

ECC – Iceland

European Consumer Centre Iceland (ECC)

Annual Report 2020



Evrópska
Neytendaaðstoðin
Íslandi

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 Guðrúnartún 1, 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 2020 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*

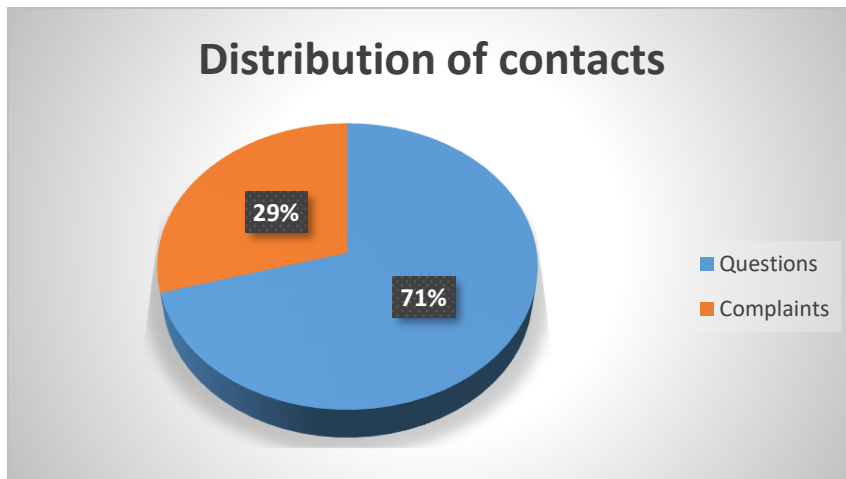


*Sigurlína Sigurðardóttir
Receptionist*

Total number of cases handled by ECC-Iceland in 2020

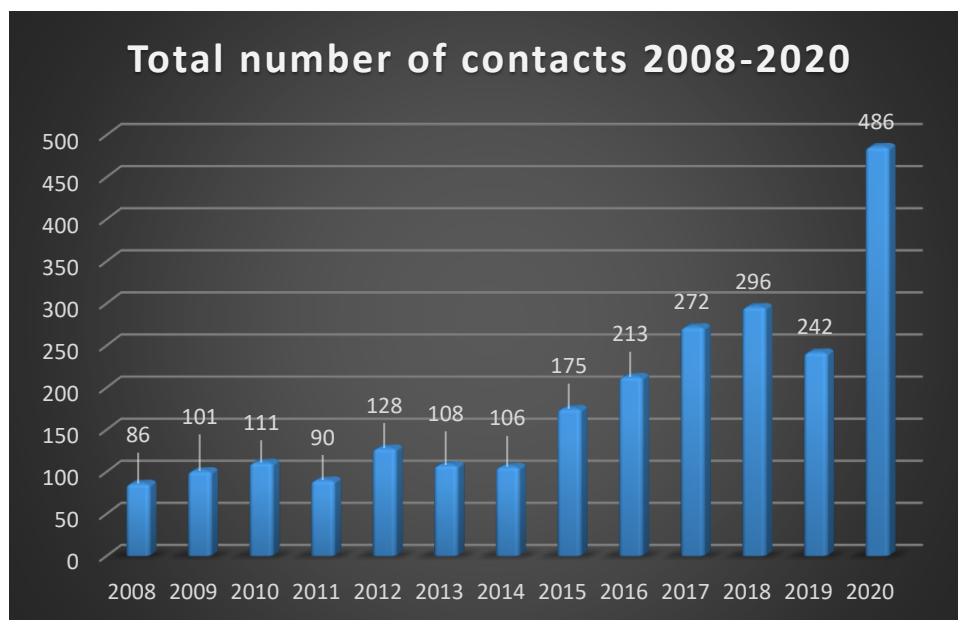
Total number of contacts

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 2020 there were 343 questions and 143 complaints registered with ECC-Iceland.



(71% of total contacts in 2020 were consumer questions and 29% were complaints)

In total ECC- Iceland had 486 contacts from consumers during the year. This was a vast increase compared to previous years. This mainly can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic and the huge impact it had on travel arrangements for consumers. This increase was a huge challenge for ECC-Iceland as the staff stayed the same as previous years. We were able to respond to all contacts, but in some cases our response time was increased during peak season.



(Yearly average of total contacts for the last 5 years are 302)

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).

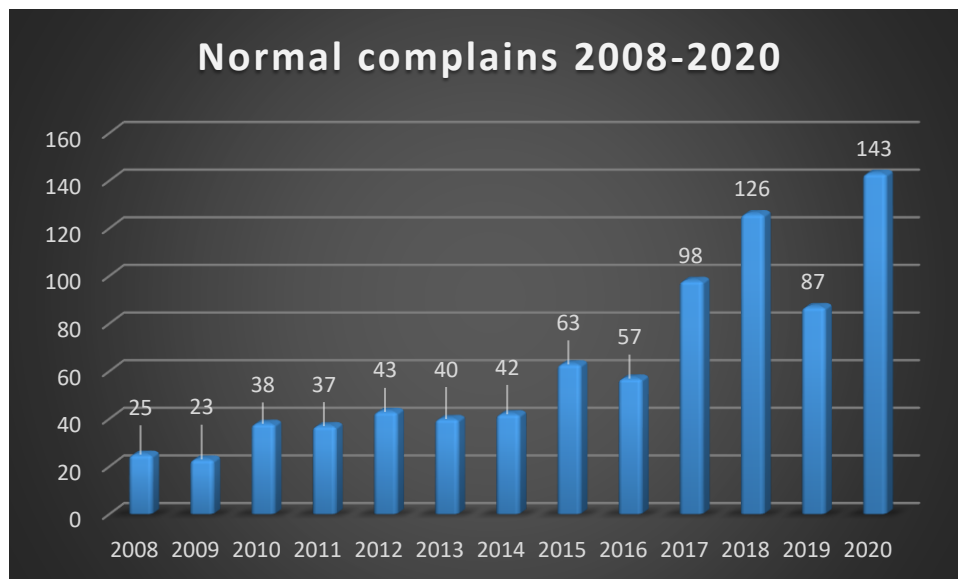
Questions

In 2020 ECC-Iceland received 343 questions from consumers. Most of the questions were regarding flight travel and car rentals but also it is quite common we receive questions regarding hotel accommodation. 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.

Complaints

In 2020 ECC-Iceland mediated in 143 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.

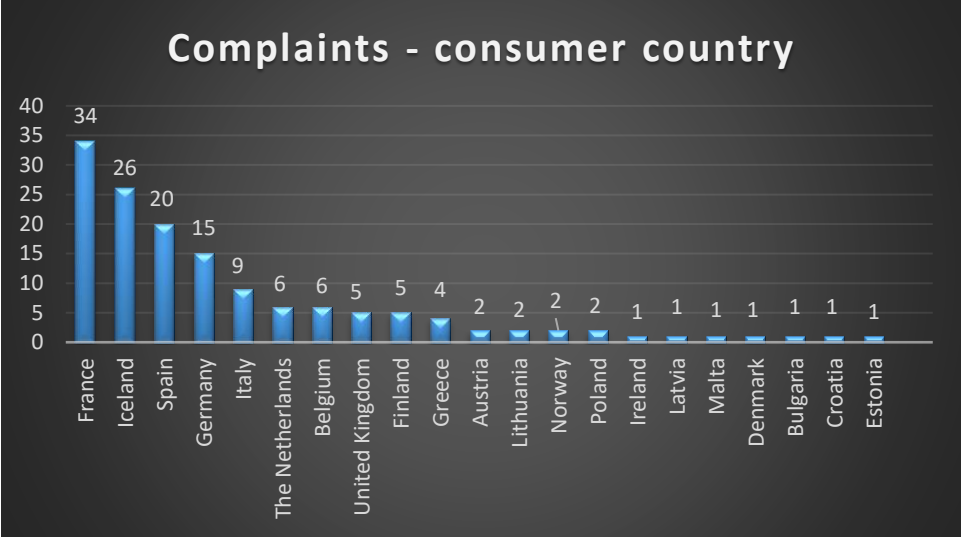
When a case is categorized as a “complaint” it can take quite more time to handle than when we answer consumer questions, as staff members communicates with the trader, looks closely on the documents of the case etc.



(Total normal complaints ECC-Iceland handled from the year 2008 to 2020)

Most of the complaints ECC-Iceland received were regarding car rentals and passenger rights. In car rental cases it was common that consumers wanted to cancel their bookings as travel was difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases consumers had a clear right of a refund but some car rentals refused. We were able to resolve most of the cases but we did forward some consumers to an ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) body. In cases regarding airlines most cases were from consumers that had a flight that was cancelled and they wanted a refund.

In 117 cases ECC-Iceland mediated on behalf of a foreign consumer in a complaint against an Icelandic trader. In 26 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 France.)

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](#)

- Flugj er seinkað
- Flugj er aflýst
- Flug er yfirbókað
- 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 2020

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. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions most of our meetings were done online.

In 2020 the ECC-Net celebrated its 15 year anniversary, but over that time the ECC-Net has assisted over 1 million consumers that have had problems with a cross-border dispute. To celebrate our anniversary The ECC-Net launched a new shared website for all ECC's in Europe, www.eccnet.eu. There consumers can find various information about the ECC-Net.

The staff of ECC-Iceland had many media appearances in 2020, 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.

From the Director of ECC-Iceland

The year 2020 was a very demanding year for consumers in the world. It is clear by the vast cases the ECC-Net received in the past year that the service and assistance it provides is of great importance to consumers in Europe. The cooperation between ECC's proved its virtue as there was high information exchange, for example about the legal situation for consumers in each country inside the EU, Norway and Iceland. There we could for example see how countries in Europe handled consumers refund claims regarding package travel, but some countries decided to establish a regulation that allowed traders to offer credit instead of a refund. In Iceland that route was not taken and consumers kept their refund rights. This information was for example forwarded to consumers and the government in Iceland.

I am incredibly proud of the ECC-Iceland's staff, as well as all the staff of ECC-Net in Europe. The year 2020 was incredibly demanding, not just because of a higher case load, but also we had to evolve in light of new challenges, such as working from our homes but still uphold the most strict quality standard of our services.

Reykjavík, 12th of July 2021
Ívar Halldórsson