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European Elections: The European Consumer Centres Network Sets its Sights on 2024-2029

Flight to Greece cancelled? Issues with a parcel delivery after purchasing an item in Belgium? The European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net) offers free assistance for all claims lodged against a trader located in another EU Member State, Iceland or Norway. There is an ECC in each of these countries. Together, these 29 centres have handled more than 124 000 requests in 2023 alone, and recovered nearly 9 million euros for consumers involved in a cross-border complaint.

Since the last elections, the European Union has established numerous rights that strengthen and protect consumers. However, the evolution of consumption habits, particularly towards the digital realm, necessitates Europe to define forward-thinking legislation for the years to come. With one month to go before the European elections, the ECC-Net puts forth its [consumer recommendations for the upcoming term of the European Parliament](#).

Shopping online with confidence

For a genuine Single digital market and increased protection of European consumers in this domain, the ECCs proposes to the Members of the European Parliament to take action, notably on:

- Holding marketplaces accountable: By facilitating connections between buyers and sellers, who are not always easily identifiable, marketplaces allow products from third country sellers that may not always adhere to European safety standards to be imported into the EU.
- Securing online payment solutions: The ECCs wish for payment service providers to be compelled to better detect fraud and facilitate its reporting by consumers. They also advocate for more systematic reimbursement of consumers through the chargeback mechanism offered by card issuers.
- Establishing clear regulations to define influencer marketing, ensure transparency, and hold influencers accountable. A [Commission investigation](#) recently revealed that only 20% of influencers clearly label their commercial posts as advertisements. The remaining 80% should be reported by authorities for non-compliance with European rules. Currently, France is the only country in Europe with specific legislation regulating commercial influence.

Protecting Consumers against Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly prevalent in our consumption habits. It is being harnessed more and more by e-commerce sites, digital platforms, and social networks. Their algorithms leverage our personal data to determine which products we are most likely to purchase. To mitigate risks, the European Union recently passed a law on AI, providing an initial legal framework for Europe.

To ensure that AI serves consumers' interests, the ECC-Net seeks to establish its own guidelines. For instance, the network suggests that consumers should be systematically informed when an algorithm uses their personal information (related to their purchasing behaviour, health, or finances) to sell them goods and services. Additionally, when a company delegates its customer service to an AI-powered



chatbot, consumers should always have the option to contact a human being instead. Lastly, given the rapid technological advancement of AI, legislative measures in Europe should be frequently adjusted and reworked to suit current needs.

Improving Travellers' Rights

Adapting regulations on transportation and travel ranks high among the upcoming legislative priorities for the EU. More specifically, consumers need better protection in case of [airline insolvencies](#). Complaints handled by the ECC-Net reveal that European passengers lose an average of 431 euros in the event of bankruptcy. It is urgent to establish a guarantee system to protect consumers against airline insolvency.

The European regulation that has defined air passenger rights since 2004 also needs to be revised. This would notably involve clarifying what constitutes an “extraordinary circumstance” and list specific events that could justify non-compensation from an airline. The ECC supports establishing standard weight and size limits for airplane luggage, which would make it easier to compare prices at the time of booking.

The ECC also advocates holding intermediaries accountable. Many online booking platforms and fare comparison websites display highly opaque prices and fail to assist consumers or refund cancelled tickets in a timely manner.

To view the rest of the ECC-Net's recommendations, please refer to their position paper, accessible at the following link: [Consumer Empowerment: ECC-Net's Recommendations Post-European Elections 2024/2029 | European Consumer Centres Network \(eccnet.eu\)](#)

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