

European Consumer Centre (ECC) Annual Report 2010



General Information about ECC-Iceland

The ECC-net's purpose is to assist consumers in disputes with traders and provide general information on consumer rights in cross-border commerce within the European Economic Area (EEA). ECC-Iceland is one of 29 centers across Europe. ECC-Iceland assists Icelandic consumers in dealing with foreign traders by gathering information, forwarding complaints to trader's ECC center and keeping track of any progress abroad. At the same time ECC-Iceland handles communication with Icelandic traders when complaints come in from consumers in other countries in the EEA. The Consumers' Association of Iceland manages ECC-Iceland according to an agreement with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, and is funded by the Icelandic government and the European Commission (SANCO), each responsible for half the operational costs.

ECC-Iceland Staff

ECC-Iceland's operation, which is relatively small, is housed and managed by the Consumers' Association of Iceland. The association's staff therefore also works for ECC-Iceland but there's only one position equivalent to approx. 50% of a full time job that is shared between three employees. They are Hildigunnur Hafsteinsdóttir, lawyer and director of ECC-Iceland, Kristín Einarsdóttir case-handler, and Ásta Vigdís Bjarnadóttir, receptionist and case-handler.



ECC-Iceland staff with colleagues from Nordic ECC-centers at a meeting in Reykjavík

Number of Cases

In 2007 a new registration system (IT-tool) was introduced to the ECC-net. The system requires all information requests and complaints as well as cases ECC handles be entered into the system. In 2010 47 information requests, 26 simple complaints and 38 normal complaints were registered, thereof 35 handled by ECC-Iceland and 3 handled solely by the consumer ECC. The workload has been increasing steadily the past few years, for instance in 2007 there were only 7 normal complaints in total. In 2008 there were 25 normal complaints, and 23 in 2009. This past year was therefore record-breaking for ECC-Iceland when it comes to the number of complaints.

Number of Cases for the ECC-net

ECC-Iceland is the smallest centre in the net and therefore only handles a fraction of the cases that come through the ECC-net. This past year the ECC-net published an extensive 5 year report on the net's operations in 2005-2009. It reports that in 2009, the net received over 60.000 cases from consumers, emphasizing the need for the ECC-net. The report (in English) is available in printed form at our offices at Hverfisgata 105. You can also request having it sent to your location by calling t: +354 545 1200, or view it online on our homepage, www.ena.is.

Volcanic Eruption in Eyjafjallajökull



In spring 2010, a volcanic eruption in Eyjafjallajökull wreaked havoc on flight schedules across Europe. There were a lot of delays and cancellations and in many instances it was difficult for air passengers to have their rights honored. ECC-Iceland did its best to inform and advise consumers affected by the disruption in flight schedules by, for instance, thoroughly reporting on the matter on its homepage.

ECC-Iceland also received cases regarding foreign tourists in Iceland who had rented cars that were damaged by the ash drift. It can be estimated that about 20% of the cases ECC-Iceland received in 2010 were in one way or another connected to the eruption and its effects. For further information on the eruption and its impact on consumers, there is plenty of information on ECC-Iceland's homepage, www.ena.is.



Other Projects

In addition to providing guidance and acting as intermediary in complaints, ECC-Iceland has many different projects. The ECC-network is quite extensive, with ECC-centers located in all countries within the EEA (except Liechtenstein). ECC representatives therefore convene regularly in addition to having a great deal of email communication. The ECC-centers contribute to various reports and joint projects for the ECC-network. ECC-Iceland also has a home page, www.ena.is, where the aim is to inform consumers about hot topics in consumer issues within the EEA. New news bulletins are added regularly, published both in

English and Icelandic. This passing year ECC-Iceland published about 40 news items. Reports published by the ECC-net are also published online.

Success stories from ECC-Iceland

Most of the cases ECC-Iceland received last year were about travel and transportation. Following are a few examples of cases in 2010.

An Icelandic couple had booked a flight with a foreign airline from England to Spain. 30 minutes before the scheduled departure the flight was cancelled with no reason provided. After spending the night at a nearby hotel, the couple returned to the airport and were told that the airline in question would not be flying to the intended destination in the next two days. The couple therefore had to buy a flight with another airline. Following intervention by ECC-Iceland and ECC-UK, the airline agreed to pay 250 Euros in compensation to each individual, as well as refunding the original flight and the one night stay at the airport hotel.

A Swedish consumer rented a car from an Icelandic car rental. About three weeks after returning the car, 120.000 ISK (Icelandic krona) were charged to his credit card. The consumer later received a letter stating that the charged amount was the consumer's liability for damage on the rear bumper and front windshield. The consumer did not remember



doing any damage to the car and requested a refund. The car rental declined the refund and insisted the damage occurred while the consumer had the car. To support their claims, the car rental provided photo evidence of the damage along with the car mechanic's damage report. Despite ECC-Iceland's intervention, no agreement could be made so ECC-Iceland helped the consumer forward his case to the Ruling Committee in

Travel Industry Matters. The committee ruled that the car rental should refund the charged amount, and based its decision on the photos not being sufficient proof of the damage occurring before the car was returned to the car rental, but no employee had been present upon the return.

A Dutch couple bought a four-day package trip to Iceland. Due to the volcanic eruption in Eyjafjallajökull, the flight was delayed causing them to miss out on one night's stay, which had already been paid for. After ECC-Iceland's intervention, the trader agreed to refund one night's accommodation as well as refunding costs for refreshments the couple had to buy during the delay.

A Finnish consumer bought a product from an Icelandic web trader, but never received it. The consumer contacted ECC-Finland who forwarded the case to ECC-Iceland. The trader believed they had sent the product twice already, but since it never arrived, the trader agreed to refund all the consumer's costs due to the non-delivery.



Reykjavík, January 5th 2011,
Hildigunnur Hafsteinsdóttir