



your update

UK European Consumer Centre

Information and support for consumers shopping across the EU

Welcome to the Winter issue of *Your Update* in 2017 brought to you by the UK European Consumer Centre. This edition includes reports on the UK ECC's 10th anniversary and National Consumer Week as well as a case study about ghost-hunting. 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

Andy Allen, UK European Consumer Centre Director

Marking 10 years of consumer complaints

A ghost-hunting device, flowers, hair transplant, human fingers in dog food and a masturbation aid are just a few of the more [bizarre subjects](#) for complaints received from UK consumers by the UK European Consumer Centre consumer advice line within the past year.



Based in the UK, the UK ECC is celebrating its 10th anniversary with the knowledge that it has helped more than 84,000 UK consumers since it started.

Andy Allen, service director at the UK ECC, said: "It's fantastic that our consumer advisors have been able to help so many UK consumers in the past 10 years.

"We also remain one of the busiest centres within the European Consumer Centre network of 30 centres - we handled more than 10,000 cases (complaints and information requests) last year (2016) alone – and we do tend to get some 'more unusual' enquiries. No matter how unusual the case is, every complaint is important to the consumer and we always do our best. There are, of course, the more common subject areas for complaint.

"Our aim is to help as many UK consumers as possible who encounter problems with a trader based in Europe, to achieve a resolution: a replacement, repair, refund or cancellation of their contract. We also receive cases from European consumers who are having problems with a UK trader and every effort is made to contact the trader to resolve the complaint.

"The types of complaints the UK ECC has dealt with in its 10 years have been as varied as the countries within the EU. We have certainly had some bizarre complaint, but they are all part of the rich tapestry of cases which have helped us build up an excellent insight into the problems UK consumers are experiencing when buying in Europe and also what problems European consumers are having when shopping in the UK."

Did you know?



National Consumer Week has given the UK ECC an opportunity to remind consumers that the online purchase of health or

beauty products such as slimming or diet pills, face creams and tooth whitening merchandise could pose a potential problem in some cases.

It has issued a [checklist](#) for consumers to consider if they have ordered samples or accepted an offer which has led to being stuck in a subscription trap.

Two videos have also been produced in connection with the UK ECC's support of National Consumer Week. The first is a [short animated video](#), featuring Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf, which draws attention to what can happen if you are scammed online. The animation is designed to make consumers think before they sign and to understand what they are getting into.

The second is a [60-second video](#) about subscription traps with top tips on how to stay safe online. It is part of a series designed to draw consumers' attention to potential consumer problems and consumer rights.

[National Consumer Week](#) is an annual consumer education campaign coordinated by Citizens Advice and other members of the UK's Consumer Protection Partnership, including the UK European Consumer Centre. This year's campaign focuses on subscription issues and subscription traps.

Subscription issues can include signing up for a fixed term deal, trial, or promotion where it is unclear that the consumer will be auto-enrolled into ongoing payments.

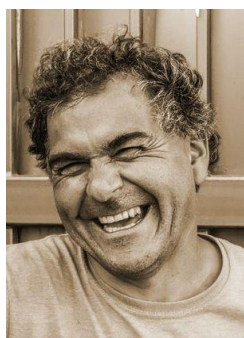
Problems relating to transport (including passenger transport by air and car rental), recreation and culture (including photographic and video equipment) and restaurants, hotels and accommodation (including timeshares and discount holiday clubs) have dominated the issues raised by UK consumers about traders across Europe.

The UK ECC service, which has its UK base in Essex, is free for consumers and is co-funded by the European Commission and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The UK ECC is delivered by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute.

Counterfeit Christmas advice

Be wary of counterfeit goods this Christmas. The cost-cutting approach of most counterfeiting operations means products are likely to be poor quality, with a significantly shorter lifespan than that of a legitimate product. Such products will generally not meet required safety standards, putting you and your families at significant risk. Read the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Counterfeit Christmas advice [here](#).

Case study:



A UK man paid 4,200 Euro for a hair transplant to be done in Hungary. The work carried a guarantee. The consumer carried out all of the post-operative advice, including massaging his hair, but said that after at least six months the operation hadn't worked and that his hair regrowth was patchy. The consumer contacted the trader, who said that the guarantee wasn't valid because their doctor had already advised the consumer that the transplant was not likely to work all over his head.

UK ECC service director Andy Allen said: "The consumer approached the UK ECC for help, saying that the treatment hadn't been successful and wanted the procedure to be done again. We took the case up with our Bulgarian counterparts, who secured agreement for the trader for a partial £1,000 refund. The trader's doctor maintained that the consumer's head wasn't suitable for a full hair transplant. The consumer said he did not want to accept the refund and was advised that his only alternative was to pursue the matter through the courts."

Have you seen?

In the 10 years that the UK ECC has been helping thousands of consumers with problems with traders based in Europe, [EU legislation](#) has made great strides in improving consumer protection. To support the anniversary, the UK ECC (part of the ECC Network), has taken a look at some of these changes.

Andy Allen, UK ECC service director, said: "The UK ECC has a vital role to play in helping the thousands of UK consumers who find themselves in dispute with EU companies over problems with purchases. The service is an essential part of a consumer's armoury in their bid to get what is rightfully theirs.

"But without the necessarily legislation in place, our job would be a lot harder and consumers would be in a much more precarious position."

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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