Help and advice for consumers in Europe ECC-Net
European Consumer Centre Luxembourg

Press release
European Consumer Centre Luxembourg

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Buying and Booking Through Online Platforms

The European Consumer Centre Luxembourg has published a new information sheet to help consumers make informed decisions and avoid potential risks.

Online platforms have become an integral part of our everyday lives. Whether buying second-hand clothes, booking accommodation or purchasing concert tickets, many people now use these platforms as a matter of course. Some are now so well known that they hardly need to be mentioned by name.

Online platforms provide easy access to a wide range of products and services, allowing consumers to compare offers and prices quickly. However, before making a purchase or completing a booking, a few simple checks can help consumers avoid unpleasant surprises.

Know who you are entering into a contract with

An online platform is not always the seller of a product or the provider of a service. In many cases, it simply acts as an intermediary, connecting buyers with sellers or service providers.

Before entering into a contract, consumers should therefore check who they are contracting with and whether the seller is acting as a trader or a private individual. This distinction is important, as different legal rules apply depending on the seller's status.

The country in which the seller or service provider is established may also be relevant if problems arise.

Compare terms and conditions, not just prices

The price initially displayed may not always reflect the final amount to be paid. Additional service or processing fees charged by the platform may be added during the booking or checkout process.

Consumers should therefore take the time to carefully review cancellation, delivery, return and refund policies, as well as the available payment methods. Certain payment methods may also involve additional fees.

It is also worth paying attention to how offers are ranked in search results. An offer appearing at the top of the list is not necessarily the cheapest or the best option. Some offers may be promoted in exchange for payment or given greater visibility based on the platform's ranking criteria. Consumers are therefore advised to compare different offers and providers before deciding.

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Buyer protection: Check the terms carefully

Some platforms offer what is known as buyer protection, which may, for example, provide a refund if a product is not delivered or does not match its description.

However, this protection does not apply automatically. Each platform sets its own terms and conditions, exclusions, procedures and deadlines.

Consumers should also be particularly cautious if a seller asks them to pay outside the platform. Wherever possible, they should use the secure payment methods offered by the platform, especially if buyer protection depends on using these methods.

What to do if something goes wrong

If a problem arises with a product or service, consumers should first contact the seller or service provider concerned and, where appropriate, also inform the platform.

If the problem concerns the platform itself, consumers should contact its customer service department.

If a cross-border dispute within the EU cannot be resolved, the European Consumer Centre Luxembourg (ECC Luxembourg) can inform consumers about their rights and provide free assistance in seeking an amicable solution.

About us – www.cecluxembourg.lu

The European Consumer Centre GIE Luxembourg (ECC Luxembourg) is part of a network of 29 European Consumer Centres in the European Union, as well as in Iceland and Norway (European Consumer Centres Network). The ECC-Net also cooperates with the International Consumer Centre in the United Kingdom.

ECC Luxembourg informs consumers about European consumer law and assists them in the settlement of cross-border consumer disputes. The services are free of charge.

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