



With summer approaching many of us are planning our holidays and coming home with a suitcase full of new purchases is a highlight of the holidays for a lot of people. The Single Market offered by the 27 EU Member States benefits consumers by offering us a larger selection of items to choose from and also in many cases cheaper prices. But problems that occur when you shop across borders can make it difficult to complain effectively. This month's e-bulletin offers advice on how to make a complaint against traders based in another EU country.

Our consumer complaint concerns the new entry requirements for travellers to the United States and a scam that charges these travellers up to \$250 for a service from the U.S. Government that is completely free of charge.

If you have had a problem with a purchase from another EU country, please contact us on 01 8090600 or at info@eccdublin.ie. For information on your consumer rights in Europe, see www.eccireland.ie.

Ann Neville
Editor

1. Shopping for trouble?

European legislation protects you every time you shop in Ireland or in another EU Member State. But if something goes wrong when you buy something outside Ireland language difficulties and distance can often make it difficult to complain effectively. So if you have made a purchase in Europe that you are unhappy with, what can you do to resolve the matter?

1. Contact the retailer or service provider (ie the trader) to seek a remedy.
2. If the trader cannot or will not help, put your complaint in writing:
 - Enclose a copy of the receipt and any other paperwork and give them a time limit in which to resolve the matter (e.g. fourteen days)
 - State clearly what the problem is and what you want to achieve. Be polite and realise your limits
 - Keep a copy of your letter of complaint and proof of its submission (e.g. postage receipt if you send it by registered post)
 - You can often find the preferred manner to file your complaint and the contact information in the trader's terms and conditions

What to do next

If the trader does not reply to your letters, refuses to do anything, or makes a final offer that you are unwilling to accept, you can contact the European Consumer Centre Ireland. We are there to support you if you have a problem with a supplier of goods or services in another EU country. We offer a free and confidential information and advice service on consumer rights in the EU. If necessary, we can contact the trader to solve the dispute directly and if this fails we can provide information on alternative means of pursuing your complaint.

You can send the details of your complaint to our office by post or by email at the address listed below:

European Consumer Centre
13a Upper O'Connell Street
Dublin 1
Email: consumeradvice@eccireland.ie

You can also find further information on our website (please click [here](#) for details) or submit queries or questions via our on-line form at www.eccireland.ie/about_us/contact.html

2. I am travelling to the United States and understand that I need to fill in a new electronic visa application. I have done this on-line and paid \$250 for the service. A friend has told me that he got his free. Is that correct?

For any non-U.S. citizen who wants to travel to the United States, it is mandatory to submit an application before travelling without a visa. It is called the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) application and you can submit your ESTA application on <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> for free. It is a simple and quick procedure in which you enter your passport details and answer some basic questions and you receive your authorization immediately. However, if you do a Google search for "ESTA" the first link that appears is a private company that will submit your ESTA application on your behalf for a fee of \$250. While the company admits that they are not affiliated with the U.S. government nowhere do they mention that submitting the ESTA application is free if done through the U.S. government site. For people not familiar with the ESTA requirements or for whom English is not their first language it might not be obvious that there is another free option for obtaining ESTA authorization to enter the United States.

If you have been affected by a scamming company operating from the U.S. you can report them to the **Better Business Bureau** at www.bbb.org or to www.econsumer.gov, both organizations which allow consumers to lodge complaints against fraudulent companies based in the United States.

For further information on on-line scams see www.eccireland.ie/topics/scams.html

If you want more information about this or any other cross-border consumer issue you can contact us on 01 8090600 or at www.eccireland.ie.

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