



UK European Consumer Centre



Annual Report 2011

UK European Consumer Centre

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

We're here to help.



Introduction

2011 was a difficult year for many UK consumers, one in which they faced financial and work-related challenges.

And it was a demanding year for the UK European Consumer Centre (UK ECC) as we rose to the challenge of assisting UK consumers across Europe.

It was our fourth full year of operation. We are part of the European Consumer Centre Network (ECC-Net) - ECC-Net 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.

Throughout 2011 we strived to provide the best advice, support and assistance to as many consumers as we could.

It was a huge achievement for the UK ECC to continue to be the network's busiest centre. In 2011 we handled a total of more than 7,000 cases (Information Requests, Simple Complaints and Normal Complaints) – around 1,000 more than the next busiest ECC (ECC Germany).

In 2011 the UK ECC continued to build on its reputation as a professional and efficient service. This is reflected in large numbers of consumers who contact us day in, day out and in the results and success stories we achieve.

Although we handled slightly fewer cases in 2011 than in 2010, we played a very important part in advising, supporting and informing those consumers. We are proud to help not only UK consumers in dispute with traders based in a European country outside the UK, but also to play a key role in helping other ECCs who share cases with us from EU consumers about UK traders.

Our staff have a passion for giving consumer advice and are trained and dedicated to do that to the best of their ability - to give excellent service to you, the consumer.

And as the recession continues to bite for many UK consumers, you can be assured that with the UK ECC on your side when you shop in another Member State, you can feel just as confident as you do at home. You are not alone, even when you cross borders!



Susan Tolman

UK ECC Information and Communications Officer



Executive summary

As many UK consumers continue to face the harsh reality of having less money to spend in real-terms both at home and elsewhere in the EU, the picture painted by data gathered in our fourth full year of operation reflects that consumers are continuing to feel the pinch financially.

The trend for our more in-depth cases (Simple and Normal Complaints) in 2011 was slightly up on the previous year (by 1.7%), perhaps reflecting a tougher stance being taken by consumers in wanting their problems resolved.

But the category which saw the biggest change was Information Requests – the fastest type of case to handle. The number of Information Requests we received dropped by 22.8%.

There are a number of subject areas worth mentioning specifically as we look back at 2011; namely Recreation and Culture, Passenger Transport by Air, and Discount Holiday Clubs, all of which continued to have large numbers of complaints.

Unlike 2010, in 2011 there were no significant extraordinary natural circumstances impacting consumers and therefore affecting the number of complaints we received.

Analysing our statistics shows that the way in which UK consumers buy in Europe continues to change. 2011 continued the trend of 2010 in that E-commerce was the overall top choice selling method of UK consumers, with 34.9% of them choosing it in 2011 compared to 27.7% in 2010.

An important part of our work is to educate consumers before they make purchases in an endeavour to try to prevent problems later on. This continued apace in 2011, with information stands at various locations and an increasing number of subscribers to our regular e-newsletters.

Throughout 2011 we also continued to support the European Commission and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) by bringing our expertise to workshops and projects targeted at addressing consumer problems and sharing best practice across the ECC-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 was created by the European Commission to provide a service to all European consumers who shop 'cross-border' within the EU. The Commission wants consumers to have the same confidence shopping anywhere in the EU as they do at home: the ECC-Net is the reality which rose from that vision.

Each centre provides advice and information to consumers in their home country, about the purchase of goods and services from another 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 to try to resolve the complaint amicably.

The aim of the UK ECC is to help as many UK consumers (who encounter problems with traders 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. Our core purpose is to advise and assist consumers.

But we don't just work for the benefit of UK consumers. The collaborative nature of ECC-Net means 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 operates, essentially, in an advisory nature with no enforcement powers, which consumers sometimes find disappointing and upsetting. We provide information and advice on consumers' rights shopping in Europe and, where appropriate, offer further help by contacting the trader on your behalf. Our lack of enforcement powers means that we can not force traders into a particular course of action if they ignore our communication or disagree with our point of view.

Each centre within the network works hard to form close relationships within its home country with organisations which do have enforcement powers. The UK ECC provides trading standards with information, allowing them to complete intelligence-led enforcement for UK consumers. We also work with the Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network organisation in the UK - the Office of Fair Trading. The CPC exchanges information and cooperates with counterparts in other Member States 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 Director	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
Consumer Advisor	Wojtek Szczerba
UK ECC Administrative Assistant	Danielle Ancient

Our staffing remained constant in 2011, providing stability and experience for consumers whose cases our advisors handle and enabling us to offer an ever-increasing professional and informative service relevant to consumers' particular circumstances.



Delivered by the Trading Standards Institute

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

TSI is a high-standing professional body with a 130 year pedigree. It is a not-for-profit professional membership organisation, representing trading standards and market surveillance officials - in the UK and overseas - working in local authorities, business and consumer sectors, and government.

TSI performs a key influencing role in engaging with, and making representations to, central and devolved government, UK and EU parliamentary institutions, and key stakeholders in the local government community, business and consumer sectors, and other regulatory agencies.

itsa Limited is the principle business arm of the Institute that develops and delivers a wide range of added-value products, services and project solutions.

European activities include the Product Safety Forum of Europe (PROSAFE), an initiative sponsored by the European Commission to deliver consistent market surveillance in product safety throughout EU Member States and accession countries.

There were two other European activities in 2011: RAPEX - an EU Rapid alert system for dangerous consumer products; and ICSMS (Information and Communication System for Market Surveillance) - a pan-European market surveillance database of technical products.

TSI also delivers the service for pre-purchasing advice provided by our sister organisation – the European Consumer Centre for Services: www.ukecc-services.net



Our work: cases

The Network

Data gathered in our first four full years of operation is helping us to build a more comprehensive picture of trends as many UK consumers face strained financial conditions. This case-handling experience enables us to have a greater understanding of the problems consumers face. In this section we look at the statistical information from 2010 and 2011 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 looked at 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 2010 we handled 2,518 Information Requests – 1.9% reduction from the 2009 figure of 2,567. In 2011, this had dropped by 22.8%. But as these are, generally speaking, the fastest type of cases to handle, the impact was minimal. This could actually reflect a tougher stance being taken by consumers in wanting their problems resolved, which has led to a slight increase in our more in-depth cases (Simple and Normal Complaints).

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

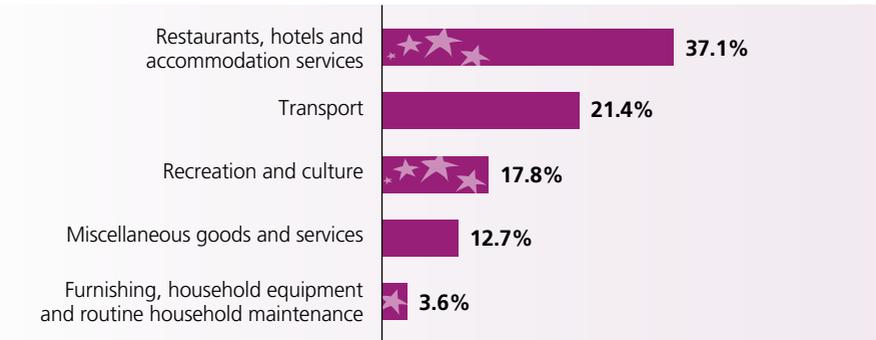
Simple Complaints

The next level of enquiry is a Simple Complaint; this is where 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 to help consumers proceed.

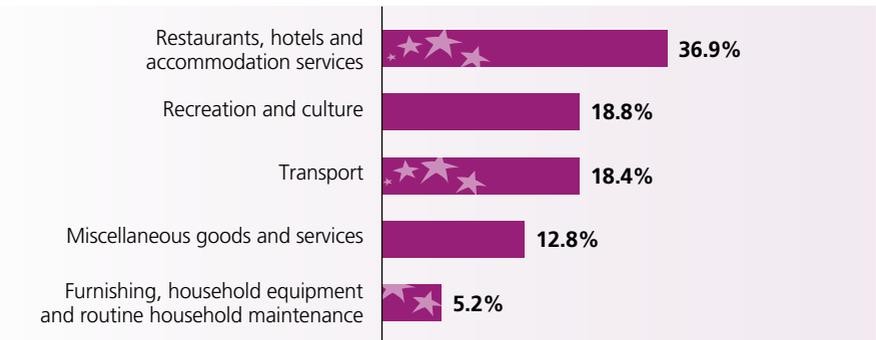
In 2011 we handled 3,457 Simple Complaints from UK consumers, a 3.3% increase on the 2010 figure of 3,346.

Examining the top level of classification of our cases, we can see what type of enquiries the UK ECC received and the differences between 2010 and 2011.

2010: Top Level % Simple Complaints



2011: Top Level % Simple Complaints





Although the positions of several of the categories have remained the same - for example, topping the Simple Complaints chart in 2011 (the same as in the previous three years) with 36.9% of the Simple Complaints is Restaurants, Hotels and Accommodation Services - some of the other categories have changed position. Timeshares and Discount Holiday Clubs, contained within this classification, remained one of our largest areas for enquiries and complaints. In 2011, a larger percentage of consumers complained about Recreation and Culture than in 2010 – up from 17.8% to 18.8%, pushing it back up to be the second highest complaint category (as it was in 2008). Transport dropped to third place, attracting 18.4% of Simple Complaints in 2011 compared to its 2010 figure of 21.4%

Normal Complaints

The top level of enquiry is a Normal Complaint; these are enquiries where 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 to the consumer and will share the case with the ECC where the trader is based.

As well as handling Normal Complaints from UK consumers in dispute with a European trader, the UK ECC advisors also deal with cases shared with them by another ECC where a European consumer is in a dispute with a UK trader.

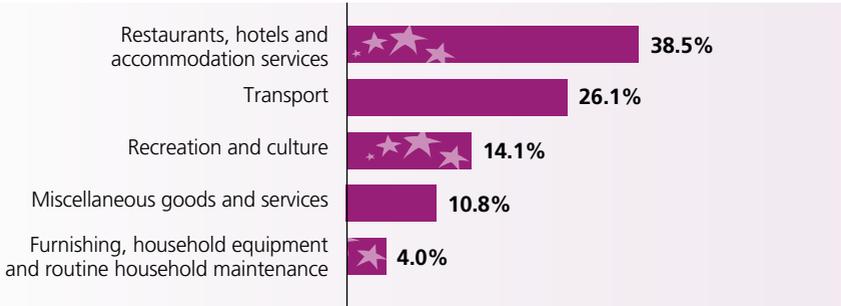
Cases from UK consumers

In 2010 1,020 Normal Complaints were recorded on the IT Tool by the UK ECC. In 2011 this figure had dropped back by 17.5% to 868, but this is still 10.6% higher than the 2009 figure of 785.

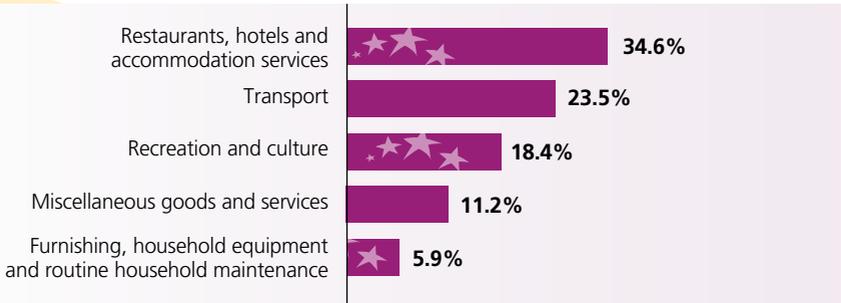
We have examined the types of Normal Complaints received from UK consumers by looking at the top level of classification and the more detailed third level. We have made comparisons between 2010 and 2011.

Normal complaints from UK consumers: top level classification

2010: Top Level % Normal Complaints



2011: Top Level % Normal Complaints



The main types of complaints from UK consumers stayed exactly the same in 2011, compared to 2010, with all categories staying in precisely the same position (although some of the figures themselves may have changed slightly).



**Normal complaints from UK consumers:
3rd level of classification top five 2010**

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Transport	Transport services	Passenger transport by air	12.9%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/ similar products	Resale	12.5%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/ similar products	Discount holiday club	11.4%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	7.0%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/ similar products	Other related propositions	5.1%



Normal complaints from UK consumers: 3rd level of classification top five 2011

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Transport	Transport services	Passenger transport by air	11.9%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/ similar products	Discount holiday clubs	9.8%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/ similar products	Other related propositions	6.9%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: timeshare and related/ similar products	Resale	6.6%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	6.5%

Passenger Transport by Air has stayed in top position for the second year in a row. Discount Holiday Clubs has moved up to the second largest category of cases. And other related propositions, which includes loyalty cards, cashback schemes and legal services offering to recover consumers' money from timeshare and holiday club deals, has moved up from fifth to third place.

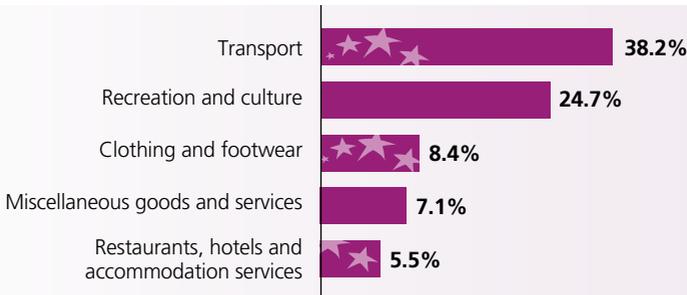
Cases about UK traders

In 2010, 1,410 Normal Complaints were recorded on the IT Tool concerning UK traders. In 2011 this figure had dropped slightly to 1,340 (a decrease of 5.2%). This is still higher than the 2009 figure of 1,111.

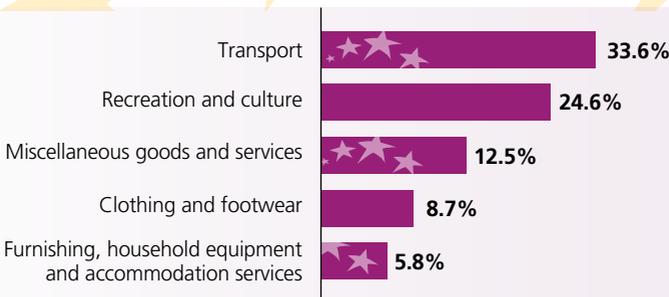
As with Simple Complaints, Normal Complaints are encoded using COICOP. With Normal Complaints we are able to examine in detail all three levels of COICOP and provide comparisons between 2010 and 2011.

Normal complaints about UK Traders: top level of classification (top five)

2010: Top Level % Normal Complaints



2011: Top Level % Normal Complaints



The top two spots of most complained about classification stayed the same: Transport, and Recreation and Culture, with 33.6% and 24.6% respectively. Restaurants, Hotels and Accommodation Services dropped out of the top five altogether, with Furnishing, Household Equipment and Accommodation Services taking its place. Miscellaneous Goods and Services took third place, with Clothing and Footwear dropping to fourth.



**Normal complaints about UK traders:
3rd level of classification top five 2010**

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Transport	Transport services	Passenger travel by air	21.6%
Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services	Accommodation services: n.e.c	No classification available	4.8%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	4.9%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Equipment for reception, recording and reproduction of sound and pictures	4.1%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Photographic and cinematographic equipment and optical instruments	4.0%





Normal complaints about UK traders: 3rd level of classification top five 2011

Top Level	Second Level	Third Level	% of Normal Complaints
Transport	Transport services	Passenger travel by air	17.1%
Other personal effects	Personal effects not included elsewhere	Other personal effects	6.1%
Recreation and culture	Recreational and cultural services	Cultural services	4.3%
Transport	Transport services	Car rental	4.0%
Recreation and culture	Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment	Information processing equipment	4.0%

The number of European consumers complaining about Passenger Transport by Air meant that this remained the highest category in 2011, just as it had in 2009. However, instead of accounting for 21.6% of complaints, the figure went down to 17.1%, which was higher than the 2009 figure of 9%.



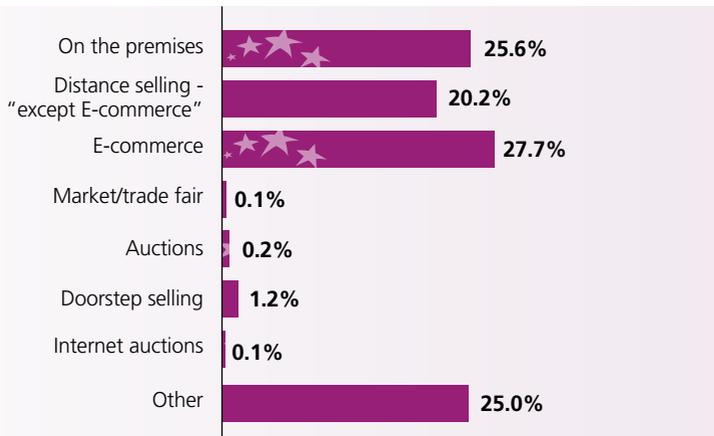
Selling methods

We want to understand consumers' most preferred way of buying, so as well as choosing the correct classification for every complaint that is documented, our consumer advisors also make a note of the selling method used: that is, how the consumer bought the item or service.

UK consumers

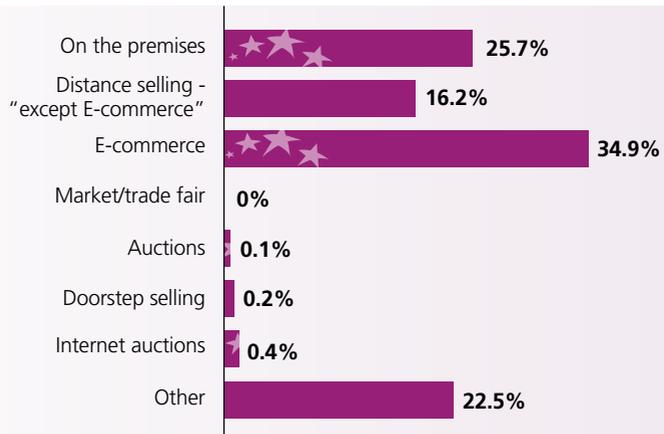
Selling methods preferred by UK consumers

2010: Top Level % Normal Complaints





2011: Top Level % Normal Complaints

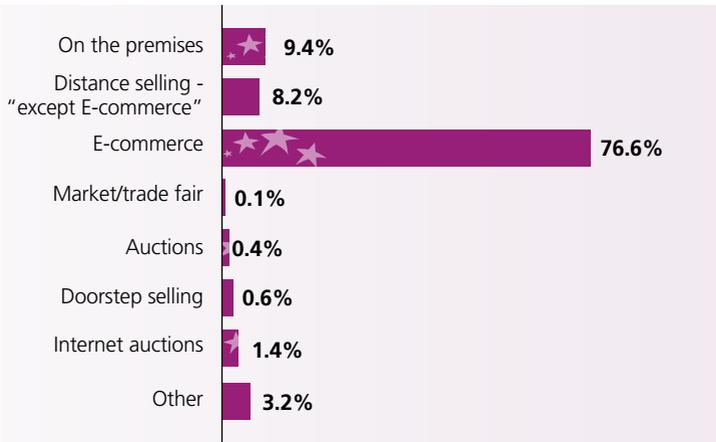


UK consumers started to use E-commerce as their preferred selling method in a much bigger way in 2011 than ever before, with E-commerce being used in 34.9% of cases as opposed to 27.7% in 2010, showing that UK consumers are becoming much happier completing their transactions online. However, they still have a long way to go before they catch up with their European counterparts, 79.1% of whom used E-commerce as their top choice of selling method.

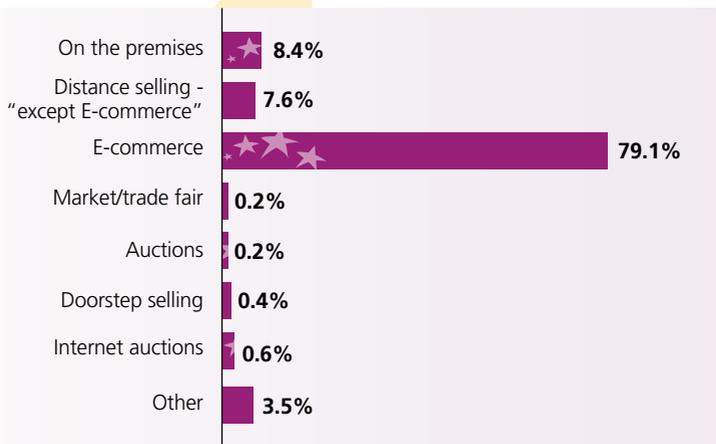
European consumers

Selling methods preferred by European consumers

2010: Top Level % Normal Complaints



2011: Top Level % Normal Complaints



Looking at these figures, there is still a major difference between the selling methods favoured by UK consumers to those of European consumers.

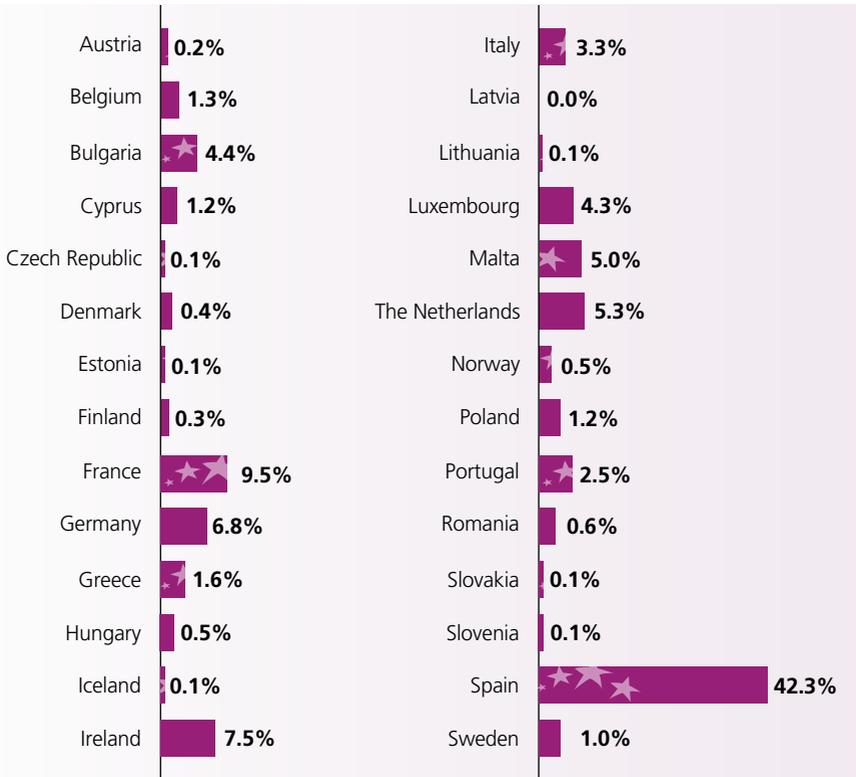
Country relationships

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 with whom we work more frequently than others. This section of our Annual Report looks at this and compares results from 2011 with those of 2010.

From UK consumers

Relationship with other European countries (UK consumer cases)

2010: % Normal Complaints

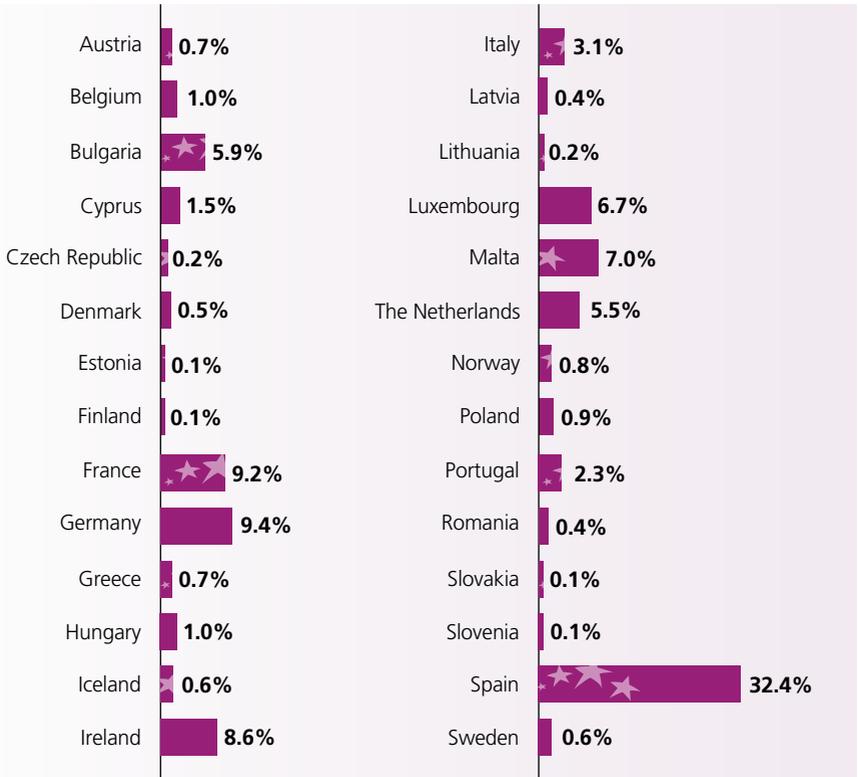




From UK consumers

Relationship with other European countries (UK consumer cases)

2011: % Normal Complaints

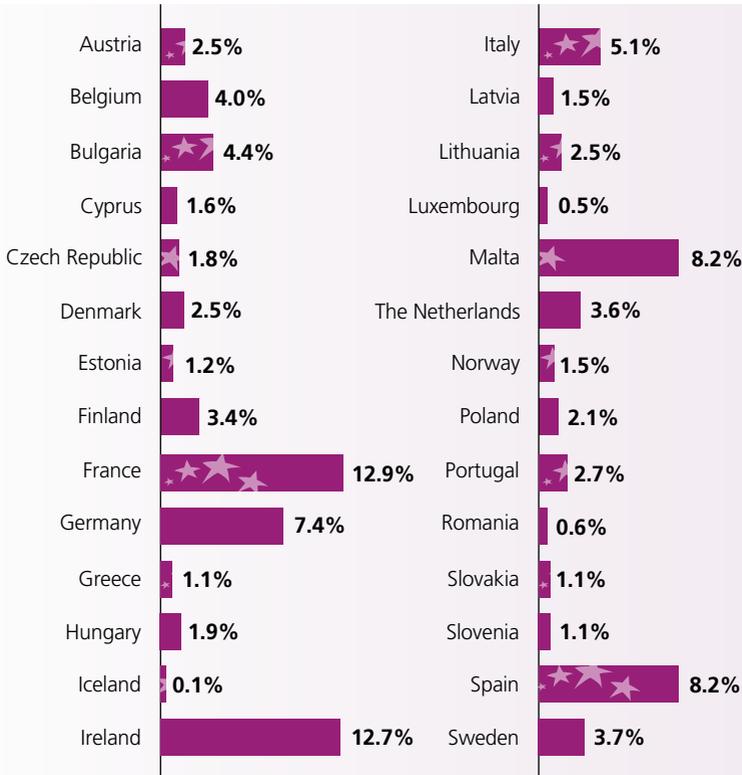




From European consumers

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

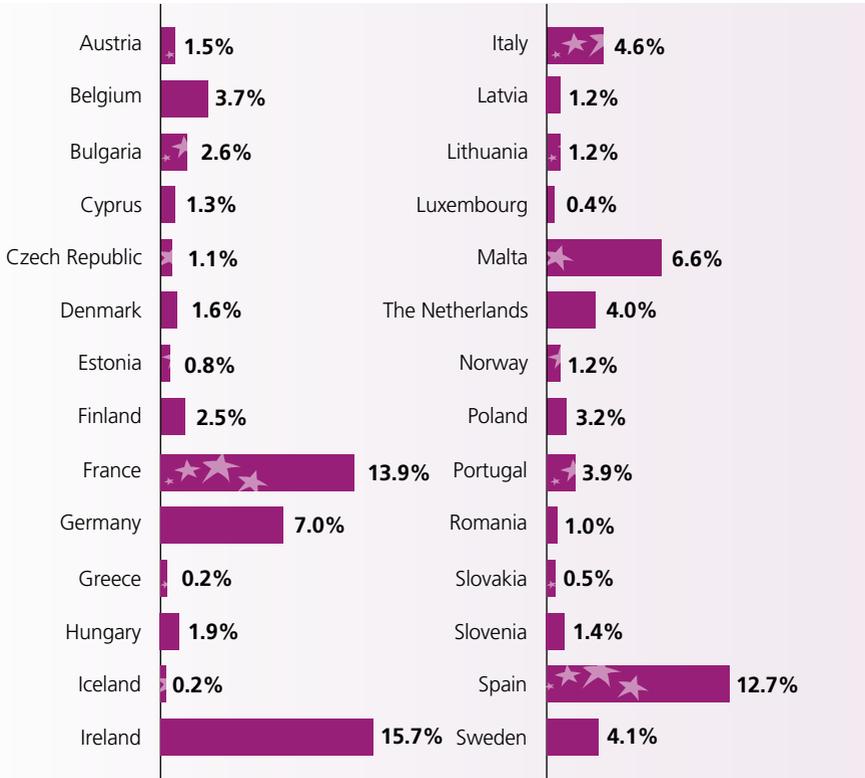
2010: % Normal Complaints



From European consumers

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

2011: % Normal Complaints



Our consumer advisors have shared cases from UK consumers with all 28 other centres, as well as having received cases from all 28 centres regarding UK traders. This is a real achievement, highlighting the importance of the UK as a significant player in the European economy, both from a consumer and trader perspective. UK consumers are more than willing to take advantage of the Internal EU Market to buy goods and services in all countries across Europe. And UK traders are proving their reach across Europe by 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 2011 we received the following contacts:

Direct contact	Total received
Phone	6,350
Online form	846
Email	5,698
Letter	741
Fax	43
Basic total	13,678

Referrals	Total received
Consumer Direct (now known as Citizens Advice consumer service)	1,131
European Consumer Centre for Services	107
Overall total	14,916

In total during 2011 we received more than 13,500 contacts from UK consumers, equating to an average of 54 contacts from UK consumers every working day, in theory that's slightly lower than the average 56 contacts a day in 2010.

However, in 2011 we also started receiving more referrals from Consumer Direct (now known as Citizens Advice consumer service) and the European Consumer Centre for Services, so we now include those too. They accounted for 1,238 together, meaning an overall total of 14,916, that's more than 500 more than the overall total for 2010.

Our work

European Consumer Summit 2011

The UK ECC took the opportunity of attending the third-ever European Consumer Summit, held in 2011 in Brussels, to take part in discussions about EU Consumer Policy with consumers, consumer advocates, business and consumer policy makers.

The summit, entitled EU Consumer Policy: The Way Ahead, enabled the UK ECC to be in on the ground floor of future policy making of EU Consumer Policy. Delegates attended workshops to both learn from and enrich them with their perspective. Subjects included 'what challenges are we facing?', 'Alternative Dispute Resolution: how to make it work better' and 'how can we strengthen the consumer voice?'.

Supporting the summit was just one way the UK ECC ensured that its consumer advisors were positioned to provide the best possible advice to UK consumers in these difficult financial times. Consumer advisors also attended an EU-Presidency conference and seminar on consumer protection and consumer law and later in the year represented the UK ECC at an ECC-Net Cooperation Day to share ideas and best practice and also to discuss case handling. Our UK ECC Executive and a consumer advisor also participated in Luxembourg's International Conference, the Fourth Conference on aspects of European Consumer Law.

In order to ensure that our staff keep up to date with changes in the law, consumer advisors attended short courses on subjects such as consumer redress, essential consumer law, consumer affairs and trading standards and scams.

Keeping consumers informed

During 2011, the UK ECC worked hard to continue the vital work of spreading the word amongst consumers and other consumer protection bodies about cross-border consumer/trader problems. We promoted the UK ECC's part in the ECC Network, how our consumer advisors assist consumers, the topics we cover, the types of cases our staff can advise on and the appropriate consumer legislation for these cross-border disputes.

We sent out five issues of Your Update e-newsletters, containing a flavour of what the UK ECC does, showing examples of cases we have been working on and providing advice on cross-border shopping. The newsletter is written and produced in-house and emailed to hundreds of subscribers. Consumers can request to receive their own copy by asking to go on the distribution list. Copies are also posted on the UK ECC website.

As part of our work to raise consumers' awareness of their rights when buying something in the EU, the UK ECC and its sister organisation the European Consumer Centre for Services (ECCS) entered a ground-breaking partnership with P & O Ferries when they set up an advice desk about

EU consumer rights for passengers on return sailings from Dover to Calais. On several occasions in 2011 consumer advisors were on hand to provide passengers with advice on burning consumer rights issues.

Also in 2011, the UK ECC took part in an online cross-border mystery shopping exercise, whereby mystery shoppers representing ECC offices made test purchases from online traders. The subsequent report revealed that consumer conditions had improved when shopping online across borders compared to an ECC-Net report of 2003.

Attendance at the TSI's annual Consumer Affairs and Trading Standards Conference and Exhibition in Bournemouth in 2011 helped maintain the UK ECC's positive and fruitful relationship with the TSI – the UK's national enforcement membership organisation (made up of local authorities' trading standards teams). The conference was well attended by all types of consumer organisations across the UK. The UK ECC stand received a great deal of interest and many questions were asked of us. During the conference we provided people with leaflets and promotional materials, which proved very popular with delegates.

Awareness of the UK ECC within the media remained high in 2011, with a number of high-profile radio and television interviews and national newspaper articles featuring how the UK ECC helps consumers, helping to strengthen the view of the organisation's role within the consumer protection environment.





Media requests, press releases and coverage

Press Releases

Better Protection for UK holiday-makers on its way (26/01/2011)

How to have a protected 2011 in the EU (16/03/2011)

Thinking of booking that festival ticket? (26/04/2011)

Visiting Europe this summer? It's time to know your rights! (10/05/2011)

Do you know your air passenger rights? (30/06/2011)

European Consumer Centres' Air Passenger Rights Day 2011 (07/07/2011)

Consumer advisors to find their sea-legs in ground-breaking partnership with ferry operator (19/08/2011)

Passengers back on dry land with more confidence to shop in the EU following ground-breaking partnership with ferry operator (24/08/2011)

Not everybody is as reliable as Santa! (28/09/2011)

Major improvements for UK consumers when shopping online 'cross-border' – but still some obstacles to overcome (04/10/2011)

Air Passenger Rights report issued by European Consumers Network (01/11/2011)

UK European Consumer Centre urges consumers to limber up for the Olympics correctly (22/11/2011)



Selected Coverage

The Guardian 'Timeshare directive offers holidaymakers greater protection' (02/02/2011)
BBC Radio 4's You & Yours 'Implementation of EU Timeshare Directive' (21/02/2011)
Travel Daily News International 'Better protection for UK holiday-makers on its way' (21/03/2011)
Travel Law Quarterly Magazine 'UK ECC Secondary Ticket Market' (April 2011)
TS Today Magazine 'Time of your life?' (April 2011)
UTV News 'Consumer warning over ticket resale websites' (13/04/2011)
The Guardian 'Consumer warning over ticket resale websites' (13/04/2011)
European Commission 'Don't get caught out buying festival tickets' (14/04/2011)
Star Global Tribune 'Care Hire - Travellers urged to carefully consider who they book with for car hire' (21/04/2011)
Eastbourne Herald 'How to have a protected 2011 in the EU' (30/05/2011)
Mail Online 'How to avoid car hire potholes that can easily spoil your summer holiday' (06/07/2011)
Admiral 'Crackdown on holiday hire car charges' (08/07/2011)
Daily Mail 'Car hire complaints on the rise' (8/7/2011)
Which 'Want to complain? Where do you go if there's no ombudsman?' (22/08/2011)
Wise Geek online forum 'How do I choose the best online beauty shop?' (25/08/2011)
BBC News 'Online traders failing on refunds, tests show' (06/10/2011)
Travel Daily News 'Air passengers rights report issued by ECC-Net' (04/11/2011)
Which? 'Olympic Fakes: don't get scammed' (23/11/2011)
The Mirror 'Tips on spotting fake Olympics ticket sites' (23/11/2011)

Selected Interviews and Media Requests

Mail on Sunday - Property scams in Northern Cyprus (02/04/2011)

BBC Radio 4, You & Yours – Timeshare Directive (21/02/2011)

Which? Travel – Car Hire Statistics (11/03/2011)

Which? Travel - Legal company offering to help consumer get money back (06/04/2011)

Good Housekeeping – General information panel about UK ECC (13/04/2011)

The Guardian – Recreational and cultural services' case studies (13/04/2011)

Money Mail – Volcanic Ash (13/04/2011)

Daily Telegraph – Timeshare Directive (04/05/2011)

Sunday Times – Car Hire (15/06/2011)

Money Mail – Car Hire (28/06/2011)

Good Housekeeping – Buying presents abroad (06/07/2011)

The Independent – Online tickets and secondary ticket market (12/07/2011)

Radio 4, Money Box – General consumer affairs (13/07/2011)

Ideal Home - Advice about buying from non-UK websites (27/09/2011)

Daily Mail - New rules on EU consumer rights to enter into force (11/10/2011)

BBC Rip-Off Britain – Filming regarding a case study, unfair contracts, buying from overseas, purchasing online or by phone (13/10/2011)

BBC Northern Ireland – Rights when purchasing online (04/11/2011)

BBC Wales – X-Ray consumer programme – Christmas Shopping online and counterfeit goods (11/11/11)

Sunday Times – General consumer advice (16/11/2011)

Daily Mail – Consumer rights shopping online (06/12/2011)



Thank you

Much of what the UK ECC does goes unrecognised. But amongst the large number of UK consumers which UK ECC consumer advisors helped in 2011, it was good to receive thanks from a gratifying number of people.

Each thank you is a recognition of the many hours of work our consumer advisors put into each case in order to help consumers to achieve the best resolution possible.

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

"Thanks for everything you and your team have done for me. I will never forget" Mrs C

"I have just received an email to tell me that money has been refunded into my account. I can't thank you enough for your help in this matter and I would be grateful if you can pass my thanks on to ECC Bulgaria as well." Mr P

"Thank you for your assistance about my claim. This has now been resolved and I wish to say thank you to everybody who has helped me." Mr H

"I really don't know what I would have done without you. This has taken such a weight off my mind. I am at a loss for words to express my relief." Ms N

"I have now resolved my problem and thank you for your help in this matter. I have now had a full refund." Mr H

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

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