EUROPEAN CONSUMER CENTRE SLOVENIA

2018

Help and advice for consumers in Europe

ECC-Net

European Consumer Centre Slovenia

EUROPEAN CONSUMER CENTRE IN 2018

FREE ADVICE AND CONSUMER ASSISTANCE

In 2018, the ECC Slovenia successfully completed its fifth year of operation within the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology. During this period, cross-border purchases of goods and services and travel abroad were on the increase, and due to new technology, the supply and opportunities were also increasing and they were more diverse and complex; therefore, the problems of consumers who turned to the ECC Slovenia were always new and unique.

1055 consumers turned to the ECC Slovenia in 2018

799 pieces of information or advice

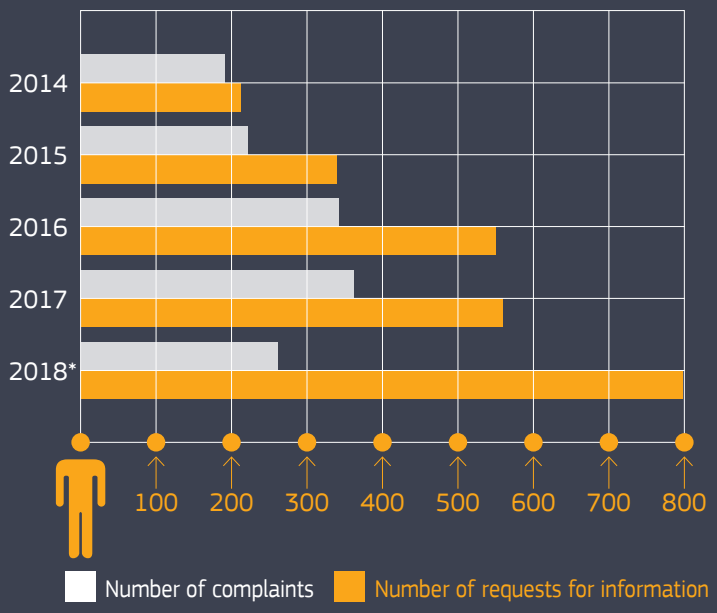
256 consumers were assisted by the ECC in resolving a complaint against a foreign trader

COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE MODE OF PURCHASE



The number of consumers who made their purchases online continued to grow. There were already 87% of such cases in 2018, of which 15% of consumers made purchases through online booking intermediaries and online platforms. Compared to previous years, there was a greater dispersion of complaints across countries in online shopping.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS AND REQUEST FOR INFORMATION IN PAST YEARS



* The increase in the number of requests for information and, on the other hand, the decrease in the number of complaints were to a certain extent due to a changed manner of recording complaints and questions in the ECC Network's IT tool for handling consumer complaints and questions.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

A consumer submits a complaint or a question via the link on the epc.si website, in which they present their issue in detail and define the claim they have against a provider of goods or services. In the case of a complaint, they must attach all relevant documentation, in particular an order confirmation, an invoice and communication with the trader. The ECC examines the complaint and, if justified, translates it and forwards it to the ECC in the country of the provider, alerting the provider to a violation of consumer rights and inviting them to comply with the consumer's claim. If the provider unjustifiably rejects the consumer's claim or is unwilling to cooperate with the ECC Network, the consumer is advised to use other court or out-of-court means of dispute resolution.

EFFECTIVENESS IN RESOLVING COMPLAINTS



62 % of complaints from foreign consumers against Slovenian traders successfully resolved



50 % of complaints from Slovenian consumers against foreign traders successfully resolved

REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS BY FIELDS



58 %
transportation



12 %
recreational and cultural activities



4 %
restaurants, hotels, and accommodation services



6 %
clothing and footwear



7 %
furniture, home equipment



6 %
mixed goods and services



7 %
other

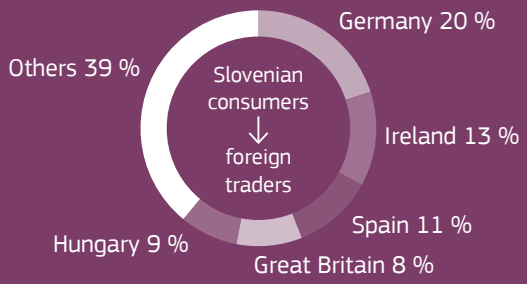
STUDY VISITS OF OTHER ECCS

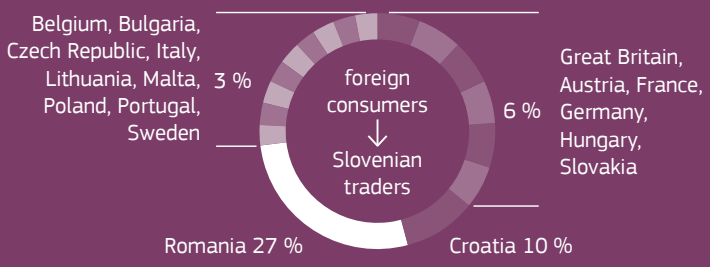
In November 2018, the ECC Slovenia, together with colleagues from Bulgaria, Lithuania and Latvia, attended a study visit to the ECC Netherlands, which provided the opportunity to get to know the structure, environment and operating conditions of the ECC Netherlands and their host organisation. They presented their cooperation with stakeholders, various forms of communication with the public, and experiences with out-of-court consumer dispute resolution. A good part of the study visit was dedicated to complaint handling procedures with a new online tool and examples of good practice in handling complaints.

ECC-CPC-MONITOR

The ECC Network continues to cooperate with the network of public authorities responsible for implementing consumer protection legislation in Member States (the CPC Network). In 2017, the networks set up a common online tool, the ECC-CPC-monitor, through which they exchange information about cross-border providers of goods and services that massively, systematically or repeatedly violate EU law in the field of consumer protection. At the end of 2018, the ECC Network reported 82 violators to the system (65 in 2017). Also in 2018, the highest number of complaints was due to subscription traps, namely 20. Other fields where recurrent violations occurred were: air travel (where online intermediaries stand out in particular), vehicle rental, selling of designer furniture, ticket reselling and digital services, and the first complaint was also recorded regarding virtual currencies.

REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS BY COUNTRIES





CONSUMER PROBLEMS

Most consumer questions were related to consumer rights in air transport. There were 207 such questions, representing as many as 2/3 of questions regarding services. Regarding purchase of goods, half of the questions were related to the exercise of rights due to defects in goods.

SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED CASES

A Slovenian consumer bought a new motorcycle from a German trader for the price of EUR 6,999.00. The price included 19% VAT. The consumer then paid the VAT again, when he registered the motorcycle in Slovenia, and was entitled to a refund of the VAT paid in the trader's country. Since the German trader did not want to repay the amount of VAT to the consumer, the consumer contacted the ECC, which examined the matter and sent it to colleagues in Germany to address it. They intervened against the trader, who initially requested a translation of the certificate of paid VAT issued by the Slovenian Financial Administration. The German ECC then explained to the trader that a translation was not needed as the practice across EU countries was to recognise official certificates in foreign languages. Shortly thereafter, the German trader repaid to the consumer a VAT amount of EUR 1,117.49.

A consumer who was denied boarding of a plane because too many airline tickets had been sold was interested in where and how she should file a complaint and what amount she was entitled to. The ECC explained to the consumer that, in accordance with the regulation on the rights of air passengers, because she was denied boarding, she was entitled to compensation, the amount of which is fixed as a flat-rate amount and depends on the length of the flight. Given that the ECC was not aware of the flight details, she was advised to check the amount of compensation with a "rights calculator", which is available on the epc.si website. The ECC also explained to her that she should address the complaint directly to the air carrier by using their online form, if available, and documenting the submission of complaint by making a screenshot, or by using the "EU Complaint Form for Air Passengers" and sending it to the carrier's email address. With the help of the ECC's advice, the consumer was able to exercise her rights with the air carrier, which then paid her compensation for denied boarding.

A consumer who purchased a TV from an online retailer with headquarters in Hungary contacted the ECC for advice on how to proceed because the goods had not been delivered within the agreed time. The consumer was advised to ask the trader in writing for delivery and set a deadline. If the goods are not delivered even within the additional period, the consumer may withdraw from the contract and demand reimbursement of the payment. The trader then delivered the TV to her within the additional specified period.



COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

INFORMATION MATERIAL

The Air Passenger Rights brochure provides information on passenger rights in the event of delayed or cancelled flights, denied boarding and transfer between classes, and advice on how to act in case of difficulties. The brochure also contains information on passenger rights in the event of delayed, lost, damaged or destroyed luggage. Consumers also learn how to act in these cases in order to successfully exercise their rights. The leaflet What You Need to Know When Hiring a Car contains advice for consumers for all phases of car hiring (from booking to renting and returning a vehicle) and tips on what to do in case of a car accident or theft. The practical examples also illustrate the problems that the consumer may encounter at certain phases of hiring a vehicle.

WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY – ECC OPEN DAY

On 15 March, World Consumer Rights Day, the ECC again organised an open day, this time in Pogačarjev trg square in Ljubljana. The event was primarily aimed at young people, so the Ljubljana secondary schools were invited to participate. The ECC prepared short lectures for students on the most important consumer rights, secure online shopping, risks when buying counterfeits, scams on FB, and air passenger rights.

SURVEY ON THE USE OF PROCEDURES OF OUT-OF-COURT SETTLEMENT OF CONSUMER DISPUTES

The ECC conducted a survey among providers of goods and services on the use of procedures of out-of-court settlement of consumer disputes under the law of the same name. The purpose of the survey was to raise awareness of the possibilities of out-of-court settlement of consumer disputes, identify reasons for lack of interest in these procedures and possible obstacles to the use of procedures, and find out what needs to be done to make better use of this potential of the legislation.

CAMPAIGN ON CONSUMER RIGHTS, INTENDED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In the second half of the year, the ECC launched a campaign on consumer rights on city buses in Ljubljana, aimed primarily at the younger population. As part of the campaign, two short films were played on the bus screens, informing consumers about their rights in the use of mobile phones abroad and online shopping. The campaign continued in 2019.

LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

At Zagorje Secondary School, the ECC conducted two workshops on consumer rights and secure online shopping. At the invitation of the social company Simbioza Genesis, the ECC delivered a lecture for the elderly, focusing on consumer rights in the case of defective goods.

FAIRS

The ECC participated in the Youth Arena fair and also attended the Natour Alpe Adria fair at the invitation of the Slovenian Intellectual Property Office. Within the framework of the presentation of the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, the ECC participated at the International Trade Fair in Celje in September.

MEDIA

In six press releases, the ECC reminded consumers of the rights that they are entitled to under European regulations and informed them of the new EU consumer rights legislation. The ECC concluded the year with a message about the renewed application ECC-Net: Travel, which provides support to consumers in exercising their rights abroad. The ECC also participated in ten television and ten radio broadcasts and was included in 76 publications in other media.

EUROPEAN CONSUMER CENTRE SLOVENIA (ECC)

The ECC Slovenia is part of the network of European Consumer Centres, which operate in all EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. The ECC Network informs and advises consumers and provides them with expert support in resolving their complaints against foreign providers of goods and services from the EU, Iceland or Norway. All services are free for consumers.

USER SATISFACTION WITH THE ECC'S SERVICES

According to the survey conducted among consumers who contacted the Slovenian ECC in 2018, 87% of users were satisfied with the ECC's services.

IMPORTANT NEW BENEFITS FOR CONSUMERS AT EU LEVEL

PROHIBITION OF CHARGING FEES FOR CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS

In the past, particularly airlines, ticket vendors, and some other providers charged a fee for credit card payments. This is forbidden under the new EU Directive on payment services in the internal market, which has been in force since January 2018.

CROSS-BORDER PORTABILITY OF ONLINE CONTENT

Starting in April 2018, consumers who purchase music and video content online through subscriptions, may access such content on equal terms also when travelling in another EU country. Providers must not charge extra for the provision of cross-border portability.

STRENGTHENING THE RIGHTS IN THE PURCHASE OF ORGANISED TRAVELS

A new directive on package travel, which has applied since July 2018, provides more rights for consumers, and protection has extended to other forms of custom-made combined travel, too.

MORE CONTROL OF PERSONAL DATA

Since May 2018, more stringent rules set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) apply throughout the EU in the field of personal data protection.

GEO-BLOCKING PROHIBITION

Under the new regulation, which has applied since December 2018, in the cases defined by the regulation, traders may not differentiate between customers by offering them different general terms and conditions, including prices.

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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

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