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European consumers face significant hurdles when shopping online outside the EU, new research shows

Although more and more Europeans shop online, their trust in the market outside the EU remains low. [New research](#) shows this is because consumers lack information and face difficulties when something goes wrong with a purchase on the global online market.

Global e-commerce sales are expected to reach \$4 trillion in 2020, up from \$1.6 trillion in 2016. EU online sales are seeing similar growth rates. But consumer trust in the market outside the EU remains low.

To find out why, The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and German consumer group Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband (vzbv) commissioned an analysis of the experience of EU consumers when shopping online on the global online marketplace.

The analysis shows that consumer protection is substantially lower when purchasing from sellers outside the EU. The study broadly finds that consumers...

- Lack essential information at the pre-purchase stage.
- Lack accessible means of redress when something goes wrong.

To tackle these problems, the consumer groups suggest:

- To make more information available to consumers when they shop online outside the EU.
- To develop means for consumers to act if something goes wrong. This requires better international cooperation and enforcement by national authorities. What might help individual consumers is for the EU's alternative dispute resolution system to be opened up to traders from third countries.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, says:

"Consumers may shop online outside the EU for reasons of price, availability or specific dietary needs. But they are cast into a parallel world where their rights may be different, or not exist at all.

"Online shoppers can end up outside the EU without even knowing it. This can result out of unclear information about a trader's location."

Klaus Müller, Executive Director at vzbv, comments:

"Global e-commerce has huge potential in terms of consumer choice. But consumers need to have the confidence they can actually make use of this potential. Which is why a contact point for information and advice during one's global shopping journey could be helpful."

END

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