



Get help and advice on your purchase abroad

*The European Consumer Centres' Network
2011 Annual Report*



Health and
Consumers

The ECC-Net is co-financed by the European Commission and national governments.

This report describes the activities of the ECC-Net in 2011.

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More information about the ECC-Net at:
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Foreword

I am pleased to present to you the 2011 Annual Report from the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net).

Year after year, the ECC-Net contributes to further enhancing consumer confidence across the EU. It is the only EU-wide network that can inform citizens about their rights when they purchase cross-border and that can offer free help when things go wrong.

The work of the ECC-Net helps to empower Europe's consumers, enabling them to make the most of the opportunities offered by the European single market.

In 2011, the ECC-Net dealt with more than 70,000 cases.

In 2011 we undertook several projects to raise the Network's visibility and these have delivered promising results. We have created a new corporate website, accessible in ten languages, focussed on advice on the most demanded issues, including air travel, car rental, package holidays and timeshare. Before the holiday season we ran a campaign displaying advertising on major pan-European travel and tourism portals covering twelve pilot countries. This campaign was complemented by text advertising in popular search engines in the twelve pilot countries. The visible results of this campaign are promising and we will therefore continue this project in 2012.

One of the key Network's activities undertaken in 2011 was the Air Passengers Rights Day on 7th July, organised in 27 airports and 23 countries across the EU. Under the motto 'Pack a little consumer know-how, Europe offers you free help and advice', ECCs provided advice and help on air passenger rights, for example in cases of flight cancellations, delays or baggage loss.



Another key achievement was the "Online cross-border mystery shopping" project that reflected the state of the e-commerce within the internal market.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the ECC staff, the Member States and the Host Organisations for their work which well deserves the Commission's support.

The ECC-Net can indeed be one of the key tools to empower European consumers, allowing them to take full advantage of their EU rights.

John Dalli
European Commissioner for Health and Consumers

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Executive Summary

In 2011, European Consumer Centres (ECCs) handled over 70,000 contacts with consumers who experienced a problem when shopping cross-border (40% were information request and 60% assistance for handling a complaint with a trader located in a different country).

The 29 ECCs in the 27 EU Member States plus Iceland and Norway form an efficient assistance network which helps consumers fully benefit from the Single Market and be assured that their rights are equally protected wherever they shop.

The network is co-funded by the EU since its creation in 2005. After a rapid progression of its activities its use by consumers has stabilised since 2010.

Year after year, the pattern of complaints remains basically the same: more than half of them relate to a purchase on the internet and 20% by distance selling, the major concerned sectors are transport and especially by air, recreation and leisure, hotels and restaurants (respectively 31.9%, 20.3% and 11.7% of all complaints). The problems are relatively well distributed among: the product/service itself, the delivery, the price & payment and the contract terms (respectively 34.1%, 28.6%, 11.1% and 10.2% of all complaints).

In 2011, typical examples of assistance to consumers would be help brought by ECCs to claim a compensation of hotel expenses after the cancellation of flights due to the Icelandic volcanic ash cloud. This compensation is foreseen in Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights.

Complaints most commonly concern this Regulation together with Directive 97/7/EC on the protection of consumers in respect of distance contracts, Directive 1999/44/EC on certain aspects of the sale of consumer goods and associated guarantees, Directive 2005/29/EC concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and Directive 2000/31/EC on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market.

More than half of the complaints could be resolved positively. In 2011, 41% of the complaints were closed after the ECCs reached an amicable settlement with the trader and 13% passed on to other organisations of which 7% to an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)¹ entity (a solution increasing regularly with the development of such schemes).

In 2011, the ECC-Net was also particularly active to raise the awareness on cross-border consumer rights: a study on air passenger rights was published, a real life test of the performance of online sites selling consumer goods across border was conducted and a brand new site for ECCs was launched together with a pilot advertisement campaign on the help that ECCs can bring to consumers purchasing travel and package tours.

¹ For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/redress_cons/adr_en.htm



Your ECC-Net

- Is present in each EU country, Norway and Iceland
- Is free of charge for you!
- Is co-financed by the European Commission and national governments
- Has a fully dedicated staff who can provide you with professional consumer advice
- Offers you advice before buying goods or services to help you save money and avoid problems
- Offers you advice on your rights when you shop in the EU, Norway or Iceland
- Offers you free help finding a solution when things go wrong
- Offers you assistance contacting a foreign trader when you have problems resolving your complaint
- Offers you advice on other ways to deal with your complaint if an amicable solution is not possible



*Identity Card
of the ECC-Net*

What is the ECC-Net?

ECC-Net is an EU-wide network that provides information to consumers on their rights when shopping cross-border and helps them find solutions if something goes wrong.

ECC-Net is operational since 2005.

There is a European Consumer Centre in 29 countries – every EU Member State², Norway and Iceland. For further information, please visit the website at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/ecc-net>

The ECC-Net is co-financed by the EU and the participating countries. For the period covering the actions undertaken in 2011, the EU contributed close to €4.5 million to support the ECCs.

The services provided by the European Consumer Centres are free of charge.

The ECC-Net handled almost 416,000 contacts during the last 7 years.

Why the ECC-Net?

European consumers should feel confident when purchasing in another EU country as they do at home. The ECC-Net is dedicated to helping European consumers enjoy the opportunities that the EU internal market offers when shopping across the borders. The Network is there to promote consumer confidence by advising citizens on their consumer rights and providing valuable help when things go wrong.

Ten good reasons to contact a European Consumer Centre

- **The service is free of charge!**
- **It is based in every EU country, Norway and Iceland.**
- **It is co-financed by the EU and the participating countries.**
- **It has a fully dedicated staff who can provide shoppers with professional consumer advice.**
- **It offers an effective alternative to legal action against traders.**
- **It offers advice before buying goods or services to help save money and avoid problems.**
- **It offers advice on consumer rights when shopping in Europe.**
- **It offers free help finding a solution when things go wrong.**
- **It offers assistance contacting foreign traders when a consumer has problems resolving his complaint.**
- **It offers advice on other ways to deal with a complaint if an amicable solution is not possible.**



What problems can the ECC-Net help with?

The ECC-Net deals with any cross-border problem between a consumer and a trader. It covers consumer related issues such as online shopping, buying goods and services, air travel, package travel, timeshare and holiday clubs, car hire in Europe, etc.

² ECC Greece was not operational in 2011.

Services provided by the ECC-Net

The services which ECC-Net provides to consumers focus on business-to-consumer problems when shopping cross-border, either in person or in the form of distance purchases (mainly e-commerce). The ECC-Net:

- Provides information on both EU and national consumer protection rules.
- Gives advice to consumers facing a cross-border related problem and helps them contact the trader in order to reach an amicable solution.
- Informs consumers on alternative ways to deal with the complaints if they can not be solved amicably with the trader, e.g. ADR or a Court, using the European Small Claims Procedure³ or the European Order for Payment Procedure⁴.
- Cooperates with other EU-wide networks, such as the Consumer Protection Co-operation network⁵, FIN-NET⁶, SOLVIT⁷ and the EJM in Civil and Commercial Matters⁸.
- Provides valuable input for the European Commission on consumer policy issues.

What problems can NOT the ECC-Net help with?

The ECC-Net can not help in business to business issues or if there is no cross-border element involved (national cases) or if a trader is established outside the EU, Norway

³ For more information, see: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/consumers/protection_of_consumers/l16028_en.htm

⁴ For more information, see: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/judicial_cooperation_in_civil_matters/l16023_en.htm

⁵ For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/enforcement/index_en.htm

⁶ For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/fin-net/index_en.htm

⁷ For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/site/index_en.htm

⁸ For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/index_en.htm

or Iceland. The ECC-Net can not deal with a case if the other party is a governmental structure (ministry, national agency, etc). The ECC-Net can not enforce the law and/or apply sanctions on traders; it can not provide redress either. The ECC-Net cannot represent the consumer before a Court.

How to contact a European Consumer Centre?

Consumers from the EU, Norway or Iceland, who want to know more about their rights when shopping in Europe or need assistance, can reach the ECC in their own country by phone, fax, e-mail or enquiry form. The contact details of the Centres are available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/ecc-net>

How does the ECC-Net work?

If a consumer has a problem with a trader situated in another country, he first needs to contact the trader himself in order to find a solution. If a solution can not be found, the consumer may contact the ECC in his country. The ECC in the consumer's country will liaise with the ECC in the country where the trader is located, then the ECC of the trader's country who knows the national rules contacts the trader in order to reach an amicable solution.

Where an ECCs' intervention does not lead to an amicable solution with the trader, ECCs will – as much as possible – inform and assist consumers in accessing an appropriate national ADR entity and/or propose other possibilities to solve their problems (such as the European Small Claims Procedure or European Order for Payment Procedure) so as to try to avoid the lengthy and costly normal Court procedures.

With the help of the European Commission the ECC-Net is developing and improving the efficiency of its tools: since 2007, the Centres are using a common IT-tool to register and share consumer requests and compile statistics.

Host organisations of the European Consumer Centres in 2011

COUNTRY	HOST ORGANISATION ⁹	TYPE OF ORGANISATION ¹⁰
AUSTRIA	Verein für Konsumenteninformation, VKI (Austrian Consumers' Association)	NGO
BELGIUM	Organisation Indépendante pour la Protection du Consommateur a.s.b.l – OIPC, Test-Achats (Independent Organisation for Consumer Protection)	NGO
BULGARIA	Commission for Consumer Protection	G
CYPRUS	Competition and Consumer Protection Service, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	G
CZECH REPUBLIC	Czech Trade Inspection Authority	G
DENMARK	Konkurrence- og Forbrugerstyrelsen (Danish Competition and Consumer Authority)	G
ESTONIA	Consumer Protection Board of Estonia	G
FINLAND	Finnish Consumer Agency and Ombudsman	G
FRANCE	Centre Européen de la Consommation (Zentrum für Europäischen Verbraucherschutz e. V.)	NGO
GERMANY	Zentrum für Europäischen Verbraucherschutz e. V. (Centre Européen de la Consommation)	NGO
GREECE ¹¹	Hellenic Consumers Ombudsman	G
HUNGARY	Nemzeti Fogyasztóvédelmi Hatóság (Hungarian Authority for Consumer Protection)	G
ICELAND	Neytendasamtökin (The Consumers' Association of Iceland)	NGO
IRELAND	National Consumer Agency	I
ITALY	Adiconsum (Associazione Difesa Consumatori e Ambiente) CTCU (Centro Tutela Consumatori Utenti Alto Adige)	NGO NGO
LATVIA	Latvian Consumer Rights Protection Centre	G
LITHUANIA	State Consumer Rights Protection Authority	G
LUXEMBOURG	Centre Européen des Consommateurs – Groupement d'Intérêt Economique (GIE) Luxemburg	I
MALTA	Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority	G
NETHERLANDS	Stichting Het Juridisch Loket (Foundation the Legal Service Counter)	G
NORWAY	The Consumer Council of Norway	G
POLAND	Urząd Ochrony Konkurencji i Konsumentów (Office of Competition and Consumer Protection)	G
PORTUGAL	Direcção-Geral do Consumidor (Directorate-General for Consumers)	G
ROMANIA	Romanian Association for Consumer Protection	NGO
SLOVENIA	Zveza potrošnikov Slovenije, ZPS (Slovene Consumers' Association)	NGO
SPAIN	National Institute for Consumption (NIC)	G
SLOVAKIA	Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic	G
SWEDEN	Konsumentverket (Swedish Consumer Agency)	G
UNITED KINGDOM	The Trading Standards Institute (TSI)	NGO

⁹ For updated information as from 2012 check: <http://ec.europa.eu/ecc-net>

¹¹ ECC Greece was not operational in 2011. The information valid as from 2012.

¹⁰ NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation. G: Governmental. I: Independent.



*Empowering
and assisting*
consumers

Only informed and empowered consumers can play a full role in the European single market. This means strengthening their ability and confidence to buy goods and services cross-border.

The ECC-Net contributes greatly to empowering consumers and enabling them to make the most of the opportunities offered by the European single market. The ECC-Net is the only European network that can inform citizens about their rights when shopping cross-border and offer them free help when things go wrong.

In 2011, the Centres received 42,099 requests for advice and assistance with cross-border complaints and disputes. The Centres handled 28,108 requests for information.

The overall number of contacts in 2011 was more than 70,000.

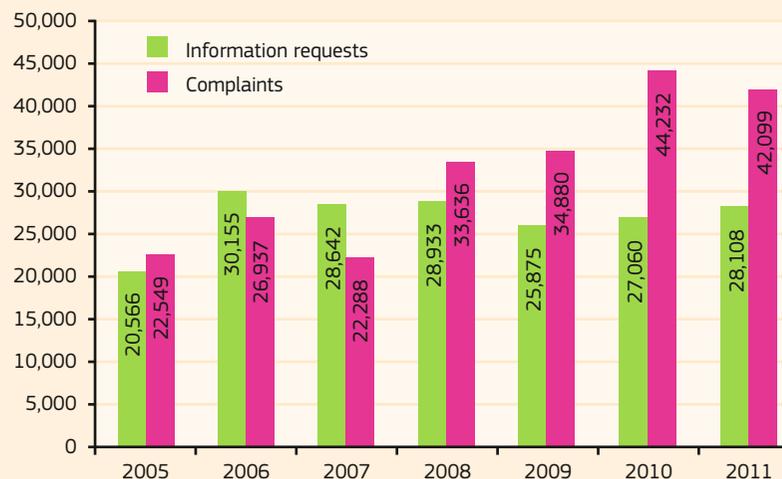
The ECC-Net provides advice on ADR procedures for consumers if an amicable agreement cannot be reached directly with the trader. ADR entities usually call in a third party, such as an arbitrator, mediator or ombudsman, to help consumers and traders find a solution. The ECC-Net informs consumers about other possible ways to deal with their complaints, e.g. European Small Claims Procedure or European Order for Payment Procedure.

As part of the well functioning of the European single market, the ECC-Net cooperates with other EU-wide networks, such as the CPC Network, FIN-NET, SOLVIT and EJM in civil and commercial matters.

The ECC-Net provides valuable input for the European Commission on consumer policy issues. The Network is in a unique position to know the everyday concerns and problems of consumers and it is increasingly providing input to policy-makers at national and EU levels.

One third of the ECCs handled more than half of all complaints and information requests. The United Kingdom, Germany and France contributed for about half of the total complaints handled by the ECC-Net. ECC Italy received the highest number of information requests in 2011.

Volume of information requests and complaints



Breakdown of total complaints 2011

Main EU laws concerned by complaints 2011	Percentage
Directive 1997/7/EC distance contracts	21%
Directive 1999/44/EC sale of consumer goods and associated guarantees	12%
Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 denied boarding and cancellation or long delay of flights	9%
National Legislation	8%
Directive 2005/29/EC on unfair commercial practices	5%
Others (18 applicable laws)	45%



Statistics

In 2011, nearly 32% of the recorded complaints related to the transport sector. Roughly 20% of the complaints were linked to leisure activities, such as recreational and cultural services – whereas almost 12% concerned restaurants, hotels and accommodation services.

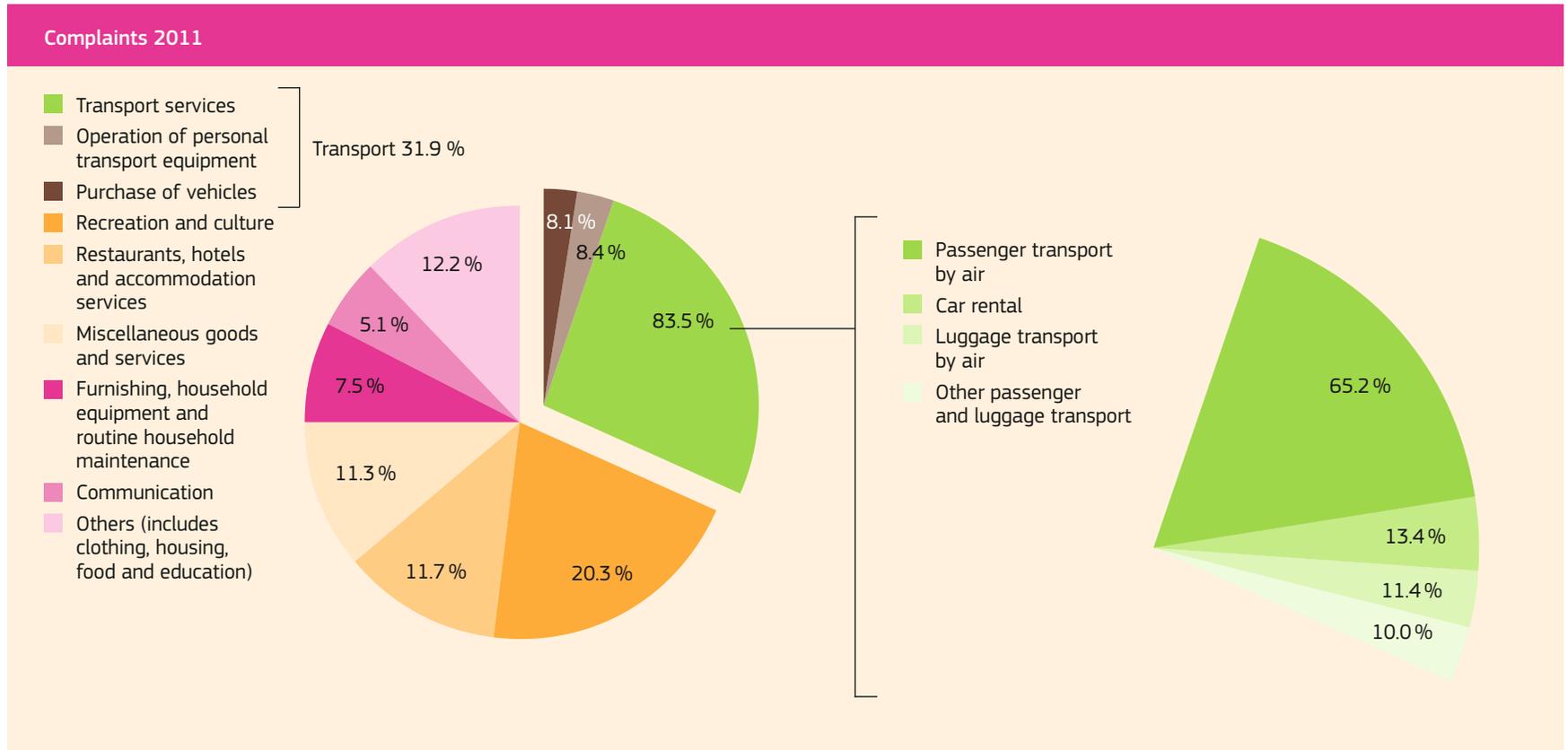
Since 2008, transport/recreation and culture/restaurants, hotels and accommodation services remained three most prominent sectors where consumers experienced cross-border problems.

Out of 31.9% complaints related to the transport sector, 83.5% concerned transport services (passenger or luggage transport by air, road, railway, car rental or other purchased transport services). 8.1% were linked to the purchase of vehicles – while 8.4% concerned operation of personal transport equipment.

Two Bulgarian citizens: “Thanks to the intervention of the ECC-Net, the trader agreed to reimburse the accommodation expenses we had, after our flight was cancelled!”

For further details, please refer to Bulgaria's national page.





Out of 83.5% of complaints related to the transport services, 65.2% particularly concerned passenger transport by air. 11.4% of complaints concerned luggage transport by air.

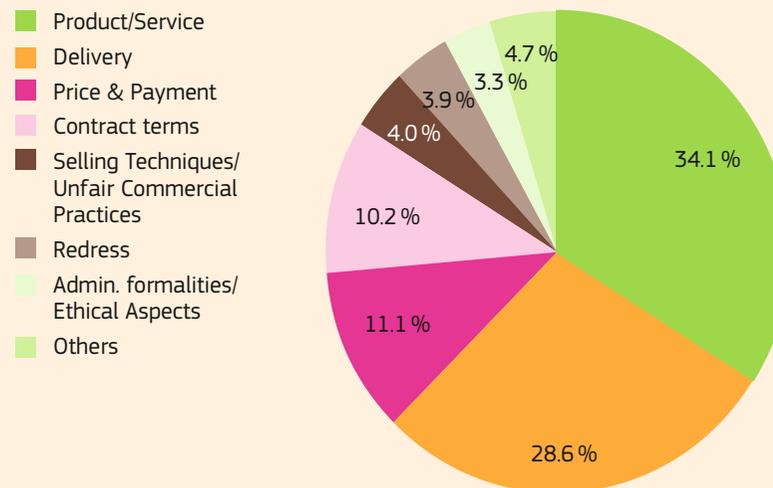
13.4% of consumers complaining about transport services had cross-border problems with car rental.

Compared to 2010, complaints related to passenger transport by air fell by 3.1% (68.3% in 2010). Car rental complaints rose by 1.7% in 2011 (from 11.7% in 2010).

The most common problem consumers faced in 2011 was with the quality of the product or the service (34.1%). Complaints about the delivery of the product/service represented almost one third of the total (28.6%).

Complaints related to contract terms and price & payment accounted respectively for 10.2% and 11.1% of the total amount.

Nature of complaints 2011



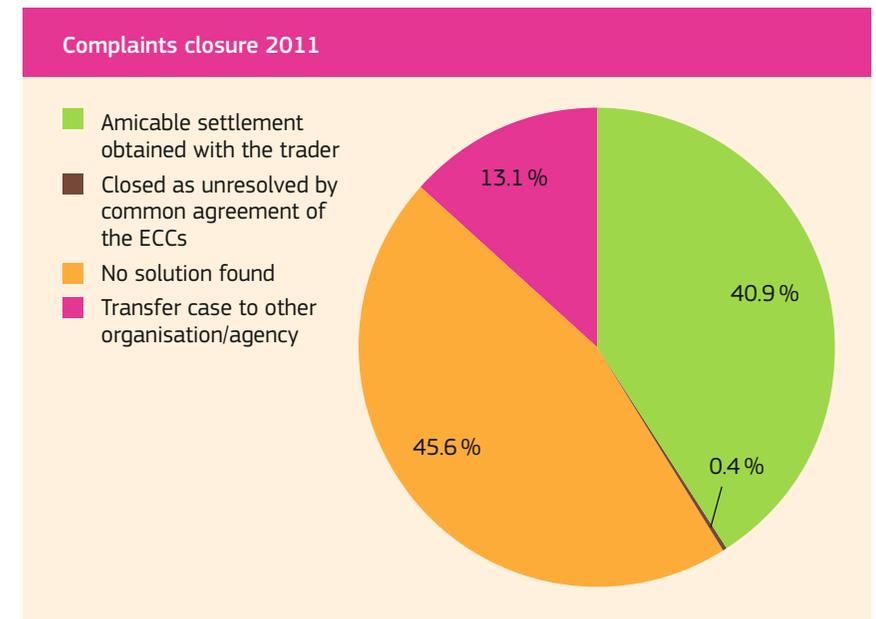
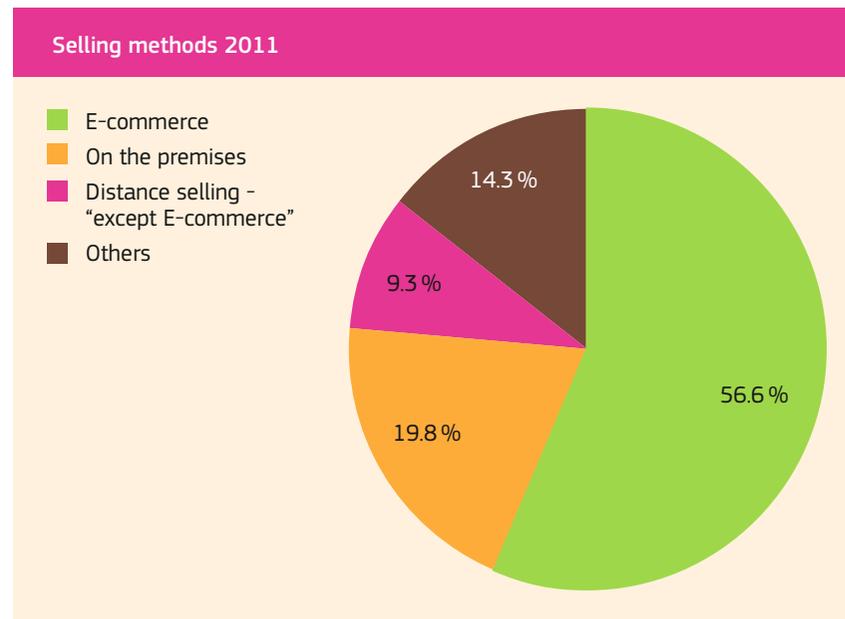
An Irish consumer: "I bought a weather station from a Danish website. Since it didn't work, I sent it back to the trader at my own cost. Then, he sent it back to me three times; however, it still didn't work! The trader refused to reimburse me. But thanks to the ECC-Net's intervention, I was reimbursed in full for the weather station and the delivery costs."

For further details, please refer to Denmark's national page.



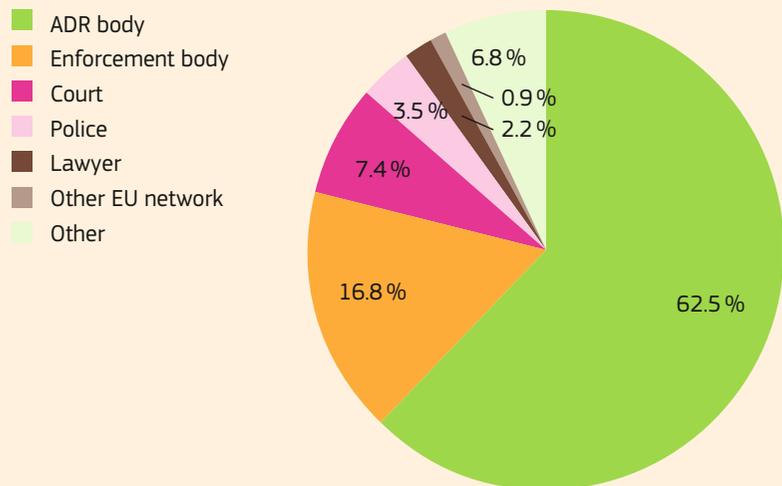
In more than half of the cases, consumers bought the product or the service online. The E-commerce transactions accounted for 56.6% of all complaints, compared with nearly 20% linked to purchases on the premises.

40.9% of complaints were closed after an amicable settlement was reached with the trader. Where no amicable settlement was possible, the ECCs passed complaints on to other organisations or agencies (13.1%). So in the majority of cases (54%) the ECC-Net was able to help consumers resolve their cross-border problems.



Out of 13.1% of the complaints transferred to other organisations or agencies, 62.5% were passed on to ADR entities (more than 830 complaints). This was a steady increase in the ECC's work on guiding consumers through ADR entities over 2009 (50% of the complaints transferred) and 2010 (58.5% of the complaints transferred).

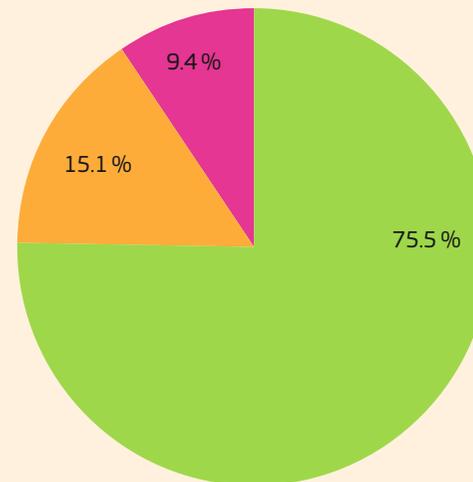
Complaints transferred to other organisations or agencies 2011



The second most frequent entity to which complaints were transferred was enforcement bodies, at 16.8%.

Closure complaints – No solution why?

- Lack of agreement from the trader
- Claim unfounded
- Lack of agreement from the consumer



In 75.5% of the complaints (3,278), the trader did not agree to find a solution to the problem raised by the consumer.

In 15.1% of the complaints consumers' claims were unfounded: this was 3.1 percentage points more than in 2010 (12%).

In 9.4% of the complaints the consumer did not agree with the suggested amicable solution, 1.4 percentage points more than in 2010 (8%).



Studies and information campaigns

In addition to directly helping consumers, the ECC-Net is very active in promoting the awareness of cross-border rights for consumers and economic operators by publishing specific studies and organising campaigns.

Online Cross-Border Mystery Shopping – State of the E-Union

Since many consumers face problems when shopping online, some ECCs joined forces to test in real life situations how traders respected consumers' rights. This "mystery-shopping exercise" involved 305 purchases in 28 countries. Delivery from abroad turned out to be reliable for 94% of the orders completed, a proportion equivalent to similar tests made for purely domestic purchases. However, for almost 60% of the websites initially selected as having characteristics permitting a cross-border transaction, the purchase order could not be completed. This exercise showed that one of the major barriers to the development of cross-border online shopping is the lack of traders willing to sell to consumers in other countries.

Air Passenger Rights Report 2011 – in the aftermath of the Volcanic Ash Crisis

The Volcanic Ash Crisis in 2010 triggered numerous problems for air travellers across Europe linked to cancelled flights and lost luggage. Roughly one third of the cases presented to ECCs could reach an amicable solution between the consumers and the airlines. The report on Air Passenger Rights – published in October 2011 – examined how ECCs could help travellers in those circumstances and more generally how passenger rights are respected.

For the full reports, please visit the website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/ecc/consumer_reports_en.htm

Air Passenger Rights Day 2011

The ECC-Net receives so many complaints about transport – in particular air travel – that the Network, led by ECC Italy, organised an “Air Passenger Rights Day 2011” at 27 airports (23¹² countries) across the EU. Under the motto “Pack a little consumer know-how, Europe offers you free help and advice” ECC-Net staff spent the day at national airports offering advice and information to passengers about the help they can get from their ECC if things go wrong when travelling in the EU – whether a cancelled flight, delays or lost luggage. There was a constant stream of visitors to the stands in all airports and the initiative attracted top media attention in most Member States.

The initiative was praised by both Health and Consumer Commissioner John Dalli and Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas, as helping passengers to know and use their rights. They underlined the EU added value of the ECC-Net work which achieves what no single national organisation can do on its own – effectively help consumers to resolve cross-border disputes with traders in a quick and inexpensive way.

Launch of a new website and visibility campaign

From June to September 2011, the European Commission ran a pilot ECC-Net online visibility campaign to inform consumers about the services offered by the ECC-Net.



¹² Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The campaign's centrepiece was the creation of a **new website for ECC-Net**, which exists in 10¹³ languages so far. Easy to find via popular search engines or consumer rights portals, this website details the ECC-Net services. It offers advice to consumers on the most popular issues including air travel, car rental, package holidays or time-share. By answering a few easy questions consumers can find out how the ECC-Net can help them with their cross-border problem.

In the pre-summer holiday season, **advertising on major pan-European travel and tourism portals was displayed in 12¹⁴ pilot countries** to reach consumers who were booking their holidays in another EU country. The theme was **“Pack a little consumer know-how: for less hassle and more peace of mind.”** The campaign website and advertising material was produced with the support of the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers (EAHC), which also developed common guidelines for the ECCs websites that could improve their quality, visibility and branding.

For further information, please visit the ECC-Net website at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/ecc-net>

The ECC-Net at major European Conferences organised by the Polish Presidency

Consumer protection was a top priority for Poland, in the seat of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2011, and two major events took place in this context:

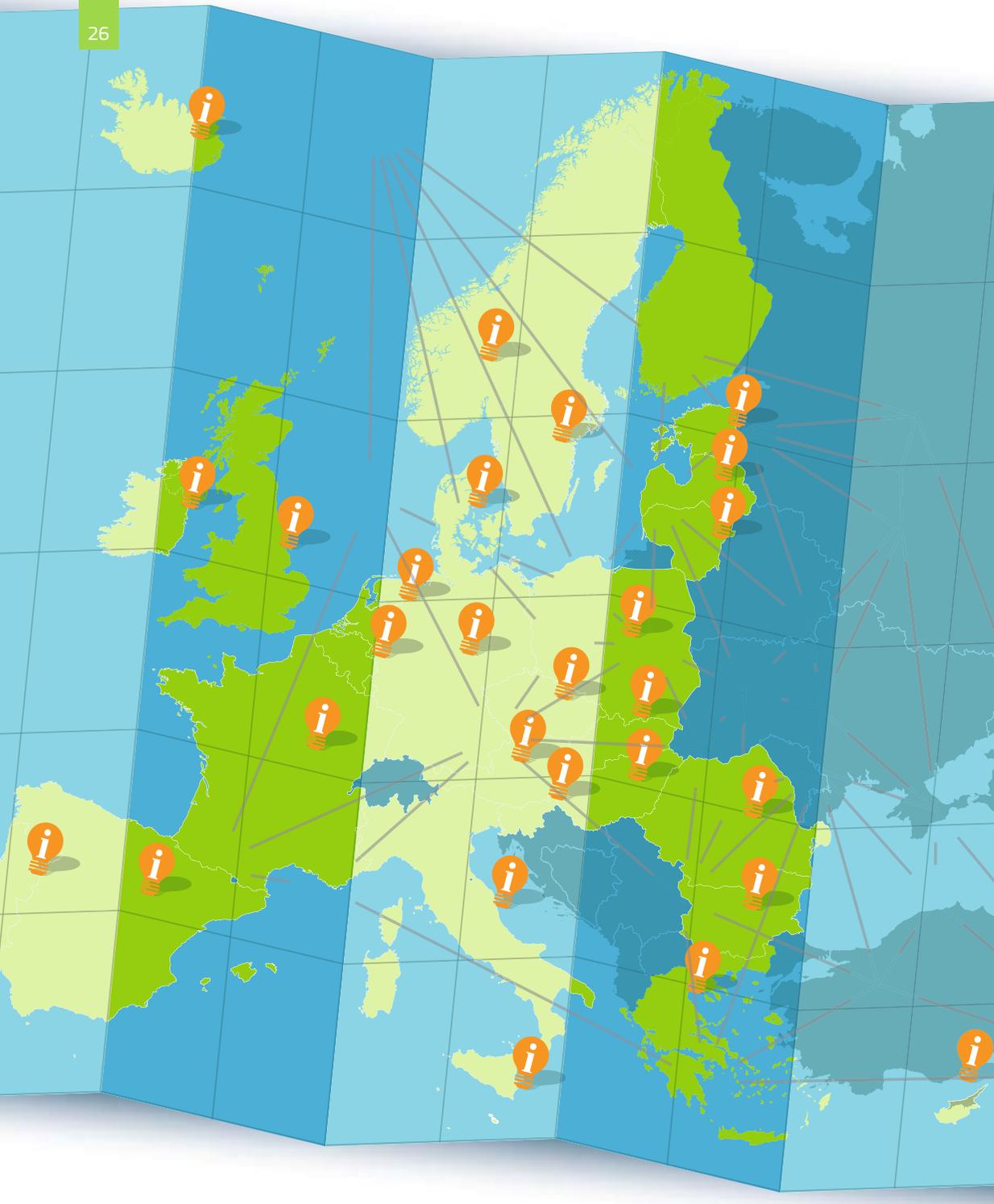
The Single Market Forum (in Krakow, on 2–4 October 2011) consisted of a Single Market Fair and a two-day conference. Visitors to the ECC's stand were invited to go through the “Consumer Empowerment Test” to check their awareness of consumer rights. Promotional material was distributed to approximately 10,000 people. The two-day conference, with panels and workshops, attracted more than 1,200 participants, who were invited to share their experience and ideas on the functioning of the Single Market. ECC Sweden represented the ECC-Net in the workshop on ADR.

For further information, please visit the website at:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/top_layer/single_market_forum_en.htm

The ECC-Net Cooperation Day and the European Competition and Consumer Day (Poznan, 23–25 November 2011). The first day was a forum for sharing best practices among ECCs. It was followed by a two-day public conference related to the development of effective competition and consumer protection strategies. It was an occasion to remind European consumers that they are among the principal beneficiaries of the EU's competition policy. Since the event was organised by the Polish Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (UOKiK), host of the Polish ECC, it was possible to look at the entrepreneur-customer relationship from a broader perspective.

¹³ In English, German, French, Italian, Polish, Czech, Dutch, Romanian, Danish and Swedish.

¹⁴ In Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Romania and Luxembourg.



National pages

AUSTRIA

Activities and events

In 2011, ECC Austria focused its activities on e-commerce. A 120 pages book "Ihre Rechte im Internet" ("Your rights in the internet") was published. Furthermore, ECC Austria launched an information campaign for pupils, called "Kenne deine Mächte – Nütze deine Rechte" ("Know your power – use your rights") and distributed 6,000 USB-sticks to schools. ECC Austria also maintained its regular publication activities within the Austrian consumer magazine "Konsument" and published in addition two info-flyers concerning the topics: "Kaufen und Verkaufen im Internet" ("Online-buying and online-selling"), "Urheberrecht" ("Copyright law"). ECC Austria participated in the joint project "Mystery Shopping". The Centre published a report "Online Cross-border Mystery Shopping – State of the e-Union", which led to a huge media echo. The report is available at: www.europakonsument.at. As in previous years, ECC Austria represented the ECC-Net at the holiday fair "Ferien-Messe Wien" (116,820 visitors). The Centre also took part at the ECC-Net Air Passenger Rights Day 2011. At the airports in Vienna and Innsbruck, ECC Austria informed travellers about their rights and distributed a huge amount of brochures.

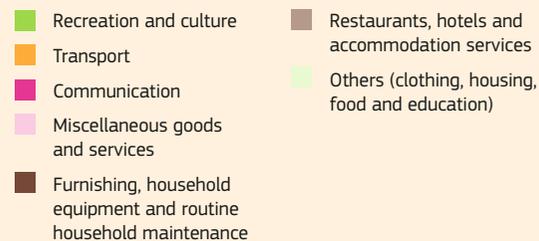
Success story

A Slovakian consumer bought a new guitar in the US for €600. On the flight back the instrument was broken despite it was being packed in a box made for the transportation. Thanks to ECC Austria's intervention, Austrian Airlines refunded the full purchase price to the consumer.

Collaboration

ECC Austria is in close contact with the Austrian consumer rights protection enforcement authorities. The Centre received many complaints against a Dutch company selling promotional bus trips, during which the consumers were persuaded to buy high priced bus trips. Although the consumers withdrew from their contracts, the trader neither accepted the withdrawals nor refunded the purchase prices. The ECC Austria forwarded these complaints to the CPC Network which initiated further proceedings.

Nature of complaints 2011



BELGIUM

Activities and events

Two major events marked the year 2011 for ECC Belgium. The Centre organised a seminar on the European Small Claims procedure – targeting judges, clerks and lawyers. The high-level speakers included university professors, Commission representatives and judges who shared their experience. Another event that attracted much media attention was the ECC-Net Air Passenger Rights Day 2011, for which ECC Belgium organised a stand in the national airport at Zaventem, jointly with the European Commission. Paola Testori Coggi, Director General for Health and Consumers and the Belgian Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne visited the stand and made speeches at the press point. ECC Belgium distributed its new brochure on "Your right as a traveller".

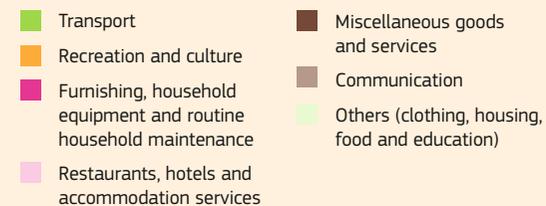
Success story

Mrs D. booked 5 tickets (for herself and her family) for a flight from Brussels to Barcelona with Vueling. On the day of departure, they checked in and boarded the plane at 9.30 am. However, all passengers were requested to leave the aircraft because of a technical problem. Mrs D. and her family remained at the airport until 11.45 pm, but received no further information. After waiting for 14 hours, they filled in a complaint form and went back home. Since Vueling did not reply to Mrs. D., she contacted ECC Belgium, whose intervention (coordinated with ECC Spain) allowed her to receive a refund for the air tickets (€963.75) and €250 compensation per passenger (€1,250).

Collaboration

ECC Belgium participated in the pilot group for the Belmed project – an internet based platform to help consumers and traders find a solution to disputes through mediation, conciliation or arbitration. During the pilot phase, ECC Belgium's remarks were given to the FPS Economy (Federal Public Service of Belgium), which was in charge of the project.

Nature of complaints 2011



BULGARIA

Activities and events

One of the most representative events of ECC Bulgaria in 2011 was the roundtable "Buying cars from the EU. How to avoid double taxation?" Another initiative undertaken by ECC Bulgaria was the roundtable entitled "The Alternative Consumer Dispute Resolution" held in November 2011. Industry associations, professional mediation organisations and representatives of Bulgarian ADRs took part to this event.

Success stories

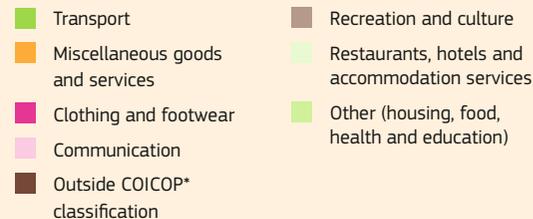
After a Hungarian airline company cancelled the flight of two Bulgarian consumers, they had to pay for accommodation. Thanks to the ECC-Net, the trader reimbursed the consumers €1,025.50.

A British consumer bought a car cover from a Bulgarian trader worth €1,779.75. The received product was defective. The trader would have sent him a new cover only if the consumer had paid the delivery cost. Following the intervention of the ECC-Net, the trader sent him a new cover – without any extra cost.

Collaboration

From 8 to 15 May 2011 ECC Bulgaria had a stand at the exhibition "Europe for us" dedicated to the Europe Day, organised by the Representation of the European Commission in Bulgaria, alongside with other European networks and ECC Bulgaria. Together with colleagues from other networks, useful information was given to consumers with regard to their rights when travelling and shopping abroad.

Nature of complaints 2011



*The classification of individual consumption by purpose.

CYPRUS

Activities and events

During 2011, ECC Cyprus promoted the new legislation on ADR – informing stakeholders, media and consumers on this new mechanism which further enhances consumer protection. The Centre published several articles on daily newspapers regarding this recently adopted Law (ADR) and also issued new informative material – a leaflet about "The European Small Claim Procedure" and a brochure on "Provision and Purchase of Services in the European Union". The Centre's aims and activities and the new ADR legislation were the focus of two informative seminars, organised by ECC Cyprus.

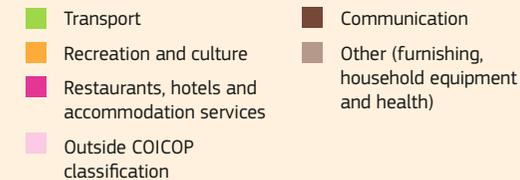
Success stories

A Cypriot consumer booked a room for five nights in a hotel in Florence. Although the hotel had confirmed the reservation, the consumer was informed just before arriving that they could not offer him a room in the abovementioned hotel and assured him that they would allocate him in another hotel of the same category. Upon arrival, the consumer realised that this was not the case. In spite of the fact that a compensation for the inconvenience was promised to the consumer, this did not happen. A complaint was submitted to ECC Cyprus, which collaborated with ECC Italy in achieving a full compensation for the consumer.

Collaboration

In 2011, two meetings were held in the field of consumer protection. The invited stakeholders were: the Competition and Consumer Protection Service, the Cyprus Consumers Association, the Cyprus Union of Consumers and Quality of Life, the Representation of the European Commission in Cyprus, the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, the Association of Cyprus Travel Agents, the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Cyprus Organisation of Standardization (CYS) and other European networks. ECC Cyprus cooperated with the abovementioned stakeholders in organising seminars/joint events, celebrating the International Consumer Day and producing leaflets and exchanging information on consumer issues.

Nature of complaints 2011



CZECH REPUBLIC

Activities and events

The highlights of ECC Czech Republic in 2011 were: 1) Air Passenger Rights Day and its media coverage; 2) Promotional activities at Fairs of EU informational networks and universities; 3) Creating a new ECC Czech Republic website; 4) Promotional campaign on consumer rights in international buses where leaflets were distributed to all passengers explaining how to claim if something goes wrong when shopping in the EU.

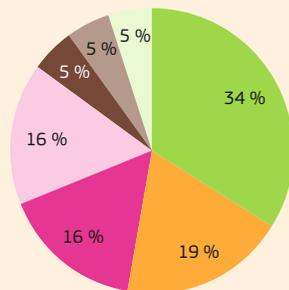
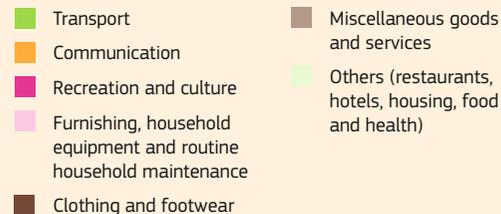
Success story

A Czech consumer made a reservation for a return ticket to London on a Hungarian airline's website. After providing all details and payment card information, the webpage suddenly closed down. The consumer refreshed the page, but the reservation was already done. Nevertheless, the confirmed return flight was not scheduled on May 9, but on May 8. The consumer called immediately the customer service and was advised to write a complaint online. Even though she did it, the company never replied. The consumer made another reservation for a one-way flight (£30) on May 9. After contacting the carrier, the ECC-Net managed to get a refund for the claimed £30.

Collaboration

The Centre had a very profitable collaboration not only with the Czech Avian Authority and the Sebe Spolu Association on the Air Passenger Rights Day, but also with SOLVIT, Europe Direct and the Representation of the European Commission in the Czech Republic on lectures and dissemination of ECC Czech Republic leaflets. The Centre closely cooperated with the Czech Trade Inspection Authority – which is its host structure.

Nature of complaints 2011



DENMARK

Activities and events

One of the highlights of 2011 was the launch of ECC-Net joint project report "Online cross-border Mystery shopping". The report was well received and the results were used both by the European Commission and the Danish government. During 2011, ECC Denmark also introduced a new system for online complaints.

Success stories

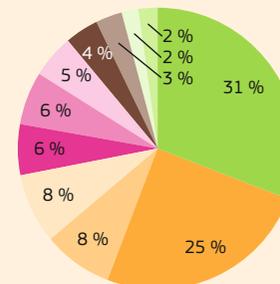
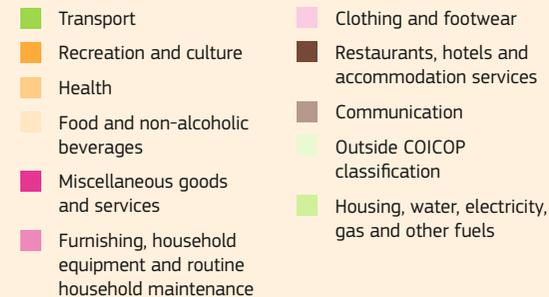
An Irish consumer bought a weather station from a Danish website. The weather station did not work and the consumer returned it at his own cost. The trader sent it back three weeks later but it still did not function. The trader refused to reimburse the consumer, who then contacted ECC Ireland. After ECC Denmark's intervention, the complaint fell under the remit of the Danish Consumer Complaints Board, which decided that the consumer had to be reimbursed in full for the weather station and the delivery costs.

A flight of a Danish couple from San Francisco to Amsterdam in April 2010 was cancelled due to the volcanic ash cloud. They had to stay in San Francisco for 7 days and therefore asked for a refund of all expenses. The claim was rejected by the airline. They complained to ECC Denmark, which passed on the complaint to the Dutch NEB via ECC Netherlands. After the NEB's intervention, the couple was reimbursed.

Collaboration

ECC Denmark collaborated with Europe Direct and gave a presentation on passenger rights in one of its workshops. The Centre also had a close ongoing collaboration with the Danish CPC and the Danish ADR entities, particularly with the Danish Consumer Complaints Board.

Nature of complaints 2011



ESTONIA

Activities and events

The ECC-Net Air Passenger Rights Day 2011 was a success for the Centre in Estonia. Representatives of ECC Estonia distributed leaflets and gave information to consumers on air passenger rights in Tallinn Lennart Meri Airport. The event received great media coverage on TV, radio and in the press. Passengers were happy to have experts' support free of charge and even those who were not flying on that day came to the airport to know more about air passenger rights.

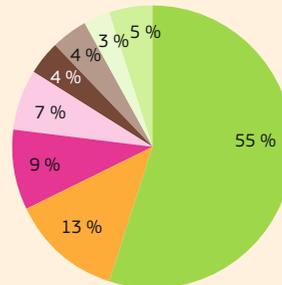
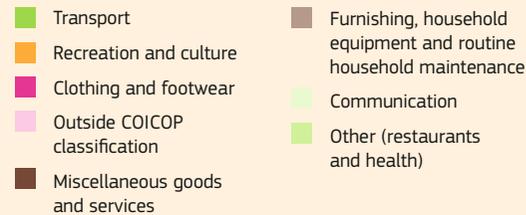
Success story

A Dutch consumer ordered a laptop screen from an Estonian trader. After having used it for a couple of months, the screen stopped working properly. The trader replied to the consumer that the product was under a 3 months guarantee, which had already expired, therefore he could not be considered as responsible. The consumer knew that the legal guarantee lasted for 2 years, he thus contacted the trader again, who replied that since the company had changed name, it was not obliged to take any responsibility. The consumer turned to the ECC-Net to get help. After ECC Estonia's intervention, the trader agreed to replace the laptop screen.

Collaboration

ECC Estonia had a successful cooperation with other European networks. The common events and the exchange of information between networks were mainly coordinated by the Representation of the European Commission in Estonia. Common summer seminars were organised each year. In 2011, the networks' summer seminar focused on the ECC-Net activities and on consumer rights when shopping cross-border.

Nature of complaints 2011



FINLAND

Activities and events

The highlight of 2011 was ECC Finland's participation to the event "EU in your everyday life - theme travel" in cooperation with the Representation of the European Commission in Finland and other stakeholders. Cooperation with Europe Direct continued in terms of consumer events organised by Europe Direct giving ECC Finland opportunities to highlight cross-border topics and the network itself.

Success stories

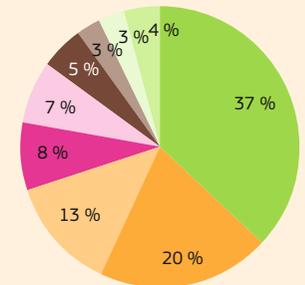
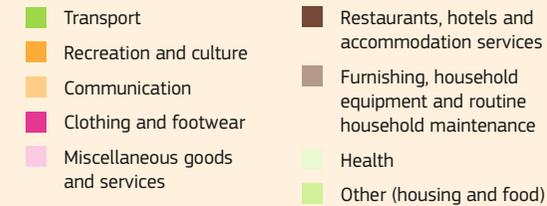
Four Swedish consumers intended to make a fishing trip from the Finnish Lapland to Råstojaure at the Norwegian border. A helicopter of a Finnish company was booked for the trip. Before departing, they found out that they could not reach their final destination because the Swedish Aviation Authority informed the company two days before departure that the helicopter would not have the authorisation to fly. The trader agreed to refund just the original transport costs, refusing to cover the new travel arrangements. Only after intervention of ECC Finland, the consumers were refunded for the alternative travel costs (€287).

The luggage of 2 Finnish consumers was delivered two days after their arrival to the hotel in Austria. The consumers were on holiday (a one-week skiing trip). Since they were going from Munich to Innsbruck by a rented car, the trader committed to deliver the luggage directly to Innsbruck. As the clothes which the consumers were wearing during the flight were not proper for skiing (jeans etc.), they had to buy new ones. Although a complaint was sent to the airline, there was no reply. After the intervention of ECC Finland and ECC Austria, the consumers were compensated with €866 for the necessary purchases.

Collaboration

Working side by side with the CPC authority, ECC Finland is in a position to exchange information on problematic cross-border issues on a daily basis. Cooperation is informal, yet, steady and ensures that all companies not complying with EU legislation are brought to the attention of the authority. Cooperation meetings with the EJM in Civil and Commercial Matters and SOLVIT contributed to better understanding of the functions of other European networks.

Nature of complaints 2011



FRANCE

Activities and events

After moving into new premises, the inauguration of the renamed host structure "Zentrum für Europäischen Verbraucherschutz e.V." was a great opportunity to present the fruitful teamwork between ECC France and ECC Germany to politicians and journalists. Throughout 2011 ECC France continued to work with the CPC Network and as part of the ECC-CPC working group. ADR was an important topic and ECC France was able to share its expertise on several occasions e.g. for the launch of a new tourism ADR and in the Commission Nationale de la Médiation.

Success stories

Two French consumers took a train from London to Heathrow Airport. The train broke down and they had to wait several hours. Despite re-routing by bus organised by the rail company, they missed their flight and had to buy new tickets. Once back in France, they contacted ECC France for reimbursement. In the end, the UK trader agreed to refund £269.

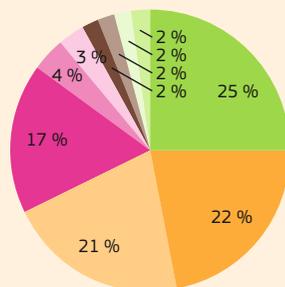
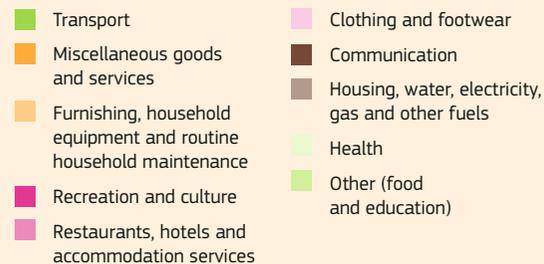
A Belgian consumer got her belongings stolen in a French hotel. No solution was found with the hotel, the consumer turned to the ECC-Net. After ECC France contacted both the hotel and the insurance company, the consumer obtained €734.

Collaboration

In June 2011, ECC France and ECC Germany organised a meeting with the respective National Enforcement Bodies regarding the EU regulation on air passenger rights and the necessity of improving the handling of consumer complaints. Cooperation with MEPs¹⁵, the CPC Authority and EJN in Civil and Commercial Matters could be strengthened and continued.

¹⁵ MEP – Member of the European Parliament.

Nature of complaints 2011



GERMANY

Activities and events

Early in 2011, ECC Germany launched the new website www.vorsicht-im-netz.de about internet fraud. The good media response and the huge number of visitors revealed a strong need for information regarding this topic. After moving into new premises, the inauguration of the renamed host structure "Zentrum für Europäischen Verbraucherschutz e.V." was a great opportunity to present the fruitful teamwork done by ECC France and ECC Germany to the attendant politicians and journalists. Furthermore, ECC Germany gave advice on air passenger rights on the occasion of the International Travel Trade Show ITB.

Success stories

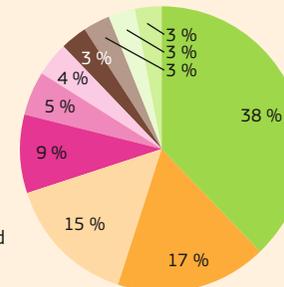
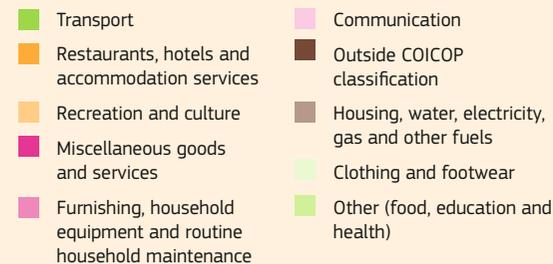
Three Belgian consumers missed their connecting flight from Frankfurt to Bolivia because of a re-routing and a consequent delay. They had to rebook another flight, departing three days later. Further problems occurred, e.g. their suitcases were damaged. Only after the intervention of ECC Germany, the airline agreed to pay a compensation of €2,403.

Some German consumers subscribed a membership holiday club in Greece for one year and paid €4,190 via credit card straightaway. Once back home, the consumers asked ECC Germany for help in order to revoke the contract. Finally, the trader paid the amount back. In total, ECC Germany received 75 consumer complaints related to this trader.

Collaboration

In collaboration with ECC France, ECC Germany organised a meeting with the respective French and German National Enforcement Bodies as well as other engaged parties on the enforcement of air passenger rights. Both Centres reported on their experiences with consumer complaints in this sector and expressed their views on a solution for existing challenges.

Nature of complaints 2011



HUNGARY

Activities and events

From 1 January 2011 ECC Hungary was hosted by a new organisation. Key issues were the smooth functioning and the promotion of the Centre, the complaints' handling and the re-establishment of cooperation with other stakeholders. In order to raise visibility, ECC Hungary carried out intensive media activities (12 press conferences), promotional campaigns (participation in festivals, tourism fairs) and educational sessions (9 presentations in seminars). Aiming to raise consumer awareness, 10 new leaflets on air passenger rights, online shopping and ECC-Net were produced.

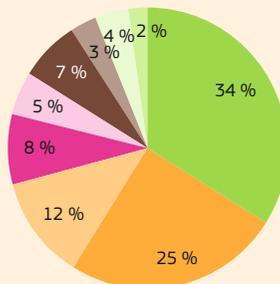
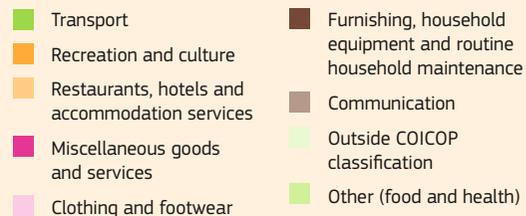
Success story

A Hungarian consumer bought "a photo and autograph-opportunity" with his favourite actor in Spain. Before the event took place, the consumer was informed by the Spanish trader that the actor cancelled his participation. The trader refused to reimburse €260 for the ticket he purchased. Following the assistance of ECC-Net, the trader gave the consumer the opportunity to choose another service.

Collaboration

As the host organisation is the main consumer enforcement body, the follow-up of cases concerning cross-border infringements was smooth. In order to start the cooperation with EU networks, SOLVIT, Europe Direct and the Commission Representation in Hungary were contacted.

Nature of complaints 2011



ICELAND

Activities and events

In 2011 ECC Iceland gave various lectures in colleges and universities. The Centre published two Internet brochures and conducted an e-survey on air passenger rights. ECC Iceland also carried out a price comparison survey on passports throughout Europe. The Centre achieved good media coverage on all its activities during the year.

Success stories

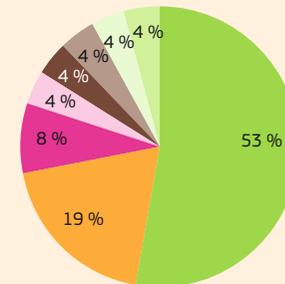
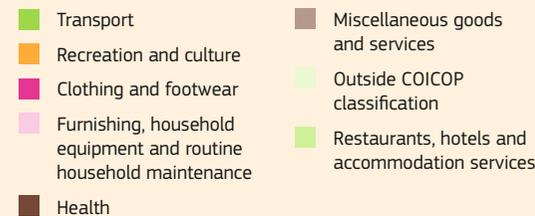
A French consumer rented a car in Iceland in August 2011. When giving back the car, there was a crack in one rear light of the car and the traveller was charged an estimated repair cost of 57,000 ISK. He thought the cost was unreasonable and sought assistance from ECC France which forwarded the case to ECC Iceland which requested to see an invoice for the repairs. It turned out that the repair cost only 37,000 ISK so the traveller was refunded 20,000 ISK.

A British consumer booked a flight from Keflavik to Edinburgh on the 29th of August 2011. Because of hurricane Irene the flight was cancelled and he was offered either a re-route to Gatwick airport in London or a reimbursement of the ticket's price. He chose the re-route to Gatwick and then claimed the cost of a flight from Gatwick to Edinburgh. The airline refused since the consumer had chosen another destination. The company was willing to take responsibility to let the passenger reach the country of the final destination – not the final destination itself. Following mediation by ECC Iceland, the traveller was refunded the cost of the additional flight.

Collaboration

The Centre cooperated informally with enforcement bodies and EU networks, particularly with the CPC Network, NEB and FIN-NET.

Nature of complaints 2011



IRELAND

Activities and events

ECC Ireland organised a joint campaign with the Irish NEB on air passenger rights, with a questionnaire, joint press release and a stand at Dublin Airport. The Centre held a conference on the consumer rights of older people about financial services, air passenger rights and safe shopping online.

Success stories

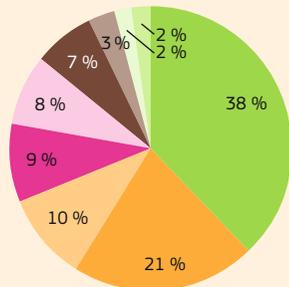
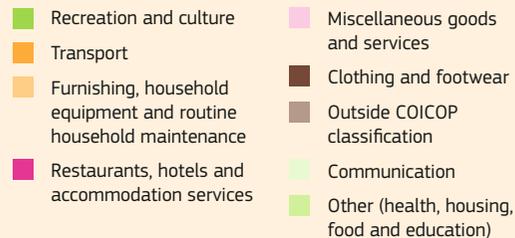
An Irish consumer cancelled a holiday due to the death of her father. Her travel insurance offered cancellation due to death of a close relative. The insurer rejected the claim as her father was resident in the UK and the policy applied to close relatives in Ireland. ECC Ireland contacted the insurer concerning the right to freely move in the EU and the principle of non-discrimination solely based on nationality or place of residence. The insurer overturned their decision and paid the consumer.

A Polish consumer transferred money to her sister in the UK through a money transfer service. According to the trader's terms and conditions, to pick up the transfer the receiver has to present a correct Money Transfer Control Number and two forms of identification verifying their name and address. The transfer was picked up by a third party. ECC Ireland contacted the trader and the consumer received a full refund.

Collaboration

ECC Ireland organised a Safe Online Shopping campaign with the Europe Direct. November was Safe Online Shopping Month and ECC Ireland gave presentations at the Europe Direct Offices. The result was 31 press articles and 12 radio interviews.

Nature of complaints 2011



ITALY

Activities and events

One of the main goals of ECC Italy for 2011 was the consumers' information. At the beginning of the summer, ECC Italy held a press conference for travellers, participated in a training session with travel agencies and on July 7th it arranged with the whole network a pan-European successful event devoted to Air Passenger Rights in 27 airports of 23 Member States, with the participation of European institutions. Big conferences were organised on ADRs and Corporate Social Responsibility with several European consumer associations. The Centre gave some lectures in schools and universities. During a meeting with the Postal Police, issues related to e-commerce were analysed in detail.

Success stories

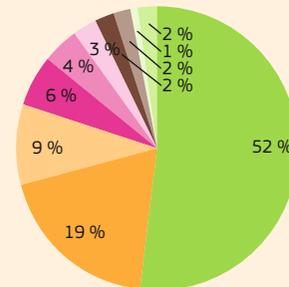
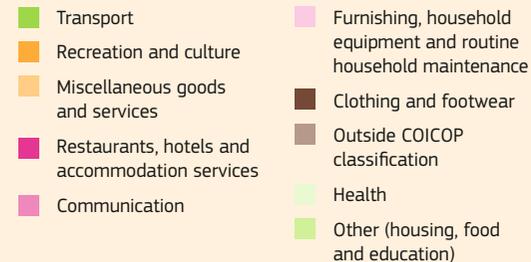
A Swedish consumer purchased spare parts worth almost €800 for his motorbike on an Italian website. 6 months after his order the items had not arrived yet. The consumer turned to ECC Sweden, which contacted ECC Italy. After several reminders, the Italian seller paid back the sum.

The Italian passenger tried for months to be reimbursed by the German airline and only after the intervention of ECC-Net he could receive the maximum sum (about €1,100) foreseen by the Montreal Convention.

Collaboration

ECC Italy collaborated with the local Representation of the European Commission, which joined all the European networks in several meetings and in a big international 5 days event dedicated to the EU. The Italian NEB participated in the Air Passengers Right Day distributing flyers in 7 national airports.

Nature of complaints 2011



LATVIA

Activities and events

Some of ECC Latvia highlights in 2011 were: 1) The participation in International Exhibition "Balttour" with an information stand and handing out the promotional material; 2) The campaign on Air Passenger Rights Day which consisted of the press briefing and leaflet distribution with involvement of ECC, NEB and host organisation representatives; 3) The Conference "Efficient Consumer dispute resolution process – role of industries and competent institutions" which organised by ECC Latvia in cooperation with the host organisation. Considering the latest initiatives of European Commission regarding ADR and ODR development, the main goal of the conference was to involve all stakeholders, mainly representatives of different business sectors as well as competent authorities to discuss the most efficient ways of strengthening ADR and ODR in Latvia.

Success stories

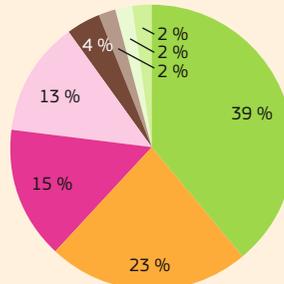
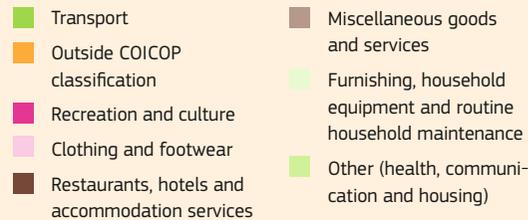
A Lithuanian consumer booked a flight with a Latvian airline. After landing in Vilnius airport, he realised that his luggage was lost. He complained to the airline without any success. After the intervention of ECC Latvia, the consumer was asked to submit a list of lost items, dates of purchase and values, with the respective receipts. As soon as the company received the requested documents, the consumer was reimbursed €1,136.

A Lithuanian consumer joined a loyalty program of a Latvian airline with the possibility to earn points to be spent online. After earning more than 20,000 points, he decided to purchase something online; however he noticed that 405 points were missing. Afterwards, he made another purchase, but after 3 errors on the webpage all points were lost. The consumer contacted the company; missing points were returned, except for 405. After the intervention of ECC Latvia, the company gave him 405 points back and awarded him with 4,000 extra points – as a compensation for technical mistake occurred online – together with an apology letter.

Collaboration

ECC Latvia organised an event on Air Passenger Rights Day in collaboration with NEB and Enforcement authority at the International Airport of Riga – held on July 7, 2011. The Centre will organise such an activity also in 2012, in cooperation with the same national authorities.

Nature of complaints 2011



LITHUANIA

Activities and events

ECC Lithuania held 27 seminars in universities, schools and business representatives. The Centre produced 10 TV and 53 radio reportages, besides publishing 37 articles online and 8 in the press. ECC Lithuania participated in the Air Passenger Rights Day event at Vilnius International Airport. The Centre provided consumers with information on the international event "EuroBasket 2011". It also made video material available on YouTube.

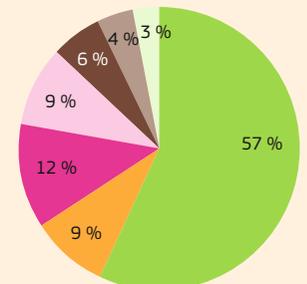
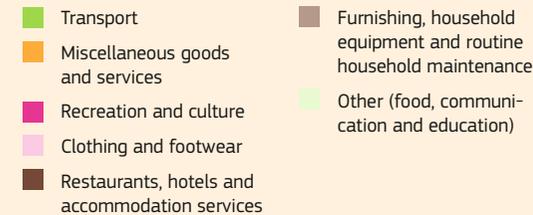
Success story

A consumer used an airline's loyalty card to collect miles. After buying some goods online (paying with the collected miles), he noticed that he was charged three times, but goods were not delivered. After his complaint to the trader, miles and money were refunded, but some miles were still missing. Moreover, the consumer could not buy the goods with the offered discount while using the miles. After turning to the ECC-Net, his miles were refunded and he also received additional miles as a compensation for the unused opportunity to buy discounted goods.

Collaboration

Together with Europe Direct, the Centre organised seminars about EU consumer rights protection in different cities of Lithuania. The seminars were part of the project "Change the world – be a volunteer". ECC Lithuania also organised a meeting with the representatives of the Civil Aviation Authority, the Lithuanian banks' association and the EJN in Civil and Commercial Matters.

Nature of complaints 2011



LUXEMBOURG

Activities and events

A lot of events of ECC Luxembourg were marked by its 20th anniversary in 2011, as for instance the "Anniversary Day", organised on 8 June for press media and invited guests in presence of Mr. Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General in DG SANCO and Luxembourg's Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade, Jeannot Krecké. Furthermore, the 20 years of ECC Luxembourg's brochure was published and finally the Centre organised an international conference "Fourth Conference on Aspects of European Consumer Law".

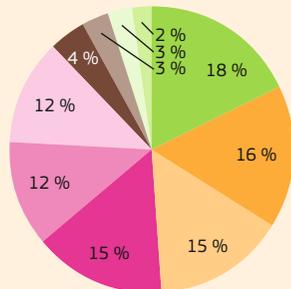
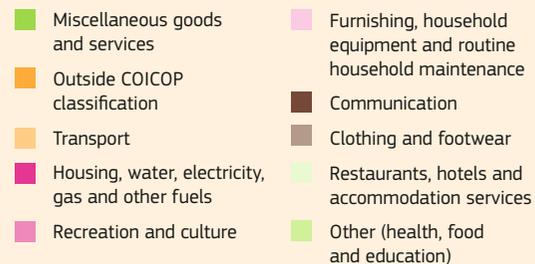
Success story

A consumer from Luxembourg took part to a trekking tour that was organised by a French travel agency for €3,000. As the promised activities and accommodation did not correspond to the offer, the consumer asked for a partial reimbursement which the trader denied because of lack of evidence. ECC Luxembourg, in collaboration with ECC France, delivered the necessary documents to the trader who finally reimbursed €1,200.

Collaboration

In 2011, ECC Luxembourg continued its profitable collaboration with its CPC Authority by transferring several consumer cases where a French trader working in the real estate sector, did not honour, inter alia, the consumers' withdrawal right. Luxembourg's CPC Authority brought the cases to the court. Furthermore, ECC Luxembourg continued to organise in 2011 the "Midis de l'Europe" together with the Representation of the European Commission, the Information Office of the European Parliament and the "Mouvement Européen".

Nature of complaints 2011



MALTA

Activities and events

The most representative activities in 2011 were: 1) The Air Passenger Rights stand at the Malta International Airport on ECC-Net Air Passenger Rights Day. Information and advice were provided to consumers about air passenger rights; 2) The Centre participated to the Europe Direct's Annual General Meeting; 3) ECC Malta had its own stand during the World Consumer Day activity. A presentation was delivered by the Centre during a conference held by Consumer Affairs Council regarding the role of regulatory authorities in consumer protection.

Success stories

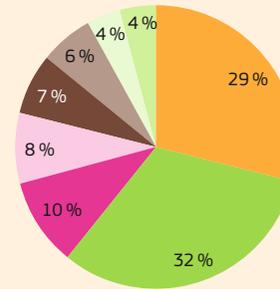
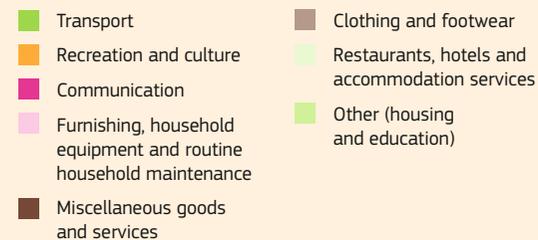
A consumer from Czech Republic was participating in a competition during a TV programme organised by a company based in Malta. He was left waiting for about an hour and was never put through to the studio. Thanks to ECC Malta's intervention, he was refunded the cost of his phone bill.

A Maltese consumer ordered 2 laptops on the internet; however, they were never delivered. She checked the shipment and she discovered that the laptops were lost. Her complaint was shared with ECC United Kingdom and through their intervention the consumer was reimbursed the sum of €1,081.76.

Collaboration

There was a successful collaboration with enforcement bodies and/or other EU networks: 1) Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) on timeshare cases. The collaboration was also arranged for consumers having claims in particular cases being investigated by the MTA, to be referred for advice on compensation; 2) Lotteries and Gaming Authority – a meeting was held regarding the possible notification of the Authority's Player Support Unit as an ADR; 3) Commerce Department – ECC Malta and ECC United Kingdom for services were welcomed to give an overview regarding their involvement as coordinators and operators of the Internal Market Information System of SOLVIT; 4) The Representation of the European Commission in Malta participated in a seminar with all other European networks, where each of them presented the services they offered; 5) Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority & Transport Malta (Civil Aviation Directorate) participated jointly in the Air Passenger Rights Day, held at Malta International Airport.

Nature of complaints 2011



THE NETHERLANDS

Activities and events

ECC Netherlands had a stand at a yearly Holiday fair in Utrecht at which consumers were informed about the ECC-Net and its activities. In cooperation with DG MOVE's¹⁶ contact in the Netherlands, the Centre promoted Air Passenger Rights at the Dutch Airport Schiphol. Furthermore, consumers were informed about their rights when shopping online at the Europe Direct Xtra afternoon. A research was carried out to assess both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Centre's work processes. Part of the research was a customer satisfaction survey, from which it became clear that consumers who contact the Centre were usually very satisfied with the swift and high service quality.

Success stories

A group of more than 15 Spanish consumers complained about a Dutch SMS provider. They all claimed that they had never signed any contract or subscription with this trader. However, they had discovered that they were charged for an amount between €30 and €150 on their telephone bill without their consent or knowledge. They requested the assistance of the ECC Netherlands and after its intervention they all received their money back.

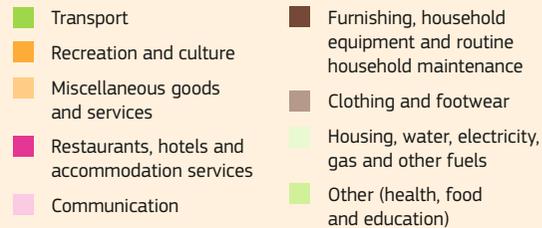
A Dutch consumer had a flight journey from Amsterdam to Sofia operated by a European airline. The flight was cancelled and rescheduled for the following day. The consumer claimed the compensation, but with no success. After ECC Austria's intervention, the consumer received €400 compensation.

Collaboration

ECC Netherlands collaborated with the Consumer Complaints Board, Social Economic Committee, the Netherlands Standardisation Institute (NEN), CPC Authority and branch organisations.

¹⁶ Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport at the European Commission

Nature of complaints 2011



NORWAY

Activities and events

ECC Norway and a European delegation organised a seminar on the proposal for a new Consumer Directive. The proposal had been actively debated in Norway, with Norwegian actors seeking to influence the shape of the Directive. Speakers included representatives from the European Commission, the Norwegian Consumer Council, the Norwegian Consumer Ombudsman, the University of Amsterdam and the University of Manchester. On Air Passenger Rights Day, the Centre informed consumers about their rights as passengers travelling by air at the airport of Oslo. Free advice on issues such as cancellation, delays and lost luggage in Norwegian, English, French, Spanish and Dutch was provided. Passengers received leaflets and freebies including luggage tags, luggage belts and frisbees.

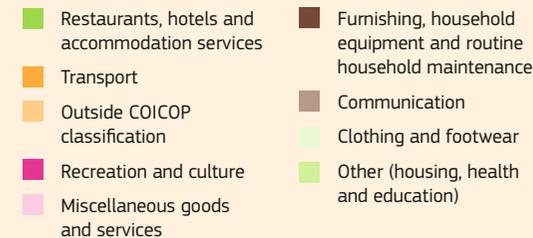
Success story

ECC Norway received many complaints regarding a Norwegian company that sold tickets in the second hand market. Most complaints related to the non-delivery of ordered tickets. Following ECC Norway's intervention, many consumers received a refund and compensation.

Collaboration

In several cases the Consumer Ombudsman took action against companies upon which ECC Norway had received a lot of complaints. The companies sent bills for orders consumers had never made. The joint action let the companies end their practice towards the consumers in the Nordic countries. Moreover, the Centre participated in a workshop organised by the NEB in Norway, having some fruitful discussions regarding air passenger rights along with representatives from the ADR, Consumer Ombudsman, Consumer Council and Norwegian airline companies. The workshop was an arena for discussing interpretations of the legal framework, sharing experiences and ensuring common practices and understanding for those organisations, consumers contact regarding their rights.

Nature of complaints 2011



POLAND

Activities and events

Some of the most representative activities and events of ECC Poland in 2011 were: 1) Active Participation in the Competition on Safe e-Shop as a supporter, member of jury; 2) Organisation of two events dedicated to passenger rights at the airports and central stations of Warsaw and Krakow; 3) Participation in the competition project run by MEPs from IMCO¹⁷ – “Unia bez barier” (Union without barriers) – meeting dedicated to barriers in passenger rights, communications and other sectors; 4) Participation in Schumans Parade in Warsaw; 5) Participation in the Single Market Forum in Krakow; 6) Organisation of Cooperation Day in Poznan; 7) Promotion of the ADR notification and its European database via internet through the ECC’s website and conference on World Consumer Day 15 March 2011; 8) Participation in the European Direct Selling Association’s Round table conference on the future of the door-step-selling.

Success story

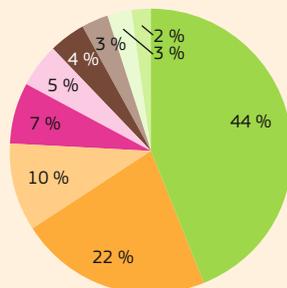
Some British consumers ordered wheels for their horse drawn carriage from a Polish producer. However, the ordered items, although paid (€390) were not delivered to the consumers, because the trader changed the date of delivery many times. Therefore, the consumers contacted ECC United Kingdom asking for assistance in order to solve the case in an amicable way. In result of the Centre’s intervention, the producer delivered the ordered wheels to the consumers.

Collaboration

ECC Poland collaborated with the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection in promoting of the ADR notification and its EU database via internet through the ECC’s website and the conference on World Consumer Day. In partnership with some Polish MEPs from IMCO, the Centre organised two events dedicated to passenger rights at the airports and stations of Warsaw and Krakow. In collaboration with SOLVIT, ECC Poland had a meeting with MEPs’ delegation from IMCO at the Ministry of Economy in Warsaw.

¹⁷ Parliamentary committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection

Nature of complaints 2011



PORTUGAL

Activities and events

Some of the most representative activities in 2011 were: 1) The information campaign in Faro (Algarve) at the airport and at the Citizen’s Shop premises, in cooperation with the regional alternative dispute resolution centre (CIMAAL). Information materials and promotional gadgets were distributed to passengers; 2) Participation in the ECC–Net Air Passenger Rights Day on the 7th of July, with an outdoor activity at the Lisbon airport, in cooperation with the national enforcement body (INAC); 3) A seminar “Shopping cross-border just one click away! New legal framework of consumer rights in the European Union”.

Success stories

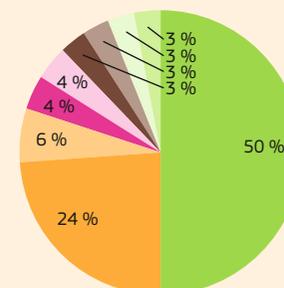
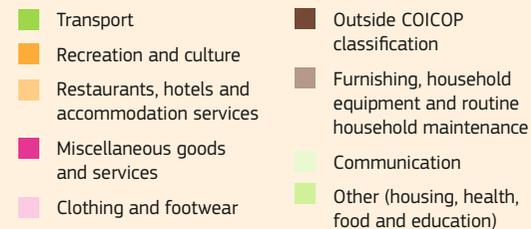
A Portuguese consumer bought a pair of sport shoes on a Dutch website but never received them. Assistance was requested from ECC Portugal and the case was shared with ECC Netherlands. After almost 2 months, the consumer was reimbursed €114.90.

A Spanish consumer booked a room in a hotel in Lisbon, made the payment and instead of only one confirmation e-mail, he received two because of a system’s error. Therefore, the trader asked for a second payment. The consumer refused to pay twice and decided not to stay in that hotel any longer, turning to the ECC-Net for help. After the intervention of ECC Portugal, the consumer was reimbursed €370.

Collaboration

Following invitation from Europe Direct (Alta Estremadura), ECC Portugal gave presentations in sessions organised in 3 different cities of the region. They were dedicated to consumer rights to inform secondary and professional training students and the public in general on cross-border issues and the ECC-Net activities.

Nature of complaints 2011



ROMANIA

Activities and events

ECC Romania produced and distributed the following brochures: "Access to care: a right in the EU"; "How to stay safe using different payment means"; "Shopping and travelling to Austria"; "Safety of products and services in the EU". 6 info sheets in Romanian and English, on different topics, were published. At the national level, ECC Romania participated in a series of activities, aimed to inform and educate the Romanian consumers.

Success story

A Romanian consumer rented a car from an Italian trader online. In order to rent the car, the consumer had to pay €100 in advance. As soon as he arrived in Italy, the trader refused to hand over the car, explaining that according to the company policy, cars could no longer be hired by Romanian consumers. A complaint against the company was made by the consumer, asking for a compensation consisting of the amount of money he had to spend to hire a car from a different company. ECC Romania contacted the trader and the consumer received the requested compensation.

Collaboration

ECC Romania had a successful cooperation with the National Authority for Consumers' Protection (NACP), the entity responsible for enforcing the relevant legislation in the field of consumer protection. The NACP is also the enforcement body for the application of the legislation on air passenger rights and the Single Liaison Office for the CPC Network. The collaboration focused on new proposals of legislation, discussions on problems consumers had when traveling and buying cross-border, in order to find possible solutions or to have common information activities.

Nature of complaints 2011



SLOVAKIA

Activities and events

In 2011, ECC Slovakia mainly dealt with the handling of cross-border complaints and information requests. The Centre produced some promotional material, including pocket diaries with text part on consumer protection. Some leaflets, mainly on online shopping produced at the end of 2010, were distributed together with the promotional materials and pocket diaries at the information stands in a shopping centre in Bratislava. Small quizzes were also organised in order to distribute the promotional material of the Centre and also to draw citizens' attention to consumer rights protection. A fruitful cooperation with one of the non-governmental organisations led into a court ruling stating the caducity of the contracts considered subscription traps.

Success stories

A Norwegian trader did not send the ordered tickets to a Slovak consumer for a football match. After the intervention of the ECC-Net, the consumer was reimbursed not only the price for the tickets, but also received a redress for suffering loss of roughly €300.

A Slovak consumer travelled by bus through Germany. His luggage was placed in the trunk of the bus. Once arrived, the consumer realised that the luggage was lost. The driver had not issued a ticket for the luggage, after placing it into the trunk. Nevertheless, the consumer received a redress in amount of €500, committing not to sue the company.

Collaboration

ECC Slovakia mostly cooperated with the Slovak Trade Inspection and the CPC authority through its contact point at the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic. In 2011, the Centre also cooperated with some non-governmental organisations in the field of consumer rights protection.

Nature of complaints 2011



SLOVENIA

SPAIN

Activities and events

The highlights of 2011 were the conference on ADR, promotion of consumer rights at 14 different stands and information points, activities at the Ljubljana Airport related to Air Passenger Rights Day, publication of two new handbooks for consumers "Dangerous toys" and "Rent a car", the launch of the renewed website www.epc.si and the agreement with the biggest daily newspapers in Slovenia to dedicate once a month half page exclusively to cross-border consumer topics and ECC-Net.

For further information about ECC Spain, please visit the website at: <http://cec.consumo-inc.es>

Success stories

Two Slovenian consumers bought tickets for a concert in Rome on a Norwegian website; however the tickets were never delivered. The consumers turned to ECC Slovenia which transferred the case to ECC Norway. After the intervention of the ECC-Net, the consumers were reimbursed €1,008.

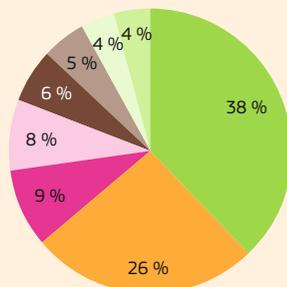
A Slovenian consumer claimed the guarantee, because some moisture appeared on his watch. The trader tried to repair it four times, but without any success. Since the watch had been purchased from an Austrian trader, ECC Slovenia contacted ECC Austria. After the successful intervention of the ECC-Net, the trader replaced the watch with a new one.

Collaboration

ECC Slovenia mostly cooperated with the Ministry of Economy regarding the EU legislation on services and the ADR development in Slovenia. There was a fruitful cooperation between the Centre and the Representation of the European Commission in Slovenia. ECC Slovenia also joined other European networks on early festival and fair for students "Študentska arena 2011" where nearly all European networks for citizens prepared info points. The Centre also cooperated with the Slovenian Consumers' Association (Zveza potrošnikov Slovenije) in the field of consumer rights protection.

Nature of complaints 2011

- Transport
- Recreation and culture
- Furnishing, household equipment and routine household maintenance
- Communication
- Clothing and footwear
- Miscellaneous goods and services
- Restaurants, hotels and accommodation services
- Other (health, housing, food and education)



SWEDEN

Activities and events

The highlight for ECC Sweden was its participation to: 1) The joint project concerning the air passenger rights report, led by ECC Sweden; 2) The joint project concerning the Mystery Shopping report; 3) The ECC-Net "Air Passenger Rights Day" at Arlanda Airport; 4) The fair Distanshandelsdagen ("The Day of Distance selling"), the biggest event for distance selling in Scandinavia.

Success stories

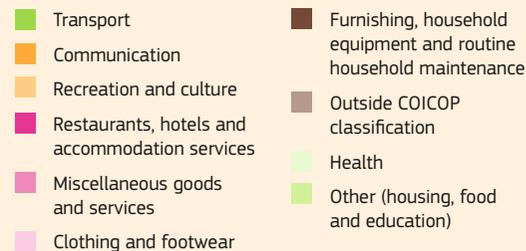
Several consumers contacted ECC Sweden regarding signed memberships with a Greek vacation club. They tried to cancel their contracts through their right of withdrawal, but the company refused to accept their cancellations. Thanks to the efforts of ECC Sweden, the company issued cancellations on 14 consumer contracts so far. The total value of the contracts varied between €2,400 and €4,700.

Some Finnish consumers contacted ECC Finland, after experiencing problems regarding a Swedish clothing company. The problems focused on the returning of cancelled purchases where the consumers received invoices and reminders from the company after returning the cloths. ECC Finland shared the cases with ECC Sweden, which contacted the company for mediation. Eventually, the company cancelled the consumers' invoices.

Collaboration

On ADR, ECC Sweden cooperated with the Swedish National Board for Consumer Disputes. A network to combat counterfeiting/piracy was established with other authorities. The creation of a web portal is planned for 2012. The Centre participated in events organised by Dolceta and Europe Direct. ECC Sweden cooperated with Generation Europe Foundation concerning the Europa Diary and the Teacher's Guide. A close cooperation with the national CPC Authority was developed concerning airline issues, internet services and e-commerce. There was a fruitful cooperation between the Centre and the National Board of Trade.

Nature of complaints 2011



UNITED KINGDOM

Activities and events

In 2011, ECC United Kingdom was the busiest centre in the ECC-Net, handling a massive amount of complaints and information requests. The Centre's work in educating consumers both about its service and their consumer rights included: leaflets on consumer-centred subjects such as car hire and the legislation on timeshare; participation in the EU-wide Air Passenger Rights Day at Stansted Airport and high profile media work such as national newspapers and national broadcast coverage (radio and TV). The popularity of the ECC United Kingdom's e-newsletter Your Update continued to grow in 2011. An ongoing ground-breaking partnership with the European Consumer Centre for Services and P&O Ferries was formed by holding a series of advice desks on cross-channel sailings. An information campaign was organised concerning the ECC United Kingdom amongst third sector organisations such as Citizens Advice and enforcement professionals, including Trading Standards by exhibiting at stands at their annual conferences.

Success story

A Slovenian consumer bought a flight ticket at London Stansted to get home to Ljubjana. He had ended up in dispute with his original British airline as the check-in had closed early and he effectively missed the flight. The first airline rejected his claim for costs. ECC Slovenia shared the case with ECC United Kingdom. After several months of negotiations, the Slovenian consumer received a full refund of £261.

Collaboration

ECC United Kingdom liaised with bodies such as the Civil Aviation Authority, the Office of Fair Trading – in its role under the Consumer Protection Cooperation – and Alternative Dispute Resolution organisations such as the Financial Ombudsman Service and the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association. The Centre also set up a case referral procedure with Consumer Direct. It continued to support the European Commission and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills by attending meetings to share best practice and feedback on consumer problems and issues.

Nature of complaints 2011





National contact
details

The updated list of the European Consumer Centres' contact details is also available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/ecc-net>

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¹⁸ ECC Greece was not operational in 2011.
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