

ECC – Iceland

European Consumer Centre Iceland (ECC)

Annual Report 2019



Að hluta til fjármagnað
af Evrópusambandinu



About ECC-Iceland



ECC Iceland is a part of the ECC-net (European Consumer Centre Network), which consists of 30 centres throughout the EU, Iceland, The UK and Norway. The ECC's purpose is to assist consumers that have a cross boarder problem with a trader inside the EEA area.

ECC assist consumers by providing information about their rights, assisting them to gather information and forwarding their complaints to a foreign trader. The ECC also handles mediation on behalf of consumers with a foreign trader. The arrangement of mediation is that the consumer can seek assistance from his local ECC centre in his home country, and the ECC centre forwards the complaint to the ECC centre in the country the trader resides, which contacts the trader on the consumer's behalf. Both ECC centres work together finding an amicable solution.

It truly is a benefit for the consumer to be able to seek assistance from his local ECC station, in his home country and in his own language, rather than chasing down foreign traders. With this arrangement problems regarding different language can be resolved, and the consumer has a legal expert in the foreign country to assist him on his behalf. ECC-Iceland also handles communication with Icelandic traders when complaints come in from consumers residing in other countries within the EEA. If mediation by the ECC- Net proves futile the network also assist consumers in forwarding their case to an ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution). The services of the ECC-Net are free of charge.

ECC-Iceland has been hosted by The Consumers' Association of Iceland for the last years, according to a contract with the Ministry of Industries and Innovation, but the costs is divided equally between the Icelandic government and the EU. The office of ECC-Iceland is located at Hverfisgötu 105, our phone number is 545-1200 and we can also be contacted via email at ecciceland@ecciceland.is

Staff

ECC-Iceland's operation is quite small, and the centre is one of the smallest in the ECC-Net. ECC-Iceland is hosted and managed by the Consumers' Association of Iceland. The association's employees therefore also work for ECC-Iceland but the staff numbers of the ECC are equivalent to approx. a full time position that is shared between three employees. In 2019 they were Ívar Halldórsson director, Einar Bjarni Einarsson Case handler and Sigurlína Sigurðardóttir receptionist.

Current staff at ECC-Iceland



*Einar Bjarni Einarsson
Case Handler*



*Ívar Halldórsson
Director of ECC-Iceland*

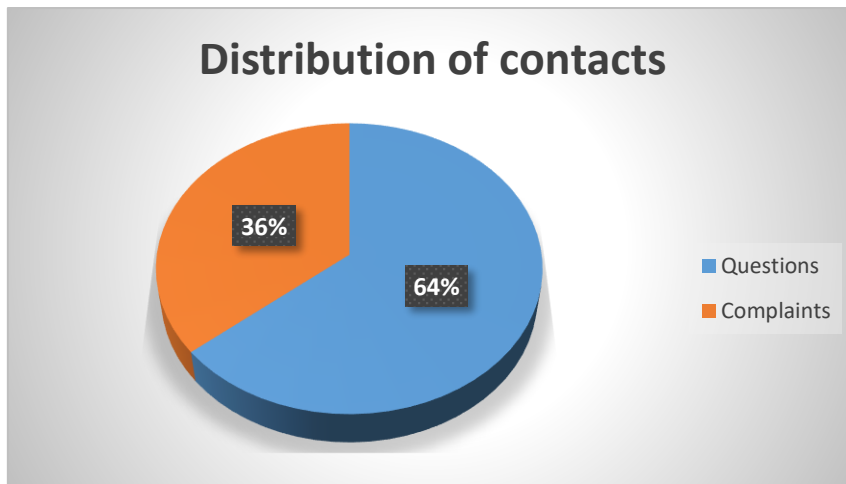


*Sigurlína Sigurðardóttir
Receptionist*

Total number of cases handled by ECC-Iceland in 2019

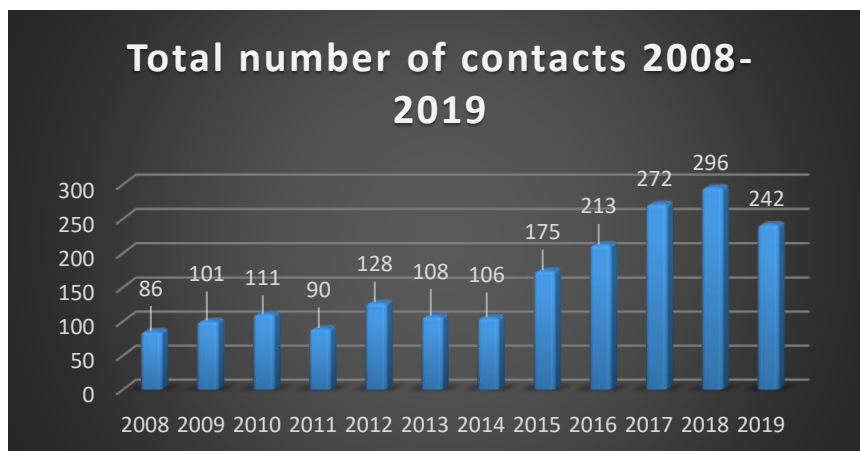
Total number of contacts

All information requests and complaints, as well as cases the ECC handles, need to be entered into a specific registration system, IT-tool. In the beginning of the year 2018 new and improved IT-Tool was launched. In the new IT-tool we have better statistical information and better ways to analyse cases and questions we receive. Now cases are divided into two categories, "Questions" and "Complaints". In the year 2019 there were 155 questions and 87 complaints registered with ECC-Iceland.



(64% of total contacts in 2019 were consumer questions and 36% were complaints)

In total ECC- Iceland had 242 contacts from consumers during the year. That is a little lower than in the last two years but well above the average. As can be seen on the below graph total number of contacts has increased considerably in the last years, especially after the year 2014. Possibly explained due to increased tourism in Iceland or increased awareness of the ECC-Net.

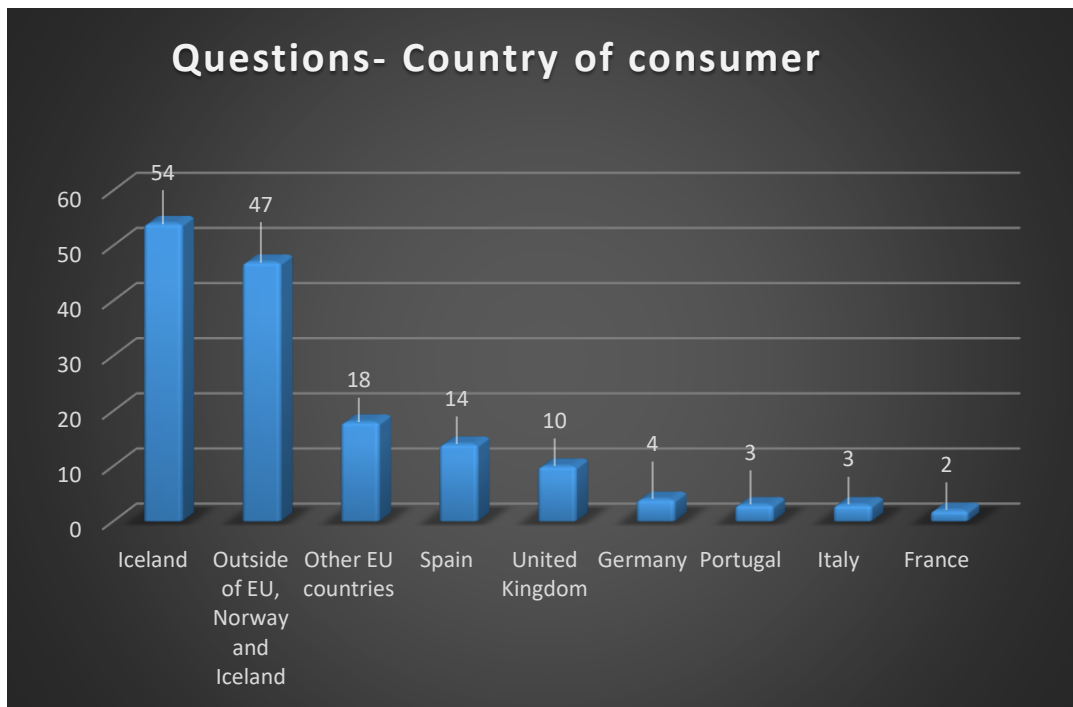


(Yearly average of total contacts since 2008 are 160)

As stated before cases are now split into two categories, “Questions” (usually the consumer contact us and asks for information about his legal rights or how he can send his complaint to the trader) and “Complaints” (cases where the staff of ECC handles mediation between the consumer and the trader with the goal of reaching an amicable solution for the consumer).

Questions

In 2019 ECC-Iceland received 155 questions from consumers. Most of the questions were regarding car rentals but also it is quite common we receive questions regarding passenger rights when flights are delayed or cancelled. ECC-Iceland also advises consumer on how it is best to complain to a trader and if the consumer is unable to solve the dispute ECC-Iceland offers consumers mediation assistance.

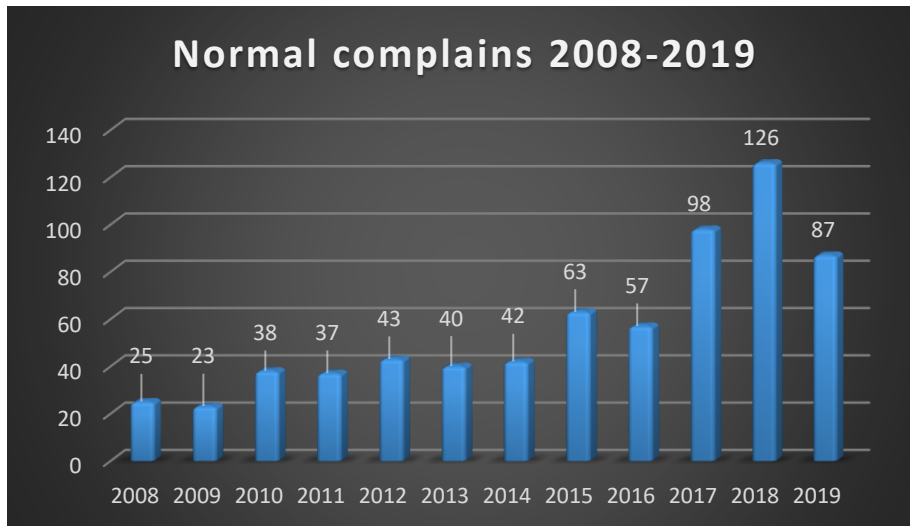


(Most of the questions were from Icelandic consumers regarding foreign traders. But we also receive quite a lot of questions from consumers outside the EU, Norway and Iceland, such as from Asia and The US)

Complaints

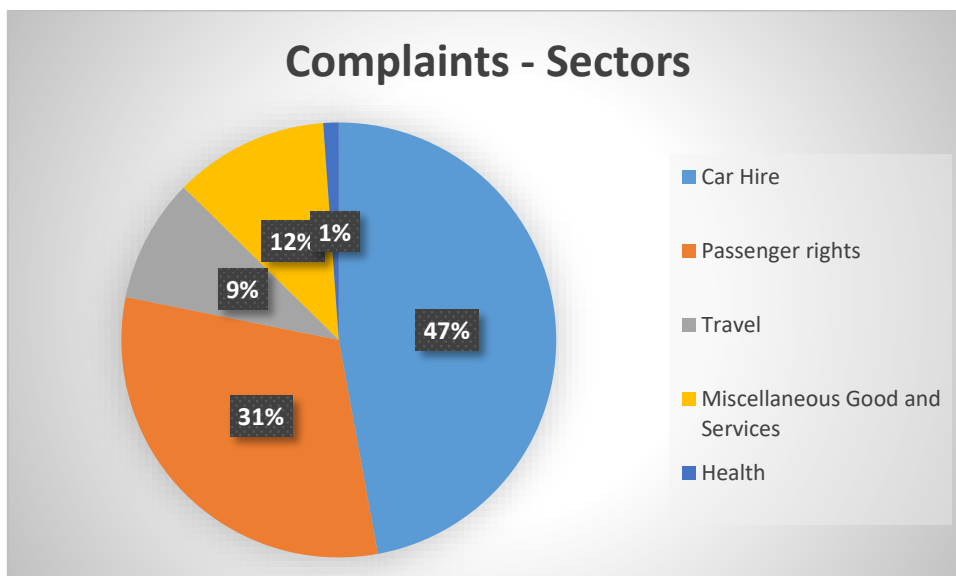
In 2019 ECC-Iceland mediated in 87 complaints in total on behalf of consumers. Like shown on the below graph there has been a considerable increase in complaints where ECC-Iceland mediated on behalf of the consumer against a trader.

When a case is categorized as a “complaint” it can take quite more time to handle than when we answer consumer questions, as staff members communicates with the trader, looks closely on the documents of the case etc.

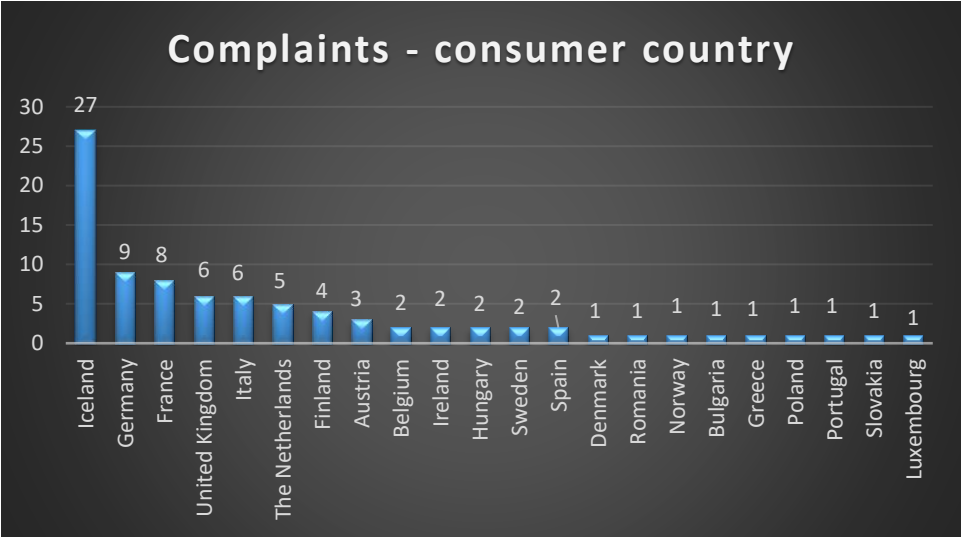


(Total normal complaints ECC-Iceland handled from the year 2008 to 2019)

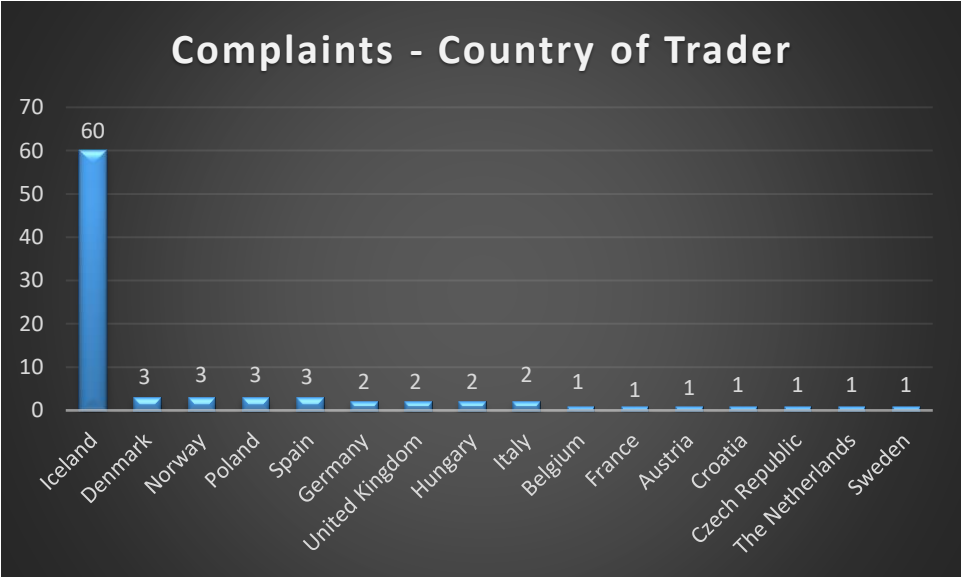
Most of the complaints ECC-Iceland received were regarding car rentals and passenger rights. In car rental cases it was common that there was some form of a damage claim from the car rental company regarding alleged damage that the consumer caused on a vehicle. Sometimes the consumer completely rejects having caused any damage, but sometimes the consumer acknowledges the damage but is protesting the damage amount. Passenger rights cases are usually regarding compensation after flight being delayed or cancelled.



In 60 cases ECC-Iceland mediated on behalf of a foreign consumer in a complaint against an Icelandic trader. In 27 cases Icelandic consumers contacted ECC-Iceland with a complaint against a foreign trader. In these cases ECC-Iceland evaluates if the consumer has a legitimate claim in the case. If there is a valid claim ECC-Iceland forwards the claim to the ECC-Centre where the trader resides. That ECC-Centre then handles all communication with the trader, puts the case to an ADR or advises on other remedies.



(The above picture shows the nationality of the consumers where ECC-Iceland handled mediation assistance. Most cases from foreign consumers were from Germany and France.)



(The picture above shows the nationality of the trader in which ECC-Iceland took part in mediation. Where the trader is Icelandic the complaint was sent to ECC-Iceland by the ECC in the country of the consumer.)

Most cases ECC-Iceland handled for Icelandic consumers were regarding traders based in Denmark, Norway, Poland and Spain. That is no surprise as those are the countries Icelandic consumers do quite a lot of business with when travelling abroad.

New website

In February 2016 ECC-Iceland launched a new and improved homepage, www.ecciceland.is. The main objective for the website is to provide consumers with information about various consumer related topics. On the website we publish various reports from the ECC-net, success stories from the ECC-Net and other information about consumer rights. On our website we have published the “Flight Calculator” where consumers can put in the information regarding their flight and see what rights they have, for example standardized compensations. The calculator is accessible both in English and Icelandic, but The Norwegian Consumer Council made the calculator.

Flight calculator

Athugaðu rétt þinn sem flugfarþegi

Hvað gerðist? [In English](#)

- Flug er seinkað
- Flug er aflýst
- Flug er yfirbokað
- Vandamál varðandi farangur

Réttindi flugfarþega eiga við þegar flugið er til eða frá landi innan Evrópusambandsins, Noregi eða Íslandi. Þessi réttindi eiga einnig við ef flugrekandi er skráður innan Evrópusambandsins, í Noregi eða á Íslandi.

Other projects in 2019

In addition to providing guidance and acting as an intermediary when it comes to complaints, ECC-Iceland works on various other projects. ECC-centres are located in all countries within the EEA (except Lichtenstein) so the ECC-Net is an extensive network. ECC representatives therefore convene regularly in addition to having a great deal of e-mail communication. The Net as a whole also works on various joint projects and publishes reports on different consumer issues, all of which can be found on the website www.ecciceland.is

During the year ECC-Iceland received some media attention, both from newspapers, national radio and on-line media. There was also a substantial coverage of the ECC in the Consumer

Magazine that is published four times a year and includes success stories, about the ECC-Net in general and news about specific topics.

The staff of ECC-Iceland had many media appearances in 2019, including on-line coverage, and we also had many mentioning in The Consumers Magazine where we frequently publish success stories and news from the ECC-Net. ECC-Iceland has always made it a priority to have good relations with stakeholders. As such we have a good informal and unformal communications with various stakeholders, enforcement bodies, ADR bodies and the government.

Reykjavík, 24th of May 2019
Ívar Halldórsson