

What has the EU done for consumers?

- **You have similar rights when buying goods across EU countries:** and if things go wrong there's also new pan-European support to help you get your money back. (*Consumer Guarantees Directive & ADR/ODR Directive*)
- **You are not ripped off when you buy something:** consumer contracts must have clear and unambiguous rules, and unfair terms are banned. Annoying pre-ticked boxes when purchasing online, which can mislead consumers into buying additional services they may not want, are banned. You can change your mind as the cooling off period for internet and telephone purchases is extended from 7-14 days. Charges for using a credit or debit card have to be based on the actual cost. Firms with customer hotlines will not be able to use expensive premium numbers for customer queries and complaints about a purchase. (*Consumer Rights Directive*)

Unfair commercial practices, including misleading and aggressive marketing are also banned. (*Unfair Commercial Practices Directive*)

- **Products are safer - particularly for our children:** producers must only place safe goods on the market and they are liable for any injury or damage caused when their products are defective. Toys including imports from outside the EU must meet strict EU safety standards. The EU also banned a number of chemicals used in children's toys.
- **You know what you are eating and buying:** EU-wide labelling rules cover ingredients of foods, medicines and cosmetics. This is particularly helpful if you suffer from food allergies (*Food Information Regulation*) or if you want to know if a food is high in fat, sugar and salt (*Health and Nutrition Claims Regulation*). You can also buy with confidence in that those foods that make claims have to have the scientific evidence to back them up. (*Health and Nutrition Claims Regulation*)
- **You can enjoy hassle free holidays:** tour operators must provide comprehensive and accurate information about package holidays and must accept responsibility when the services they provide go wrong. Consumers are protected if the tour operator becomes insolvent. If you buy a timeshare then operators must give you comprehensive pre-contractual information along with a 14 day cooling off period.
- **You can choose whether or not to eat GM foods:** in 2004 new EU-wide rules came into force requiring all foods containing GM to be labelled. Despite

resistance from the UK Government, consumers are given more information to make a choice between eating GM or not.

- **Your new car is cheaper:** in 2003 new rules came into force which meant British consumers got a fairer deal and no longer pay prices higher than rest of Europe.
- **You can get money back if your flight is late, cancelled or if you are bumped off it:** the airlines hate it and many legal challenges have been launched over the years but you have EU-wide rights to claim compensation.
- **Your food is safer/has less risk:** European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was set up in the aftermath of BSE to bring together risk analysis, management and communication across the EU. In addition, on December 13 this year new mandatory labelling rules come into effect for processed foods and fresh meat. They will include details on country of origin, allergens and concise nutritional information. Labour MEPs also voted in January this year for sugar in baby food to be capped at 10%, much lower than the current proposal of 30%.
- **Your iTunes downloads are cheaper:** Which? asked the OFT in 2004 to investigate the prices charged for music downloads by Apple's iTunes as consumers in France and Germany were paying 20% less than those in the UK - but Apple blocked consumers with a UK based address or credit card from using French and German sites. The complaint led to a competition investigation by the European Commission following which Apple agreed to bring its UK prices into line with other EU countries.
- **Using your phone on holiday will soon cost the same as at home:** 2015 seen MEPs push through legislation to cut fees for use of mobiles while travelling in EU, with holidaymakers able to call, text and surf at UK rates from mid-2017. The end of rip-off roaming fees is a massive win for British consumers. Driving down costs and making it easier to travel is what being in the EU is all about.