

The EU has issued new Rules on distance selling including internet trading that are designed to give more protection to consumers shopping online.

Among the changes are:

- **Protection against cost traps.** This happens when fraudsters try to trick people into paying for 'free' services, such as horoscopes or recipes. From now on, consumers must explicitly confirm that they understand that they have to pay a price.
- **Increased price transparency.** Online shoppers will not have to pay charges or other costs if they were not properly informed before they place an order.
- **Banning pre-ticked boxes on websites.** Some companies, including airlines, offer extra services to shoppers such as travel insurance or car rental through so-called 'pre-ticked' boxes which you have to untick if you do not want them. This practice is to be banned.
- **14 day cancellation period.** Shoppers now have 14 days instead of 7 to change their mind on a purchase. This is extended to a year if the right to withdraw is not explained. The time starts when the shopper receives the goods, rather than the time of the contract, which is currently the case. The rules will apply to internet, phone and mail order sales, as well as to sales outside shops, for example on the consumer's doorstep, in the street, at a Tupperware party or during an excursion organised by the trader. There will also be a standard withdrawal form in use throughout the EU. Clearer information on who pays for returning goods is also required. The withdrawal right does not apply to digital content unless the buyer cancels before downloading the product.
- **Better refund rights.** Traders must refund consumers for the product within 14 days of the withdrawal including the costs of delivery.
- **Ban on surcharges for use of credit cards.** Traders will not be able to charge consumers more for paying by credit card than it actually costs the trader. Those who operate **telephone hotlines** allowing the consumer to contact them in relation to the contract will not be able charge more than the basic telephone rate for the calls.
- **Information on digital content** has to be clearer, including its compatibility with hardware and software and the application of any technical protection measures, for example limiting the right for the consumers to make copies of the content.
- **Standard rules** for distance sales throughout the EU will apply for sales by phone, post or internet and off-premises contracts.

EU Governments have 2 years in which to implement the Directive. ContractStore's online terms of sale complying with the existing law can be found here. A new version will be produced in due course.

For more details the Directive can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/consumer-marketing/rights-contracts/directive/index_en.htm