CONSUMER PROTECTION SCRIPT

Promoting consumers’ rights is one of the core values of the European Union and this is reflected in its laws. The EU have some basic principles of how they protect their members, as consumers. The first on the list is this: Buy what you want, where you want! The EU law entitles you to “shop until you drop” without having to worry about paying customs duty when you return home. This applies whether you go to the other country to shop or whether you order goods over the Internet or by post. The authorities in your country cannot stop you from importing a product which you have lawfully purchased in another EU country. But there are a few restrictions and exceptions, like you’re not going to import fire arms or explosives!

The second principle is: If its broken, send it back and get it replaced! What if you buy a new Laptop, and after a short time it breaks down, what do you do then? Under the EU law, if a product you buy does not conform to the agreement you made with the seller at the time of purchase, you can take it back and have it repaired or replaced.

The third principle is: Contracts should be fair to consumers. Have you ever signed a contract without reading all the small print? Well I’m not the first, am I? What if the contract says you cannot cancel the contract unless you pay the company a huge amount in compensation? Irrespective of which EU country you sign such a contract in, EU law protects you from these sorts of abuses.

The fourth Principle is: High safety standards for food and consumer goods. When looking around a super market what do you see? Products from across the EU. Are they all safe? Well, yes, they have to be. The EU has laws to help ensure the products you buy are safe. Infact, the EU countries have among the highest safety standards in the world.

The fifth and last principle is: Consumers should not be misled. It not the first time that someone received a letter in Malta from a company which congratulates you on having won first prize in a lottery or when visiting a site on the internet, a popup appears saying that you've won twenty thousand euros! Then It turns out to be no more than a scam. Advertising that misleads or deceives consumers is prohibited under EU law. In addition, when you are dealing with
telesales or on-line retailers, sellers must be open and honest with you. The EU law requires them to give you full details of who they are, what they are selling, how much it costs and how long it will take to be delivered.

For instance, in my country there was a case, a woman bought a new stainless steel sink. By the time she bought the sink she was abroad, so she hadn’t used the sink yet. When she returned home from her holiday, she was going to use the sink, when she noticed that the sink was stained and the water was not draining away. This woman called the seller and he told her that he can’t do anything about it, as he was the seller not the manufacturer. She sent pictures and videos of the sink not draining the water. The seller then contacted the company abroad, but they said that the woman might have used a cleaning product which damaged the sink. But she argued that this was not true, as she didn’t use the sink. The woman asked for help, and this was the answer. When we purchase a product, it is the seller who is responsible to provide us with a solution should a problem crop up.

Another legal right we are entitled to is that the goods we buy should be of good enough quality, fit for their purposes and as described or agreed with the trader. So if the woman did not damage the sink then the seller must provide her with a solution to the stains. The company can either try to fix the problem or replace the sink. If neither repair nor replacement are possible she may request a part or full refund.

It’s quite common nowadays for people to buy off the internet, as they say it’s much cheaper online. We have to be careful before purchasing a product. If for instance one of the products we are buying is bought from e-bay one must check about the seller, one should also check the reviews from the customers that purchased products from the seller. If the reviews are good then you can go ahead and buy the product. If you see negative comments or no reviews it’s best to find another seller who has plenty of positive reviews because then you would be on the safe side. And then you will have your package in no time, unless it gets lost in the post!