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### **EU-wide shopping becomes a reality just in time for Christmas**

From Monday 3 December, e-commerce merchants will no longer be allowed to block consumers from other EU countries from purchasing items on their website. Thanks to this new 'ban on geo-blocking' consumers will be able to shop online across the EU and take advantage of a wider choice and the possibility to access the best deals regardless of where they are.

A European Commission mystery shopping exercise identified some kind of geo-blocking on 63% of the websites it assessed.<sup>1</sup> This deplorable situation should now significantly improve.

In practice, the following methods – among others – will be prohibited:

- Consumers can no longer be blocked from purchasing goods on a website because of their nationality or place of residence. (However, traders are not obliged to deliver the goods to the consumer's home address.)
- Consumers can not be refused payment by an e-commerce shop just because they want to pay with a foreign bank card.
- Online merchants are no longer allowed to automatically re-rout foreign consumers to a website in the consumer's country (which might offer a less beneficial deal).

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

"It can be very frustrating for consumers to try to buy a pair of shoes or festival tickets from a foreign website just to find out they cannot make the purchase because they are in the 'wrong' country. This is not what you would expect to happen in a single market and it is very good news this nuisance will stop.

"A single market offers consumers more choice and better offers. With geo-blocking finally coming to an end when shopping online, consumers can even better reap the advantages of being in a market of 500 million people.

Other geo-blocking practices however will still exist. The ban does for example not extend to the audio-visual sector. TV providers will still be able to block foreign viewers from watching their programmes online.

"Disappointingly, geo-blocking will continue to exist when people try to watch foreign TV shows or films online. This is a missed opportunity as it is one of the areas where geo-blocking is widespread and causes the most annoyance. There is still a lot to do to make the single market for audiovisual content and services a reality."

ENDS

<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/geo-blocking-consumers-online-findings-mystery-shopping-carried-out-european-commission\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/geo-blocking-consumers-online-findings-mystery-shopping-carried-out-european-commission_en)

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