



This month discusses car rentals and the most common problems experienced by consumers as outlined in ECC Ireland's recently published 2010 **Annual Report**. Our Consumer Query of the Month discusses difficulties with online check-in while our Success Story deals with lost luggage. Our consumer survey is available on our website at www.eccireland.ie and this month deals with consumer confidence when cross-border shopping.

If you have had a problem with a purchase from another European country, please contact us on 01 8797620 or click [here](#). For information on your consumer rights in Europe, see www.eccireland.ie

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Driving into trouble?

As more and more of us favour flexible holiday arrangements over the traditional package holiday, booking a rental car when we book our flights and accommodation is an increasingly common step for many consumers. However the number of car rental complaints received by ECC Ireland shows that for some people at least their car rentals are not a problem-free experience.

ECC Ireland's recently published **Annual Report** indicates that car rental continues to occupy a position among the top three most complained about areas, after air travel and electronic goods, for the second year running. Charges imposed after the return of the car for alleged damages incurred represented the vast majority of consumer complaints and accounted for 41% of the total number of cases related to car rentals. While it is understandable that consumers are liable for damage caused to a vehicle during their rental period, they should not be penalised for damage caused by normal wear and tear. Accordingly, consumers may not be responsible for a mechanical failure which occurred during the rental period if the problem in question was not due to an action or omission carried out by the consumers themselves.

To avoid this situation it is important to carefully inspect a car on collection and return, as well as to check the so called insurance or cover provided, and the excess amount that could be charged to a credit card in the event of damage to the vehicle. There have been instances in which car rental companies have charged consumers' credit cards without the consumers being acquainted with any evidence showing that damage was sustained to the vehicle, even without prior notification of the alleged damage. As a result, consumers became aware of these charges only upon checking their credit card statements. Complaints regarding the elevated costs for repairs are also frequent.

Additional charges constituted the second major cause for consumer complaints and accounted for 17% of the total number of car rental-related cases received in 2010. Consumers very often do not realise that prices quoted online or over the phone only contain the basics and that it is important to make sure what is included in the final quote

and to check the cost of optional extras (e.g. excess waiver or additional driver), as these items, if voluntarily selected, may not be recoverable at a later stage.

You should also pay attention to the fuel policy, as in some cases car rental companies charge in advance for fuel and expect consumers to return the car with an empty tank, something that may be impracticable for the majority of consumers to do.

Consumer Query of the Month

I recently booked a flight for me and my girlfriend. Last night I tried to check in online as we are flying tomorrow but due to what appears to be a technical problem, the boarding passes were not made available for printing. I am fairly familiar with the online check-in procedure, as I have flown with this airline in the past, but I don't understand what went wrong this time. What should I do?

Online check-in is generally a convenient feature as it helps passengers to save time and cuts costs for airlines. We appreciate, however, that passengers who find difficulties when attempting to check in online should not be deprived of assistance as airlines are required to supply services with due skill, care and diligence. In this case, if due to a technical problem (e.g. the capacity limit of the page has been exceeded), we would recommend you to try to access the site later if you are still in time to do so, to see if you can retrieve or regenerate your boarding passes. Some airlines include in the relevant section of their website a 'reprint' option. If the problem recurs, we would recommend you to take screenshots of the details displayed on screen, as this may be useful as evidence of your attempts, and contact the airline's customer services for assistance before the time to check in online or reprint your boarding pass is up.

Success story of the Month

A Polish consumer's luggage was lost while travelling with an Irish air carrier. The consumer reported the matter at the airport and consequently submitted all relevant receipts for the air carrier's attention, requesting compensation under the auspices of the Montreal Convention. As no response was received, the consumer sought assistance from ECC Poland. The details of the complaint were passed on to ECC Ireland. Following our intervention, the air carrier offered compensation amounting to more than €1,180.

This month's survey

Here in ECC Ireland we are always interested to hear what you think. This month, we are asking whether you feel confident that if something goes wrong when buying goods or services from another European country your complaint would be heard and resolved? To take part in the survey just go to our home page www.eccireland.ie

If you want more information about this or any other cross-border consumer issue you can contact us on 01 8797620 or at www.eccireland.ie.

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