

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1605/07

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to the Commission

Subject: Consumers' cross-border problems

In its press release IP/07/253 of 27 February 2007 on strict measures against cross-border fraudsters, the Commission strongly recommended that consumers who experienced problems with cross-border traders should 'contact the European Consumer Centre in your country'.

Such advice can only be welcomed, particularly as regards sorting out the many problems encountered by consumers making significant purchases in another Member State (prices, guarantees, after-sales service), and reflects the number of opinion polls carried out by the Commission.

This has led to the growing success of many European Consumer Centres located in border regions and co-funded by the Commission.

– Will the Commission, therefore, please explain why it has decided to support and even encourage the centralisation in national capitals of numerous European Consumer Centres located in the border regions, which were operating extremely effectively, such as those of Barcelona, Bolzano and Eupen?

For that very reason, Member States like France and Germany have nonetheless wisely decided to keep their Consumer Centre on the border open, and have refused to move it to the capital.

– Does the Commission not think that the network of Consumer Centres has become hybrid, unless it maintains a minimum of 'border sub-branches' in each Member State? If not, why has the Commission developed a 'variable geometry' approach to dealing with similar problems?

– Finally, does the Commission intend substantially to increase the funding of European Consumer Centres, in keeping with its strongly-expressed wish to see these Centres play a major role, so that the Centres will be able to respond swiftly and efficiently to the ever more complex problems encountered by European citizens?