



ECC MALTA NEWS

AUGUST 2015 ISSUE 02



Information and advice about cross border consumer rights

We are very happy to publish the second edition of our Newsletter for this year and to bring you the latest news happening within the ECC Network and also in the consumer related area

In this edition you will read about what has been going on in the car rental sector, what are the news for mobile roaming charges and why 2015 is an important year for the European Consumer Centre Network. We will also highlight a case study that ECC Malta has worked upon and closed in a satisfactory way during the last month.



ECC Net 10 Years Anniversary

2015 is an important year for the ECC Net, since it marks the Networks' 10 years since its establishment. In fact in June the European Commission has launched a report for this occasion which highlights the achievements of the Network since it started its operations in the various European Member States.

Over the past 10 years the ECC Network has provided assistance or advice to over 650,000 consumers. The number of direct contacts with the Centres has increased constantly over the years and in 2014 alone, the figure was well over 90,000 twice as many as in 2005. Changes in the consumer area has been challenging and the growth in e-commerce, which today accounts for two thirds of all queries received by the Centres, have had an impact on the ECCs work.



Good News for Consumers in the Car Rental Sector

The result of a joint action between the European Commission and National Enforcement Authorities is that five major car rental companies agreed to significantly review how they deal with consumers

Thanks to this joint action European consumers will now benefit from more clarity on insurance policies and tank refuelling options, more fairness when handling damages and greater price transparency.

Five major car rental companies operating within the European market have pledged to bring their current car rental policies more in line with the requirement of consumer protection legislation set out by EU rules on consumer rights, unfair commercial practices and unfair contract terms.

The main pledges made by these companies are:

- **Improved transparency when booking online:**
 - Clearer information about all mandatory charges and optional extras;

- Clearer information about key rental terms and requirements, including deposits charged on the consumer's card;
- **Better information at the booking stage about optional waiver and insurance products**, including their prices, exclusions and applicable excesses.
- Improved and **more transparent fuel policies**
- Clearer and fairer **vehicle inspection processes**
- **Improved practices for taking additional charges from customers:** consumers are given a reasonable opportunity to challenge any damage before any payment is taken

Whilst it must be stated that not every car hire experience end up with problems to the consumer, this joint action was taken as a result of an increase of complaints

on car rental services reported by the European Consumer Centres. Read more about this topic in the European Commission's Press Release and detailed report about this joint action here: <http://eccnetmalta.gov.mt/good-news-for-consumers-in-the-car-rental-sector/>

If problems arise, more often than not consumers will end up dealing with them after returning the car. One could face other problems during the rental period like accidents and thefts. When possible in respect of problems that arise during the stay in the foreign country, it is advisable that they are settled before the consumer leaves that country. ECC Malta provides hints and advice about car hire when abroad so that consumers can be better informed in order to avoid problems when returning at home after a well deserved holiday. Read more in our travel and transport section from ECC Malta's website: www.eccnetmalta.gov.mt

Case Study



ECC Malta was contacted by a Maltese consumer who purchased a fridge from a trader based in Italy for the price of €801. After 5 months the fridge stopped functioning properly, in that it was not cooling enough with the consequence that the food in the fridge was getting spoiled. The consumer contacted the trader with her problem and sent several emails. Notwithstanding, the trader failed to offer any solution to the consumer and failed to take any responsibility even though the fridge was still within the guarantee period.

The consumer contacted ECC Malta with her problem and her case was shared with ECC Italy. Following the intervention of ECC Italy, the consumer was instructed by the trader to conduct

the necessary repairs at a local agent. However, following the intervention of the local agent the fridge could not be repaired. Subsequently the local agent offered the consumer to choose a new fridge. Notwithstanding, this solution did not work out for the consumer since the available models offered by the local agent did not meet the original specifications required by the consumer.

In the circumstances, ECC Italy intervened again and contacted the Italian trader explaining the situation. Ultimately it was agreed that the consumer returns the faulty fridge and the trader replaced it with a new fridge of the same model.



Mobile Roaming Charges to end in June 2017

When travelling abroad, mobile services, such as making and receiving calls, sending or receiving text messages or downloading data, are operated by a foreign network, since the home provider does not operate in that country. For providing this service, the foreign network operator will pass on charges to the home operator, who in turn will pass on the additional charges to the consumer. This is what is called mobile roaming and EU legislation in this regards had introduced a maximum cap price on roaming costs.

However, the good news in this sector is that consumers travelling within the EU will be paying the same price to use their mobile phone as they would pay if using their mobile phone at home from June 2017. This decision came following an agreement between the European Parliament, Council and Commission.

The European Commission stated that whilst it is committed to "implementing those conditions and making sure that the end of roaming charges is operational as of day one" a series of

technical conditions need to be fulfilled in order to abolish roaming charges.

Furthermore, already from April of next year roaming charges will become cheaper. Consumers will only be charged a small additional amount to domestic prices up to €0.05 per minute of call made, €0.02 per SMS sent, and €0.05 per MB of data (excl. VAT). The Commission stated that this maximum roaming charge is about 75% cheaper than current roaming caps for calls made and data.

Staying "h'APP'y" in Europe with ECC-Net: Travel app



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Help and advice
for consumers
in Europe

The ECC-NET (EMERGENCY) app is a joint European Consumer Centre Network (ECC-Net) project, led by ECC Germany.

For more information:
www.eccnetmalta.gov.mt

The poster is part of the action 670694 – ECC-Net EM (FPA) which has received funding under a grant for an ECC action from the European Union's Consumer Programme (2014-2020).

The ECC Net mobile application has been relaunched in June. It now features an improved design and more comprehensive advice for consumers

Developed as an ideal travel companion inside the European Union as well as in Iceland and Norway, it helps the European consumers to know and express their consumer rights in 25 European languages.

When on holiday, we always want to avoid stress. That's why the ECC-Net: Travel app is easy to use and offers a variety of solutions to any problem. For each type of situation, the app not only informs you whether you are entitled to claim your rights but also how to express them. Following installation the app works offline and is accessible for Android, iOS and Windows. Read more information from here:

<http://eccnetmalta.gov.mt/staying-happy-in-europe-with-ecc-net-travel-app/>

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