



ECC Dublin Consumer Monthly

April 2006

All kinds of everything could definitely describe the variety of complaints ECC Dublin received in 2005. From lost in translation in Lithuania to liposuction in Poland consumers of all shapes and sizes encounter the Internal Market in different ways. We briefly outline some interesting examples of these experiences in our review of last year's Annual Report.

This month's consumer query is from a German consumer who had a problem with a rented car in Ireland.

Mary Denise O'Reilly
Editor

- 1. What's bothering you? – All kinds of everything for European consumers**
- 2. Consumer query of the month – Having problems with a rented car in Ireland**

www.eccdublin.ie : European consumer rights online

1. What's bothering you? – All kinds of everything in Centre's Annual Report for 2005.

ECC Dublin dealt with 3,365 contacts from consumers in 2005. The main area of complaint related to travel (32%), followed by distance selling (12%) and misleading advertising (8%). Typical travel complaints related to airline travel such as consumers experiencing delays and problems with damage to and loss of luggage. In the category of distance selling the main area of complaint related to the non-delivery of goods and the receipt of faulty goods. The category of misleading advertising refers to scams and although scams reported to the Centre decreased slightly by 1% they are still a concern for ECC Dublin. The most frustrating aspect to scams is the fact that it is difficult to defend consumers' interests in the face of fraudsters.

Although not in the top three complaints for 2005, ECC Dublin continued to receive complaints from Irish consumers who had purchased electrical goods in shops in Spain. The typical problem is that these goods are marketed and sold as well known brands but turn out not to be. Ultimately consumers are disappointed with their purchases. The Centre also noted an increase in problems with a UK satellite TV services. The typical problem here was around billing issues and poor customer service.

The more unusual queries included some of the following:

An Irish airline refused to board Lithuanian children on a flight to London because they were too young to fly on their own. This prohibition however was not included in the

terms and conditions on the Lithuanian version of the airline's website. ECC Dublin intervened on behalf of the children and secured a refund of the tickets which cost over €700.

An Irish consumer travelled on a package holiday to Poland to undergo liposuction treatment. On arrival the liposuction was not carried out due to medical advice. The consumer demanded a full refund of the package holiday. The company provided a partial refund which complied with legal requirements.

To read the complete Annual Report for 2005 please click on the following link:

http://www.eccdublin.ie/publications/annual_reports.html

2. Consumer question of the month – I live in Germany but rented a car in Ireland for St Patrick's weekend. I returned the car to the rental company in perfect condition. But this month I see my credit card has been debited by €300 for scratches along the side of the car. The rental company is refusing to accept my assurances the car was fine as there was no employee of the company to check its condition when I returned it. What can I do?

We will try and assist you by intervening with the company on your behalf. First we will need some more information from you such as the car rental company's contact details, proof of payment and record of correspondence you have been having with the company.

In the past year the ECC-Net has seen a steady increase in car rental complaints. Your complaint is typical of the vast number of those received across Europe. It is problematic for consumers when returning hired vehicles to prove the vehicle is in perfect condition unless a rental company employee verifies this. This is especially true when the hired vehicle is returned outside of office hours. The advice we offer to consumers is to check the vehicle before hiring it and also on returning it to the company. Ideally try not to return it outside office hours.

If you wish to email your consumer queries to us please do so to info@eccdublin.ie

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