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## **MEPs clear first hurdles to end discrimination in online shopping**

The European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee voted today to remove obstacles when consumers shop online in the EU. It remains common practice that traders refuse to sell a product or service online to consumers living in another Member State. A 2015 mystery shopping survey revealed that only slightly more than a third of attempted cross-border purchases were successful (37%).<sup>1</sup>

The text adopted today would prohibit traders to refuse to sell goods or services to people living in other EU countries. MEPs also decided to end re-routing, the business practice whereby consumers cannot access a foreign website but are directed to a website in their own country. Finally online retailers would not be allowed to decline a purchase because a consumer owns a foreign bank card.

In what constitutes a big success for consumers, the Committee also voted in favour of extending the ban on geo-blocking to digital content such as ebooks, on-line games or music services. Unfortunately traders can still refuse to sell audiovisual services (such as films or TV) to a foreign customer.

Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) commented:

"The Single Market has greatly widened consumer choice. But online traders have for too long been successful in erecting frontiers where these should no longer exist in a 21<sup>st</sup> century common and increasingly digital marketplace. It is good news for consumers that the EU is taking steps to end such unjustified business practices.

"Consumers should be able to compare products, digital content and services from across the EU and buy those best suited for their taste and wallet. It defies core EU principles when retailers refuse to sell a product or service to consumers just because they live abroad or use a foreign bank card. This must become a practice of the past.

"Now EU legislators need to go the extra mile and also ban geo-blocking for films, sport and TV."

ENDS

<sup>1</sup> Mystery shopping survey on territorial restrictions and geo-blocking in the European Digital Single Market: [http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer\\_evidence/market\\_studies/docs/geoblocking-exec-summary\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_evidence/market_studies/docs/geoblocking-exec-summary_en.pdf)