



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate B - Consumer Affairs
B1 - Consumer Markets

SANCO

02. 10. 2008

Brussels,
SANCO/B1/GD/fl D(2008)210261

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: European Commission study on cross-border e-commerce

I would like to invite your organisation to contribute its views to a European Commission study on cross-border e-commerce in the EU by attending an interview with a member of my staff.

The objective of this study is to assess whether the EU Internal Market for e-commerce is functioning for consumers and whether final consumers can take advantage of this sales channel to conduct cross-border purchases of goods and services over the Internet.

On 20 June, Commissioner Meglena Kuneva, EU Commissioner for Consumers, set out five priorities for consumer policy in a digital age. One of these priorities is the need to critically examine the legitimacy of artificial geographical restrictions which hold consumers back within national borders.

While many market barriers have been removed or are in the process of being removed at EU level, trade levels suggest that consumers are not taking advantage fully of the opportunity to shop online in another Member State and businesses are still reluctant to sell cross-border.

Indeed, it has come to the Commission's attention that some consumers may not be able to purchase over the Internet in other EU countries because of where they are located. In this context, the Commission is inviting consumer organisations, Member States, businesses and trade associations to express their views. The results of this fact-finding exercise will be published as part of a Commission study on the state of cross-border e-commerce in the EU.

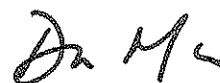
The interview should not take more than one hour of your time. It should centre on the barriers faced by retailers and how they translate into cross-border obstacles for consumers. A list of questions for discussion is attached.

The Commission also welcomes any written contribution that your organisation may wish to make as a follow-up to this interview, provided it reaches us before 14 November at the following address: SANCO-CONSULT-B1@ec.europa.eu

If you are willing to participate, please contact my colleague Gabriel Dayre (see contact details below) in order to fix an appointment.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,



David Mair
Acting Head of Unit

Contact:

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Enclosure: Questions for discussion during the interview

cc.: Mr J. Bergevin (MARKT)

ANNEXE – QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION DURING THE INTERVIEW

CONSUMERS AND ONLINE SHOPPING: OBSTACLES TO CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE

Assessment of remaining obstacles to cross-border online shopping

Question 1a: While many market barriers have been removed at EU level, trade levels suggest that consumers are not taking advantage fully of the opportunity to shop online in another Member State and businesses are still reluctant to sell cross-border. What are the reasons that could discourage consumers from purchasing goods or services on the Internet from e-commerce retailers based in another Member State or could discourage businesses from selling across borders? Please describe.

Question 1b: Depending on where they are located, consumers may not be able to purchase goods and services on the same terms. What are the reasons that could prevent consumers from purchasing goods or services on the Internet from e-commerce retailers based in another Member State, under the same conditions that apply to consumers located in that Member State? Please describe.

Question 2: Are the same concerns shared by e-commerce retailers? If so, how do they affect the ability or willingness of companies to serve consumers equably? Please describe.

Complaints and enforcement cases

Question 3: Have national authorities or consumer organisations in your country been faced with complaints from consumers who were unable to purchase goods or services on the Internet from an e-commerce trader located in another Member State?

Question 4: If so, could you please describe any actions that have been undertaken and the results obtained?

Causes of remaining cross-border obstacles

Question 5: Please describe the different causes that may prevent consumers from purchasing goods and services in another Member State or from benefiting from the same conditions offered to other consumers. To what extent can they be explained by the economic conditions of providing the good or service?

Question 6: Are these causes more prevalent when it comes to using the Internet as a sales channel, as opposed to traditional forms of retailing?

Additional comments and concluding remarks

Question 7: Please state any additional comments or concluding remarks that you may wish to communicate. We would welcome any references to supporting evidence or economic studies that your services may have carried out on this topic.