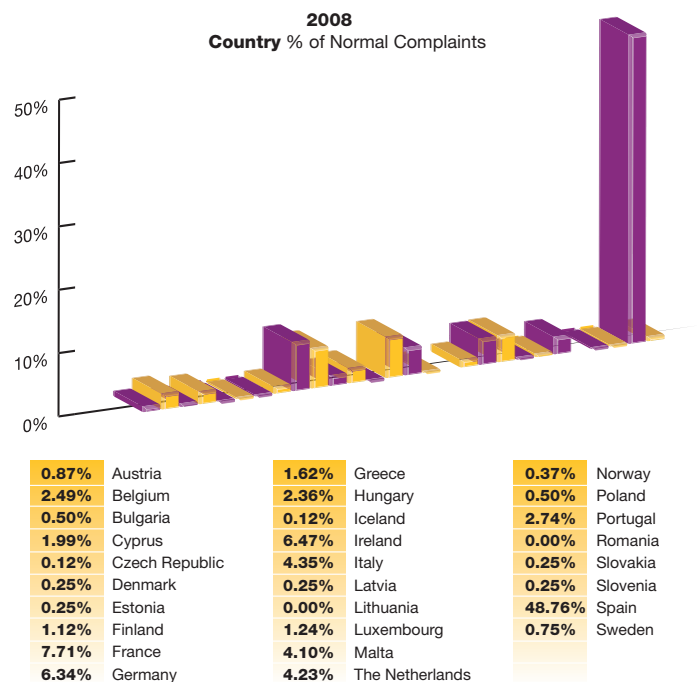


Country relationships

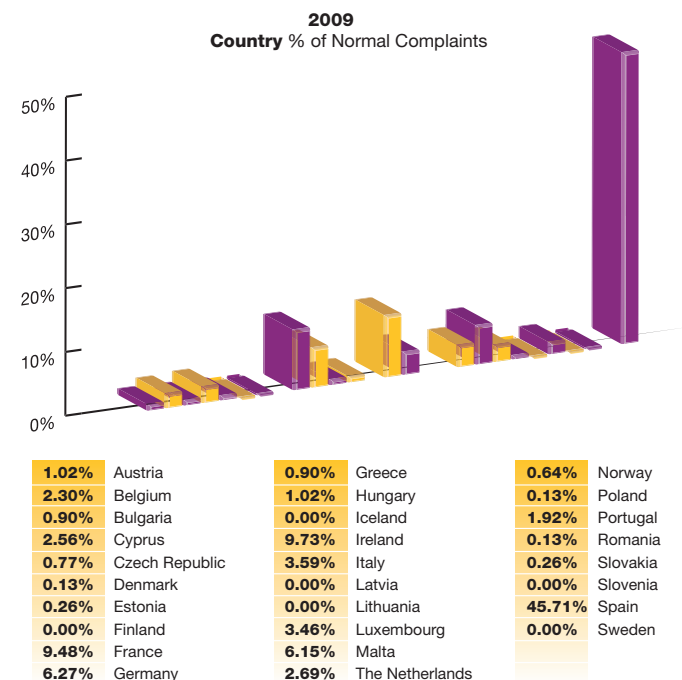
The UK ECC is part of the ECC-Network, which is made up of 29 centres throughout Europe. We are a network and all work together, but the nature of complaints means that there are some countries we have a greater relationship with than others. This section of our Annual Report looks at this and compares results from 2009 with those of 2008.

From UK consumers

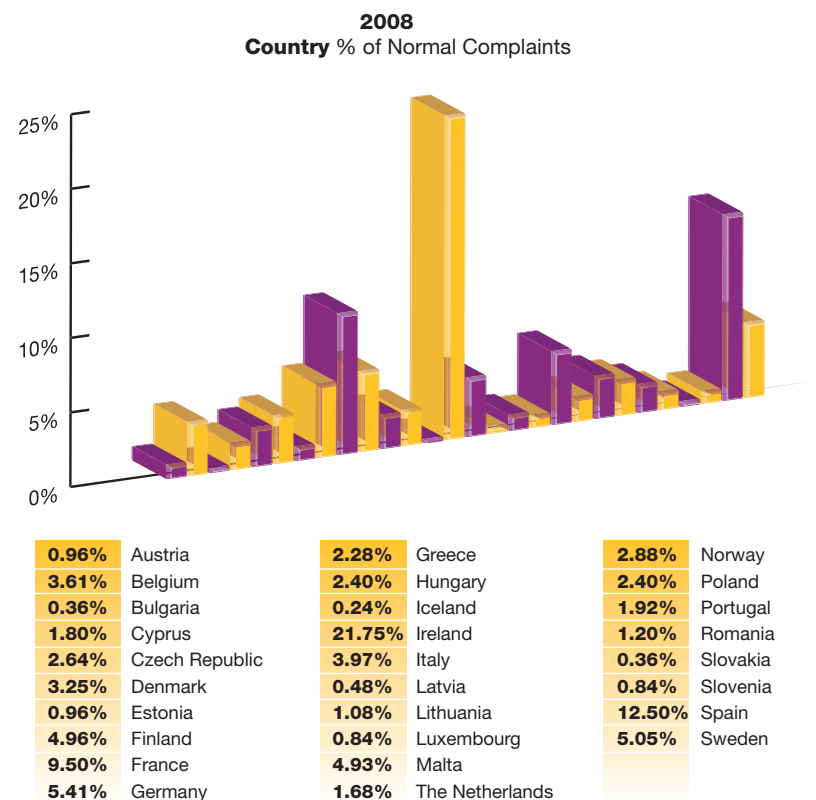
Relationship with other European countries (UK consumer cases)



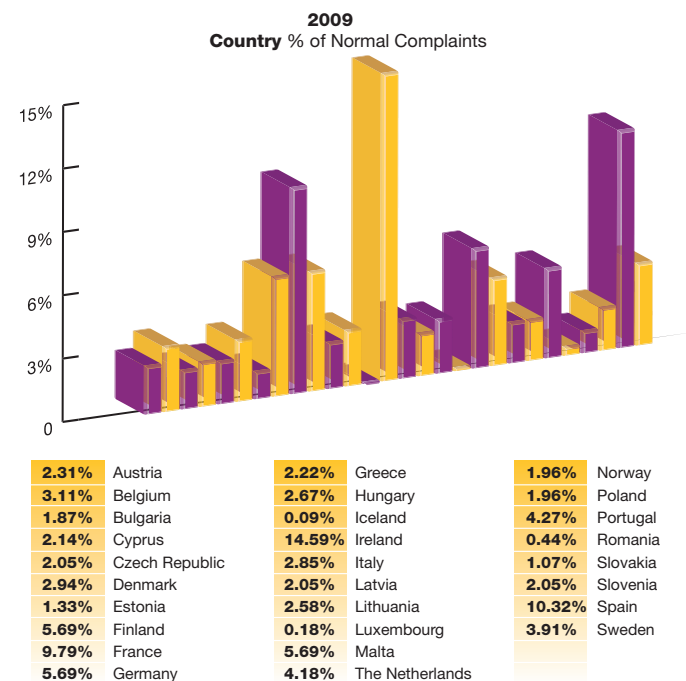
Relationship with other European countries (UK consumer cases)



From European consumers

Relationship with other European countries
(trader based in the UK)

We have shared cases from UK consumers with 24 other centres. The UK ECC has received cases from all 28 centres regarding UK traders. This is an achievement, as in 2009 there is just a handful of other centres which have worked on cases with all other members of the network.

Relationship with other European countries
(trader based in the UK)

This highlights the significance of the UK as a Consumer and Trader country; UK consumers are more than willing to take advantage of the Internal EU Market and purchase goods and services across Europe. UK traders are not limiting themselves to just the UK, but are stretching across Europe and selling to consumers in all Member States.



Incoming communications

All incoming communications to the UK ECC are recorded, either through our call management software or the physical recording of emails, letters, and faxes. In 2009 we received the following contacts:

Form of contact	Total received
Phone	6,155
Online form	814
Email	3,723
Letter	1,029
Fax	58

In total during 2009 we received almost 12,000 contacts from UK consumers, equating to an average of 46 contacts from UK consumers every working day.

Our work: European Consumer Summit 2009

The first ever European Consumer Summit was held in 2009, providing the UK ECC with a golden opportunity to participate in an event which reviewed the challenges and opportunities of the digital environment: for consumers, consumer advocates, business and consumer policy makers.

The summit, held in Brussels, enabled the UK ECC, UK consumers, businesses and ECC stakeholders to be in on the ground floor of future policy making about the digital marketplace. This is an important environment for the 150 million EU citizens who shop online.

Supporting the first summit helped ideally position the UK ECC's consumer advisers to provide the best possible advice to UK consumers faced with challenges in the digital age. Our presence also helped further increase awareness of the UK ECC service amongst consumers and consumer advocates.

Our work: spreading the word

During 2009, the UK ECC worked hard to spread the word about its part in the ECC Network, how the centre assists consumers, the topics it covers and the types of cases its staff can advise on.



The European Consumer Summit in Brussels

For the second year in a row, UK ECC staff held a promotional event at Ebbsfleet International Train Station in Kent where they manned a stand and provided travellers with advice and guidance on their rights when shopping in Europe.

Promoting the UK ECC to consumers is of paramount importance to us, as one of the challenges we regularly face is how to make consumers aware of who they can turn to with a problem.

A range of UK ECC promotional items - each with its own distinct messaging and 'call to action' - was handed out at the event to help raise the profile of the UK ECC and also to make it easier for consumers to remember us and our service.



As part of our quest to keep UK consumers informed, towards the end of 2009 we launched our first issue of Your Update. Brought to you by the UK European Consumer Centre, the aim of the electronic newsletter is to provide consumers with a flavour of what the UK ECC does, show examples of cases we have been working on and, more importantly, provide consumers with the best advice on cross-border shopping.

Your Update is written and produced by our in-house team – including a former journalist – several times a year. Consumers can receive their own copy of the e-newsletter by asking to be put on our distribution list. Copies are also posted on the UK ECC website.

The UK ECC also continued to spread the word amongst Trading Standards teams and other stakeholders about its role in providing advice and support to consumers who have a dispute with a trader based in a European country outside the UK.

It attended the annual Trading Standards Institute's Consumer Affairs and Trading Standards Conference and Exhibition in Brighton in 2009, talking to Trading Standards Officers and other consumer organisation visitors.



UK ECC consumer adviser Adam Mortimer at Ebbsfleet



The UK ECC manned a stand in the main exhibition area and also held mini-seminar sessions to inform attendees of the nature of the work undertaken by the service. We also explained how best our advisers can assist UK consumers who shop cross-border in Europe.

Attendance at the TSI's annual conference allowed the UK ECC to liaise with Trading Standards and to share intelligence, which will ensure that it's not only UK consumers who are receiving fair trading from businesses across Europe but that consumers across Europe will benefit too. It is important for the UK ECC to maintain its positive relationship with the UK's national enforcement organisation, made up of local authorities' Trading Standards teams.



The UK ECC stand at Consumer Affairs and Trading Standards Conference and Exhibition in Brighton



Our work: press releases, coverage and events

Press Releases

Too good to be true? (9/04/2009)
 UK consumers 'given teeth' to sue traders in a different European country (30/06/2009)
 UK handles more consumer enquiries than other European Consumer Centres (3/08/2009)
 Discount holiday clubs and timeshares top the UK consumer complaint chart (21/09/2009)
 Marking two years of consumer complaints – with flowers, lipstick and a horse (11/11/2009)
 Joint project between UK and Ireland could lead to 'happier consumers' in 2010 (23/12/2010)

Selected coverage

TS Today 'Scottish Branch Conference 2008' (January 2009)
 The Guardian 'Sun, Sea and Scams: Don't fall for holiday club racket' (03/02/2009)
 Travel Daily News 'Timeshare fraud' (05/02/2009)
 The Daily Express '£1 to use loos on Ryanair' (28/02/2009)
 Scotland on Sunday 'Money help desk' (12/04/2009)
 TS Today 'Ticket scams warning' (May 2009)
 The Guardian 'OFT Targets car sales scammers' (28/05/2009)
 The Independent 'Questions of cash' (20/06/2009)
 Portsmouth Today 'Don't go broke on your break' (08/07/2009)
 The Guardian 'Money' (15/08/2009)
 The Guardian 'Sky Europe's compensation policy is the limit' (21/08/2009)
 Out-Law.com 'Guide to EU small claims procedure for cross border disputes below 2000 euros' (17/09/2009)
 BBC News 'Across border shopping: Your rights' (22/09/2009)
 TS Today 'Suing for beginners' (October 2009)
 Mature Times 'How to foil the overseas scammers' (October 2009)
 Travel Daily News 'Discount holiday clubs and timeshares top the UK consumer complaint chart' (16/10/2009)
 TS Today 'TSI opens its doors' (November 2009)
 BBC News 'I wish to register a complaint' (11/11/2009)
 Basildon Echo 'Our 2 years as shoppers champions' (16/11/2009)
 TS Today 'UK ECC 2 years on' (December 2009)

Selected interviews and media requests

BBC Watchdog: Information and advice on Bulgaria Dreams (13/02/2009)
 Scottish Daily Express: Ryanair charging passengers to use airline toilets (27/02/2009)
 BBC - The One Show: Air passenger rights (03/03/2009)
 Somerset Trading Standards: Camera Scams (18/03/2009)
 Outline Productions: Holiday Scams (15/04/2009)
 BBC Web: Consumer travel rights upon cancellation of ferries (16/04/2009)
 BBC - The One Show: Holiday scams (23/04/2009)
 The Independent: Car hire contracts (10/05/2009)
 BBC holiday scam programme: Car rental, holiday clubs, audio-visual (10/06/2009)
 Radio 4 - You and Yours: Airline pricing (14/05/2009)
 The Guardian: Consumer rights directive (18/05/2009)
 The Sunday Independent (29/05/2009)
 Bedford Trading Standards (02/06/2009)
 The Independent: Consumer car rental (05/06/2009)
 The Guardian: About UK ECC (16/06/2009)
 The Guardian: Denied boarding compensation (17/06/2009)
 BBC Radio 4: Moneybox (18/06/2009)
 Daily Mail (03/08/2009)
 BBC Radio 4 - You and Yours (04/08/2009)
 Radio West Midlands (05/08/2009)
 Who are the UK ECC (06/08/2009)
 The Guardian (06/08/2009)
 Mature Times: About UK ECC (19/08/2009)
 Birmingham Post: Secondary ticket market (20/08/2009)
 BBC South - Inside out: Mail order lottery scams (21/08/2009)
 BBC Radio 4 - You and Yours: ESCP (07/09/2009)
 BBC World Service: Ticket scams (24/11/2009)
 Which? Holiday magazine: Maintenance fees (01/12/2009)





Thank you

Much of what the UK ECC does goes unrecognised. But amongst the large number of UK consumers which the UK ECC's consumer advisers helped in 2009, there was a gratifying number of people who expressed their thanks.

Here is a selection of thank-yous received from consumers we helped along the way:

"We have received a cheque for £2,200 on the 23rd December. Without your help we would not have got this back. We are sincerely grateful to you and your colleagues in France for getting our money back."

Mr R

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help and advice in bringing this claim to a satisfactory conclusion."

Mr T

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all you have done for me, and all of the work you have carried out on my behalf. I think you and your department do a sterling job and I would never hesitate to contact you again should the need arise."

Mr H

"Well done for all of your hard work and I am glad to say that they have finally refunded me the money."

Mr F

"We are writing to thank you all so much for your help and support over our recent dispute. This was a very worrying and stressful time for us and we are sure that without your help this would not have been resolved."

Mrs P

"I cannot believe my eyes! This morning I received a letter dated 24th February - this enclosed two copies of a form asking me to accept a full refund of 994 euros. It is all due to your intervention and your wonderful help. Thank you so much."

Mr G

And finally. . .

Help is at hand if you plan to shop online. It may be beneficial for you to visit Howard the ECC-Net's online shopping assistant. For more information go to our website - www.ukecc.net.

Howard will research a website for you and help you decide whether to use it. Just enter the website's name, and Howard will:

- Find out when it was registered
- Do a Google search for feedback from other consumers. If the website is new, you need to be very careful – especially if prices are low and it asks for pre-payment. And if there are negative comments from other consumers, there may be good reason to be cautious


Howard can also advise you on your rights, such as:

- How long do you have to return goods after delivery for a refund?
- When is the latest you can make a claim if the goods become faulty?

Howard cannot guarantee that a website is trustworthy. Nor can he offer a guarantee of service or quality. But he will help you make an informed decision before buying.



HOWARD
THE SHOPPING ASSISTANT

A decorative graphic on a purple background. It features several stylized stars in shades of orange and yellow. Thin, light-colored lines radiate from a point near the bottom center, extending upwards and outwards, some passing through the stars. On the right side, there is a large, empty rectangular area with rounded corners, outlined in a thin yellow line.

This UK ECC Annual Report arises from the project
"European Consumer Centres' Network - ECC-Net"
which has received funding from the European Union.
This is in the framework of the Programme of Community
action in the field of Consumer policy for 2007-13.

UK European Consumer Centre
Delivered by the Trading Standards Institute
Funded by the European Commission
and the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.