



*your update*

## Information and support for consumers shopping across the EU

Welcome to just the second 2015 issue of Your Update, brought to you this Autumn by the UK European Consumer Centre. I want this newsletter to give you a flavour of what the UK ECC does to help consumers, show examples of cases we have worked on and give you useful tips and advice to make the most of your cross-border shopping. I hope you find this newsletter useful and look forward to receiving more editions in 2015. 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](http://www.ukecc.net) *Andy Allen, UK European Consumer Centre Director*

### More than 90% of UK consumers travel to Europe more than they did 10 years ago



UK residents are venturing to Europe more than they did a decade ago.

That was one of the findings from an online survey which was carried out in the run-up to the 10th anniversary celebrations of consumer advice organisations in the European Consumer

Centre network this summer.

The survey quizzed consumers about anything from the cost of making international mobile phone calls to rules surrounding what traders can charge for travel tickets.

There were just 10 short questions in the survey, to tie in with the campaign theme of '10', designed to reinforce the essential message that consumers have been seeking the help of European Consumer Centres with problems for the last 10 years. The ECC network is 10 years old this year and has helped hundreds of thousands of consumers over that decade.

Hundreds of consumers, keen to put their knowledge of consumer rights to the test, took part in the survey on the UK ECC website over the course of just a couple of weeks.

Andy Allen, UK ECC Director, said: "The result of our online survey - that UK consumers are travelling to Europe more than they did 10 years ago - echoes our experience here at the UK European Consumer Centre. Every year the UK ECC helps more and more consumers. The reason for this appears to be a greater public awareness of the service, as this increase is coupled with a growth in website traffic and newsletter subscriptions.

"At the same time as our work has increased, so has expenditure on holidays and visits to friends and family, according to the Office of National Statistics' International Passenger Survey.

"Consumer losses across Europe when shopping cross-border are estimated to be

### UK ECC staff top tip . . .



With many people taking holidays during the winter months, it may be worth reminding consumers of a few hints and tips about paying for that holiday accommodation.

If you are asked to pay by bank transfer and this is the only method offered, be cautious and check the trader out fully before payment is sent.

If you book a hotel and are then asked for money when you are not expecting to be asked, you should go back to the original booking to check the terms and conditions to find out when and how you should expect to make payment. If in doubt, don't do it.

Consumers can do a number of things to protect themselves:

- Watch out for unsolicited approaches by email, if you are not expecting it. Check your original booking and the book's terms and conditions to see when and how payment should be made.
- Be wary of requests for payment only by money transfer service or bank transfer.
- Be suspicious if you are contacted by someone who is overly familiar and

between 500 million Euro and 1 billion Euro [taken from a European Commission Staff Working Paper]. This, when viewed alongside our increasing workload, highlights the importance of the network of European Consumer Centres in helping consumers in their disputes with EU traders."

The UK European Consumer Centre is part of ECC-Net. There are 30 such centres in the EU, plus Iceland and Norway. The network will assist consumers in the attempt to resolve the complaint. Although the ECC-Net has been going for 10 years, the UK ECC itself only started in 2007. Find out more about the [10th anniversary](#).

friendly with you.

- Guard against being put under pressure to make a decision or a payment - if you are given only a short timeframe in which to make payment, this affects how much time you take to consider what you are doing and you are more likely to make the wrong decision.

## Case study:



An Irish consumer hired a car at an airport in the UK. Despite having returned the vehicle within the correct opening hours, the trader failed to inspect the car.

After a few days, the consumer's card was debited nearly €495. The vehicle provider argued that damage to the car had been identified; however no evidence or breakdown of charges was provided.

Having examined the accident report, the consumer noticed that the damage in question had been caused to a different car model than that rented by the consumer. The consumer tried to clarify the issue with the vehicle provider but to no avail. He then sought the assistance of ECC Ireland, who contacted the UK ECC.

The matter was referred to the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association in the UK and the consumer received a full refund. Read more about car hire in the UK ECC's ['car hire across the EU leaflet'](#).

## Did you know?



... there are now new rules if you are a motorist wanting to hire a car whilst abroad, as the old paper counterpart of UK driving licences has been computerised.

This means that if motorists want to hire a car they may have to take a special code with them to show convictions for offences such as speeding or to provide evidence of the vehicles they are allowed to drive. Not all vehicle hire companies ask for these details, however, so check with the hire company beforehand.

To obtain the special code, motorists have to log on to the [DVLA website](#) beforehand. For those who do not have internet access, a phone number is available: 0300 083 0013. Each code is valid for 21 days from the date motorists obtain it and it can only be used once (to protect privacy). A motorist can have up to 15 active checks at any given time. More details [here](#).

## Have you seen?

## Contact us:



. . . that the European Commission publishes a list of ["banned airlines in the EU"](#).

For many years, the EU has agreed to keep European airspace free from airlines and aircraft considered to be unsafe, by banning such airlines from operating within the EU. The European Commission checks and updates the list of banned airlines every few months. Here is the [latest list](#) .

### [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](http://www.ukecc.net) – where it says register now for your update newsletter.

You can also subscribe to receive news items and leaflets from the home page of [www.ukecc.net](http://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**