

# European Consumer Centre (ECC) Annual report 2009



## General Information about ECC-Iceland

The Consumers' Association of Iceland manages the ECC according to an agreement with the Ministry of Economic Affairs. ECC's purpose is to assist consumers in disputes with traders over cross-border commerce within the European Economic Area (EEA). ECC-Iceland assists Icelandic consumers in dealing with foreign traders. ECC-Iceland assists with information gathering, forwarding complaints to traders and keeps 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.

## ECC-Iceland Employees

ECC-Iceland's operation, which is still small, is housed and managed by the Consumers' Association of Iceland. The association's employees therefore also work 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 manager of ECC-Iceland, Kristín Einarsdóttir case-handler, and Ásta Vígdís Bjarnadóttir, receptionist and case-handler.

## 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 2009 41 information requests, 37 simple complaints and 23 normal complaints were registered. The number of information requests has doubled between 2008 and 2009, but the numbers in the other categories did not change much. The workload however has been increasing steadily the past few years, for instance in 2007 there were only 7 normal complaints in total.

## Other Projects

In addition to providing guidance and acting as intermediary in complaints, ECC-Iceland has many different projects. ECC-centers are located in all countries within the EEA (except Liechtenstein) and the ECC-net is an extensive network. ECC representatives therefore convene regularly in addition to having a great deal of email communication. Then there are various reports and projects for the ECC-network. ECC-Iceland also has a home page,

[www.ena.is](http://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. Reports from the ECC-net are also published online. Furthermore, in 2009 ECC-Iceland published a special promotional leaflet about the operation in both English and Icelandic.

## **Success Stories from ECC-Iceland.**

### **As Trader ECC**

In May 2008 a Spanish consumer bought some products through an Icelandic website. In April 2009, when he had still not received the products he turned to the ECC. ECC-Iceland immediately sent a letter to the trader who reacted very quickly and five days after the letter was sent the consumer had gotten full refund.

A consumer from Italy rented a car in Iceland last summer. When he returned the car he was charged 162.000 ISK because of damages to the car. The consumer thought the amount was too high and brought his case to the ECC in Italy, which forwarded the case to ECC Iceland. After ECC Iceland requested a copy of the car repair bill, it turned out the repair cost was only 116.000 ISK and therefore the consumer got the difference, 46.000 ISK, reimbursed

A Danish consumer bought and paid for a product through an Icelandic web-site. However he never received the product so he turned to the ECC. When ECC-Iceland failed to come to an agreement with the trader, who claimed the item had already been sent, the case was forwarded to an ADR. While the case was before the ADR the trader agreed to reimburse the consumer what he had paid for the product. So in the end, with the help of the ECC and the ADR the matter came to a good conclusion for the consumer.

### **As Consumer ECC**

An Icelandic couple bought 2 train tickets from a travel agency in Iceland. The travel agency sold the tickets on behalf of the Danish train service. After the couple had used the tickets without difficulty for 3 weeks, the tickets were confiscated on the train from Spain to France by a train conductor for the French train service because they were supposedly invalid. Following this the couple had to buy accommodation in France while they tried to sort out the matter which ended in them having to buy new train tickets from France to Denmark for 395 Euros. The Danish and French train services both refused responsibility and blamed each other. The ECC worked on the case for a year and finally got the Danish company to agree to reimburse the 395 Euros for the train tickets and the French company then decided to reimburse the couple 124 Euros for the accommodation in France.