



your update

UK European Consumer Centre

Information and support for consumers shopping across the EU

Welcome to the September issue of *Your Update* in 2017 brought to you by the UK European Consumer Centre. This edition reports on scams and the over 50s, EU air passenger rights and complaints about air passenger travel, holiday booking fraud and a case study about a robotic vacuum cleaner. 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

Mature consumers urged 'play your part - act on scams'

Over 50-year-olds account for at least 58% of UK consumers who bring their complaints about cross-border shopping to consumer advice organisation the UK European Consumer Centre (UK ECC) – and that could be an underestimate.



According to Andy Allen, service director at the UK ECC, not everyone the UK ECC handles a case for discloses their age. He said: "We suspect that over-50s actually account for a greater amount than the 58% our figures indicate.

"Older consumers can be targeted for a number of reasons. Sometimes they are targeted for particular types of purchases – such as timeshare and holiday clubs – or for scams because they are perceived by many to be more financially stable than some young people. Older people can also appear to be more trusting than younger consumers, who we feel sometimes ask more searching questions about purchases."

There has been a notable rise in people who were 'prior' victims, showing a recurring cycle of scams targeted at the same person, according to Action Fraud victimology reports for 2014/2015.

Now, following Scams Awareness Month, older consumers are being urged by the UK ECC to 'Play your part - Act on Scams'.

Andy said: "Scams can be perpetuated from anywhere across the EU – they are not just limited to the UK. Consumers in the UK can fall foul of EU-scammers from the comfort of their own homes (via email, the internet or the phone) or whilst visiting Europe.

"Not everyone knows what to do if they are targeted by a scam – that's why in this campaign we're urging everyone to play their part and act on scams in their community. We want people to report all scams they receive, not just those where they lose money.

Did you know?

Analysis of complaints handled by the UK European Consumer Centre show that the proportion of complaints made by UK consumers about passenger air travel is decreasing (compared to those in other subject areas).



Close monitoring of the 2016 numbers show that 'passenger transport by air' accounted for 19.3% of all 'assistance case' grievances handled by the UK ECC. In 2015 this was 23.8%.

Andy Allen, service director at the UK ECC, said that this could be partly because some airlines now use an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) body to help consumers resolve their complaints. Whilst it's not compulsory for traders to actually use an ADR scheme, EU legislation requires traders to inform consumers of an approved ADR body if they've already been through their own customer service procedure.

Andy said: "We still get a sizeable number of complaints about passenger air travel, and we are very happy to help consumers either by letting know their rights, by doing an initial assessment of their case or by handling their complaint."

Consumers should check out the UK ECC [website](http://www.ukecc.net) for details about common problems and about UK consumers' air passenger rights, including details of any compensation due under Regulation 261/2004 for flight delay or cancellation.

Common problems when UK consumers complain about flights can include flight delays, denied boarding or booking/ticket problems.

"Scams can generate real upset and misery; it's not just about financial loss."

If you are worried that you may have been the victim of a scam whilst making an EU-purchase:

- **Call** the UK European Consumer Centre for practical advice and support
- For UK-related scams, **contact** the Citizens Advice consumer service on 03454 04 05 06
- For both EU-related and UK-related scams, also **report** the scam to Action Fraud at 0300 123 2040 or visit www.actionfraud.police.uk
- **Tell** a friend, neighbour or relative about any scams you become aware of

UK ECC staff tip - Air Berlin

Have you been affected by the Air Berlin bankruptcy? UK consumers worried about flights they've booked with the airline can contact the UK European Consumer Centre for details about their rights and about the liquidation process.

The air carrier will continue its business for the next couple of months, having received credit from the state, so consumers who've bought tickets are being advised that they should not worry about flights being cancelled at least for the moment. For more details about the process, contact the [UK European Consumer Centre](#).

Case study:



Mr S, a UK consumer, bought a robotic vacuum cleaner from a Germany company that was advertising on a Luxembourg-based online marketplace. After a few months, the vacuum cleaner stopped working and both the supplier and the online marketplace refused to help any further.

The consumer approached the UK ECC for help with the problem and we shared the case with ECC Germany, who contacted the seller and informed them of their legal obligations when entering into contracts with consumers. The seller refused to co-operate with the ECC-Network and eventually the online marketplace acknowledged the customer's loyalty and provided him with a full refund.

Have you seen?

A report compiled by the City of London Police's National Fraud Intelligence Bureau states that the number of reported cases of holiday booking fraud rose by almost 19% in 2016, with the most common types relating to the sale of airline tickets, booking accommodation online and timeshare sales.

The Bureau is warning that customers may be particularly vulnerable in 2017 as fraudsters could take advantage of overseas accommodation and flights being at a premium by offering "good deals" which could then fail to materialize, leaving people out of pocket and with either no flights or nowhere to stay.

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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