



RESEARCH:

"THE CONSUMER PROTECTION IN E-COMMERCE"

KEY POINTS, JUNE 2017

The Union of Working Consumers of Greece conducted a campaign with the wider survey in the area of Electronic Trade, titled "Consumer Protection in E- Commerce", using a sample of 1000 online shops in order to determine whether they fulfil the basic requirements of the Law 2251/1994 on Consumer Protection.

The first part of the research took place in April 2017.

The Online stores that constituted the sample of the survey were selected randomly and represented 10 different categories (100 online stores per category) so that the conclusions were exported with greater objectivity.

More specifically, we tested websites of online stores, of the following categories:

1. Clothing - Footwear
2. Jewellery
3. Baby Products-Games
4. Bookshops
5. Pharmacies
6. Electronics
7. Furniture Decoration
8. Sports & exercising products
9. Electrical Supplies
10. Plumbing equipment & Repair

During the first part of the research, we checked if at the sites of online shops were included the following information, and if they existed, whether the formulation was harmonised with the requirements of the Law.

1. The Right of Withdrawal
2. Customer assistance in case of defective product
3. Identity of supplier - Contact details
4. Protection Terms of personal data
5. Deadline for receiving goods

Afterwards, the Union of Working Consumers of Greece took the initiative to communicate with the suppliers, through written letters, suggesting complements of the deficiencies or urging them to proceed in more explicit formulation of the terms of use and transactions.

In the second part of the research, which took place on June 2017, we reviewed the online stores with which we had contacted through letters and to which we had exposed our observations, since they were not fully harmonized with the requirements of the Law. We actually wanted to discover if there was a satisfied part of online shops that made the desired additions or improvements.

We quote the most important statistical results:

- 3 out of 4 online stores did not fulfill the basic requirements set by the Law for the Protection of Consumer Rights.
- 1 in 2 online stores did not inform the consumers for their Right of Withdrawal, either wholly omitting the reference, or providing partly information.
- Only 1 in 2 online stores, included terms of assistance in case of defective product. The rest did not have such conditions at all or deviated significantly from the requirements of the Law.

Specifically:

- The categories of Baby Products and Bookstores, with 87/100 and 93/100 online businesses were not fully harmonized with the Law and as a result were characterized as the categories that needed the more improvements or completions of their terms.
- 7 out of 10 online shops of the Sports Goods category did not inform the consumer of the Right of Withdrawal set by the Law, or they poorly informed them about their right.
- 6 out of 10 online shops at the category of Furniture Decoration did not include consumer service in terms of product defects.

In the last stage of our research and after we had already contacted the owners and operators of online shops, which did not comply with the requirements of the Law, we tested again the websites in order to identify how many of them had made the improvements and additions which we proposed.

• Out of the 772 non-compliant with the requirements of the Law electronic shops, 282 responded positively, by making the changes that were proposed by us, while the remaining 490 have not made absolutely no change or addition to their terms.

- Considering the number of the firms that fulfilled the basic requirements set by the Law from the first screening of the survey and the number of the firms that fulfilled the basic requirements set by the Law after correcting their terms in their websites due to our communication with them, we observe the most important conclusion of the survey:

The percentage of the conforming online shops reached the percentage of 51% instead of 23% which initially identified. In other words, the 228 on line shops that were firstly found proper in the survey, today stands at 510 proper on line shops out of the total sample of 1000 after the urging of the Union of Working Consumers of Greece to proceed to the suggested improvements.

However, and despite the fact of the positive response of the owners of e-shops, on October 2017 we re-examined the websites in order to trace if the percentage of the fully harmonized with the Law e-shops increased.

The result of the re-examination, on October 2017, pointed out that the percentage of the fully harmonized with the Law online shops increased to 59,2%, from 51% on June 2017, and from 22,8% on April 2017.

Our desire is that this research and the campaign as a whole, to act as a springboard for the improvement in the Trade market.

