



your update

UK European Consumer Centre

Information and support for consumers shopping across the EU

Welcome to the November issue of *Your Update* in 2016 - the third one of the year - brought to you by the UK European Consumer Centre. We hope to issue another before Christmas. 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

Drivers set to benefit from new initiative

Car hire websites are being told to make changes so that motorists know the true cost of hiring a car before they rent.



The action comes from the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and has developed from its work in 2015 in securing changes from five leading car hire firms to improve the way they deal with customers.

It is intended to ensure that consumers get transparent prices whether they book directly with a leading car hire firm or through a comparison website. See [here](#) for more information.

Andy Allen, UK ECC director, said: "Around half of all leisure rentals are said to begin with comparison websites. This action builds on work by the European Commission last year when it worked with car hire companies to review their practices towards consumers. At this stage the top five car rental companies operating in the EU - Avis-Budget, Enterprise, Europcar, Hertz and Sixt - pledged to better align car rental practices with consumer legislation set out by EU rules on [consumer rights](#), [unfair commercial practices](#) and [unfair terms](#)."

"The UK ECC is pleased that this initiative has been taken with car hire comparison websites (which are sometimes known as brokers). They have been sent letters by the CMA to explain consumer protection law and ask for consumers to be provided with easy-to-access information in seven key areas. We hope this starts to show real dividends in 2017."

UK ECC staff tip

Brexit has led to a trickle of consumers asking the UK ECC what effect this will have on consumer protection laws.

The UK ECC has prepared this statement: "Nothing is expected to change with regard to consumer protection immediately, as no doubt government will be focused on the difficult issues of trade access and freedom of movement in the initial stages of negotiation. Any negotiation will determine if any legislative

Did you know?

More than half - 55% - of consumers do not seek refunds or compensation when they experience a problem with a trader, according to the recent 'consumer detriment report' which has been released by Citizens Advice.



The report, which said that consumer problems cost UK consumers £22.9 billion in 2015 (an average of £446 for every adult).

It has prompted the consumer advice organisation UK European Consumer Centre to urge UK consumers to become more familiar with their rights.

The report, which counted the cost of consumer problems, looked at the monetary and time costs of consumer problems, as well as compensation, to estimate the total net cost for the UK population. It also investigates related issues such as the emotional impact of consumer problems.

Andy Allen, UK ECC director, said: "It is astonishing that more than half - 55% - of consumers did not seek a refund or compensation for their problem. Often this was because they felt that the process was too complicated or didn't think they would be compensated."

"Although this report deals with UK consumers who experience problems with purchases made in the UK, the problem may well be greater with UK consumers who buy products elsewhere in the EU - just because of the extra hurdles consumers foresee in dealing with problems in a different language or from a distance."

The UK European Consumer Centre is a service

changes will be made so, understandably there is a lot of uncertainty over what will happen. But it's worth noting also that until the UK formally leaves the EU, EU law will continue to apply to and within the UK.

"The UK ECC's host body – the Chartered Trading Standards Institute - will work hard to ensure that consumer protection is on the agenda during the negotiation process and will be working with the UK ECC to share experience and expertise on cross border consumer issues."

After our formal exit from the EU, it is expected that the Government will introduce a "Great Repeal Bill" which will replace the European Community Act 1972 (converting existing European law into British law).

which plays a vital role in empowering UK consumers by providing - free of charge - information, advice and help when dealing with problems about goods and services bought from another Member State.

Andy urged UK consumers who want to know their rights before they travel to Europe to read our booklet called 'Buying something in the EU? - What you should know' to understand their rights before they go.

The booklet is available in the publications section of the [UK ECC website](#).

More information about the Citizens Advice report can be found [here](#).

Case study:



A consumer from Ireland made a flight reservation over the telephone with a UK airline. He was advised that the cost would be €1,360.

He made the booking and received an email confirmation, but at this stage the consumer discovered he had been charged about €67 more than he had agreed to. When the consumer asked for clarification from the airline, he was advised that the price had increased at the time of the booking.

The consumer was unhappy with this response and contacted ECC Ireland for help. The case was brought to our attention at UK ECC and we contacted the airline on behalf of the consumer. We requested a refund of the difference in price, arguing he never accepted a new price and was given no option to cancel the reservation following the price increase. A refund of €67 was secured.

Have you seen?

Rules to scrap extra charges for [using your mobile phone abroad in Europe](#) are due to be considered by the European Commission next month (December). If passed, the draft rules will make extra charges a thing of the past from 15 June 2017.

The proposal to end roaming charges was agreed by the European Parliament and the European Council in October 2015, but details had to be thrashed out.

Travelling to another EU country with your phone is called roaming and at the moment there are charges for doing this. You may have noticed that in April 2016 there was a change to roaming charges when the European Commission set out a maximum amount that could be charged for using phone calls, texts and data when abroad. Read more about what [roaming is](#) and read more about roaming [tariffs](#). Also check out more information on the EU rules on [keeping the cost of your mobile phone costs down](#).

The draft rules mean that there will be no time-limits on surcharge-free roaming for travellers using mobile phones. But operators will have a safeguard mechanism against potential

Contact us:



[UK ECC contact details](#)

If you wish to subscribe to the UK ECC newsletter, please register for your copy of YOUR UPDATE from the home page of www.ukecc.net – where it says register now for your update newsletter.

abuses by consumers - they will be able to challenge customers if they detect the mobile device is not being used for periodic travel; then customers could face a surcharge.

The plans are now being put to regulators, member states, and interested parties - including mobile operators - before the rules are finalised in December. The rules are based on the principle of 'Roam like at home' - where customers pay domestic prices, irrespective of where they are travelling in the EU. It means that any charges which make using your phone abroad more expensive than at home will be scrapped.

But consumers please note: this only applies when using your phone abroad temporarily. If you use a UK SIM in your phone and you live in Germany for example, the phone company can still charge you extra.

You can also subscribe to receive news items and leaflets from the home page of

www.ukecc.net



Brought to you by the UK European Consumer Centre

This UK ECC Newsletter 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 2014-20.

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.

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