



your update

UK European Consumer Centre

Information and support for consumers shopping across the EU

Welcome to the December issue of *Your Update* in 2016 - the final one of the year - brought to you by the UK European Consumer Centre. If you wish to subscribe to the UK ECC Newsletter – Your Update – please register for your copy of YOUR UPDATE from the home page of www.ukecc.net

For free legal advice, call the UK ECC on 01268 886690 weekdays between 9am and 5pm.

Andy Allen, UK European Consumer Centre Director

UK ECC urges consumers to get 'switched on' to their rights

Consumers are being urged by the UK ECC to get 'switched on' to their rights when shopping for electrical goods online in Europe.



The advice came during the UK's National Consumer Week (28 November to 2 December), as the UK ECC's research shows that electrical goods such as audio-visual, photographic and information-processing equipment bought in Europe continue to cause problems for UK consumers.

Electrical goods such as mobile phones, computers, cameras and TVs are some of the most popular goods bought online within Europe, according to the European Commission.

The UK ECC advises UK consumer buying electrical goods online in Europe that they should be aware of three key areas of consumer law:

- Pre-contract information.
- Your rights when you buy.
- If the product goes wrong.

For more details, check out the UK ECC's 'switched on' press release on the [website](#) and look at the website's consumer topics section for more information.

Online shopping has become the norm for many consumers and as this trend has grown, as many as one in six businesses now sells online and e-commerce accounts for 7% of retail turnover in the EU as a whole.

Please remember this essential advice when shopping online:

It is always important to know who you are dealing with. When using a trader's website, look for their address before completing your order. You may find it in the 'contact us' page or in their 'terms and conditions'. If the address is difficult to find, ask yourself why? What is the trader trying to hide?

Did you know?

Figures from the UK ECC show a 27.8% increase in the number of consumers asking for advice and support over disputes with traders based in a European country outside the UK.



The UK ECC (part of the European Consumer Centre 30-strong network), dealt with 12,985 information requests and cases in 2015 - an increase on the previous year's figure of 10,156. This includes cases on behalf of European consumers about UK traders.

Andy Allen, service director at the UK ECC, said: "This increase shows that there is no doubt that consumers increasingly need help when they find themselves in trouble dealing with trader-related purchases.

"Last year there was a big increase in people seeking help. This could be partly explained by the fact that UK residents are making more trips abroad and also spending more money whilst there.

"There also appears to be a greater awareness of the ECC-Net's service, illustrated by the rise in the number of people contacting us, coupled with a growth in website traffic and newsletter subscriptions over the course of 2015."

In the year to December 2015, visits to Europe went up by 10%, whilst UK residents spent 12.4% more when in Europe, according to the ONS' International Passenger Survey from the Office of National Statistics.

Case study:



A UK consumer had a flight booked from Zurich to Lisbon, but just two hours before it was due to take off, the flight was cancelled. Another flight was offered but this meant that the consumer arrived at his destination four and a half hours late.

Despite contacting the airline, the consumer was unable to secure the compensation he was entitled to under EU legislation (Regulation 261/2004). So he asked the UK ECC for help and his case was shared with our ECC-Network colleagues in Portugal. ECC Portugal contacted the trader and managed to get the 400 Euro the consumer was due.

Have you seen?

Hotels and villas are being complained about increasingly, say figures released by the UK ECC in its Annual Report 2015.

Complaints by UK consumers about accommodation services whilst in Europe now account for the third largest number of 'assistance cases' handled by the UK ECC.

UK residents are travelling abroad more frequently (the number of visits rose from 55.6 million in 2010 to 65.7 million visits in 2015, meaning that they need more accommodation.

But many consumers may not realise that visitors who book accommodation online have no right to cancel – it is not covered by the Consumer Contracts Regulations which came into force on 13 June 2014.

And the rights of the independent traveller within Europe are generally different from those of the package holiday traveller, who has extra rights under the Package Travel, Package Holiday and Package Tours Regulations 1992.

Problems in this category cover a range of things which can go wrong when booking or staying at independent accommodation: anything from disappointment at the facilities, to broken equipment right through even to non-existent accommodation.

In 2015, complaints about accommodation services rose from 5.9% (in 2014) to 8.8% of 'assistance cases' dealt with by the UK ECC. 'Assistance cases' are cases which require further help from our European Consumer Centre counterparts with a view to contacting the trader in the country in question on behalf of the consumer. These are cases where the consumer has tried to resolve their problems but attempts have failed. For the full story, check out <http://www.ukecc.net/>

Contact us:



[UK ECC contact details](#)

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Disclaimer: Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the UK European Consumer Centre cannot be held responsible for matters arising from any errors or omissions contained in this publication. The information provided is intended as a guide only and not as a legal interpretation.

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