



The issue of value for money is of increasing concern for everyone and proof of this is the number of consumers who are willing to travel to Northern Ireland to obtain cheaper products and services. The question is, if the Euro and Sterling are now almost at parity, why is this saving not being passed on to consumers?

Our consumer query concerns a consumer experiencing difficulties when trying to book a flight ticket online.

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.

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Editor

1. The high cost of shopping at home....

At ECC Ireland we receive daily queries from consumers concerned at the high cost of goods here in comparison with their prices in Sterling. If Sterling and the Euro are now almost at parity why is this saving not being passed on to consumers?

The National Consumer Agency has highlighted the difference in cost between Ireland and the UK across a wide range of different products and found that Irish consumers are on average being charged 51% more than consumers in the UK. This difference is frequently attributed to the higher cost of doing business here than in the UK but the recent report by Forfás found these costs could justify only a 5% to 6% differential in the price of the same goods being sold in Dublin and Belfast.

So with consumers being charged so much more here in Ireland than in the UK for similar products what can you do to save money?

One option is to shop on-line. In many cases UK companies offer the same goods at much lower prices on their 'co.uk' sites than in their '.ie' equivalents. In one case a consumer was able to save more than €1,000 in the cost of a camping holiday to France simply by booking it directly through the company's UK website rather than in its Irish equivalent.

Of course not all websites allow consumers from outside the UK to purchase products in Sterling due to, for instance, distribution agreements and the legislation which regulates consumers' entitlements when buying on-line does not prohibit companies charging different prices for the same product through different sites (although there are some limits to this, e.g. Regulation No 1008/2008 on air services). The increasing number of

consumers shopping across the border via the internet or travelling to the North suggests that companies trading in Ireland may consider boosting competition by dropping their prices to reflect the growing purchasing power of the Euro, as it seems that Irish consumers are more concerned about price differentials than ever before.

2. I tried to book flight tickets for myself and my family on an airline website. Despite several attempts, it seems that the booking was unsuccessful as the confirmation page never appeared and I have not yet received the confirmation email.

I am now considering booking flights with a different airline. Is there anything I should check first?

If you followed all the instructions given by the trader to complete the booking but due to a failure with the reservation system the booking appears not to be completed, it is advisable to allow some time and check your email (including the spam / junk folder) to see if a confirmation email comes through.

Otherwise, if you try to make further attempts, you may end up being charged for two or more reservations for the same passenger/s and flight/s.

If you encounter such difficulties, you should always contact the airline's reservation centre to see if there is a record of your booking, before proceeding to book other flights.

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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