
Ending unjustified geo-blocking: online shoppers must be treated equally

- Consumers must not be discriminated on the basis of their nationality or where they live
- Wider access to goods, hotel bookings, car rentals or concert tickets across borders
- By Christmas next year Europeans should be able to shop online without being blocked or re-routed

Online buyers of goods or services from another EU country must be treated like local customers.

The new EU rules, provisionally agreed by Parliament and Council negotiators on Monday night, define specific situations in which so-called “geo-blocking” will not be allowed. This means that online sellers will not be able to discriminate against customers elsewhere in the EU as regards general terms and conditions, including prices, on the basis of their nationality, place of residence or even their temporary location.

[Róża Thun \(EPP, PL\)](#), Parliament’s Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee rapporteur, said: “With the new agreement, there will be no more technical barriers to accessing traders’ websites and apps, nor will consumers be refused a sale because of a credit card address. In addition, the consumer cannot be redirected to another country-specific website without his or her consent.”

“I am happy that after one and a half years of hard work we agreed on a good deal, which opens up the European market for consumers and traders. If this provisional agreement is confirmed by the Council and the Parliament, by Christmas 2018 consumers should be able to buy products in all Member States without being blocked or re-routed”, added Ms Thun.

Treating EU buyers abroad like local shoppers

Online shoppers from another EU country than the trader must be treated as local customers when they:

- buy goods (e.g. household appliances, electronics, clothes) which are delivered to a member state to which the trader offers delivery in his general conditions, or are collected at a location agreed by both in a EU country in which the trader offers such option,
- receive electronically supplied services not protected by copyright, such as cloud services, firewalls, data warehousing, website hosting, or
- buy a service which is supplied in the premises of the trader or in a physical location where the trader operates, e.g. hotel stays, sports events, car rental, music festivals or leisure park tickets.

Automatic re-routing to another website, for reasons related to nationality or place of residence, without the consumer's prior consent would also be banned.

As proposed by the European Commission, digital copyrighted content, such as e-books, music or video games, has been kept out of the scope of the regulation for the time being.

However, Parliament's negotiators achieved an ambitious "review clause" making it clear that the European Commission must assess, within two years after the entry into force of the regulation, not only whether to extend its scope to non-audiovisual copyrighted content, but also to carefully analyse whether additional sectors, such as the audio-visual and transport services, should be included in the scope.

Next steps

The provisional agreement still needs to be confirmed by the EU member states' ambassadors and by Parliament's Internal Market Committee. The draft regulation will then be put to a vote by the full Parliament in an upcoming plenary session and formally approved by the EU Council of Ministers.

Further information

[Subject file on geo-blocking: links to procedure file and other documents](#)
[Study on geo-blocking of consumers online \(European Commission, May 2016\)](#)

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