



European Consumer
Centres Network

2006 FIFA World Cup™:

As a guest in Germany

As a guest in a foreign country, you might feel insecure because you don't know your rights and might fear that someone will rip you off. An informed consumer is an empowered consumer, and so the European Consumer Centres would like to provide you with some information that might be useful during your stay in Germany. We also would like you to make yourself at home in the country of the 2006 FIFA World Cup™!

This flyer aims to inform you about the most important rights consumers have in Germany and to offer you help if required. We would be happy if this flyer is helpful for you and recommended by you:

Shopping in Germany

- ◆ Except on open-air street markets, it's not usual to negotiate about **prices** of groceries, because a retailer is not likely to give you a discount on products that already have a reasonable price. But when buying more than one article of the same non-food product or a product of a higher price range, i.e. electronics, it's worth a try!
- ◆ In Germany, you have to pay a **deposit ("Pfand")** of 0,25 € on most re-usable glass or plastic bottles ("Mehrwegflaschen") and beverage tins. The deposit will be refunded to you when you return the empty bottles or tins to the supermarket/shop.
- ◆ In almost all big department stores and bigger supermarkets you can pay with **debit cards** (e.g. Maestro, VISA electron) without any difficulty. Some discounters only accept cash exclusively. Many shops don't accept **credit cards or cheques**.
- ◆ In Germany as in most EU countries, the seller has to provide a **two year minimum guarantee** on products. You can claim this right only from a seller, not from the manufacturer. If the item purchased is defective, you can choose between a free repair or the replacement of the imperfect goods. Should the repair fail twice or the exchanged item is also defective, you can withdraw from the contract and ask to be refunded the full purchase price when returning the product to the seller. If you want to keep the imperfect product you can ask for a price reduction. If there is a problem it is important to try and contact the seller first to try and put the problem right.
- ◆ Any **voluntary warranty** rights offered by the seller/manufacturer are in addition to the two year minimum guarantee provided by law and detailed above. More details about any voluntary warranty should be found in the general terms and conditions or in the instruction manual that comes with the item

purchased. When buying expensive items, it is important to keep the receipt, because any warranty will be linked to the particular nature or durability of the goods and only valid if you present the original proof of purchase.

- ◆ A 16 % **value added tax** (VAT/"Mehrwertsteuer") is charged on most goods and services at present. As a special exception a 7 % tax rate is charged on some goods, i.e. food and books. The market price always includes this tax. If you are a citizen of a non EU Member State, you can get this tax refunded in some bigger stores by filling out a VAT form.

Transport and hotels in Germany

Transport

- ◆ When you are travelling with the **Deutsche Bahn** (DB) or using other means of public transport, you have to purchase your ticket prior to the journey. If the train is about to leave and you jump on without a ticket, you should contact the train conductor directly. When travelling with Deutsche Bahn: Check out, which trains your ticket is valid for! Especially tickets at bargain prices can only be used for travels on certain trains. For example, the special ticket for weekends, the "Schönes Wochenendticket", is not valid on long distance trains (ICE/IC/EC). In case a ticket inspector finds you travelling with such a ticket on a long distance train, you will have to pay the regular price plus an extra charge.
- ◆ In Germany, you are obliged to buy your ticket before boarding any form of **public transport**. If you do not have a valid ticket and there is a ticket inspection on the train or on the platform, you will not only have to pay a higher ticket price, but as a fare dodger, may also be reported to the police.
- ◆ In case of a **delay to or cancellation of a train** there is no right to a refund in respect of short

distance trains ("Regionalbahnen"). In case of long distance travels, however, you may be entitled to refunds. Ask the train staff to verify the delay on your ticket, and then go to the ticket office to claim your refund.

◆ **Air passengers** have rights in respect of cancellation, delay or denied boarding against the air carriers under EU Law and further information on these rights can be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/air/rights/index_en.htm

Hotels

◆ If you have reserved a room and the hotelier has confirmed your **reservation**, both parties are bound by this agreement. The hotelier isn't allowed to give your room to another person, unless this is agreed with you.

◆ Should the reserved room be given to another person or in the case of **double booking**, the hotelier has to pay the resulting costs, e.g. travel expenses for a return journey or the difference in hotel costs, if you had to change to another, more expensive, hotel.

◆ If you are prevented for any reason and you would like to **cancel your reservation**, you should try immediately to cancel the arrangement in accordance with hotel's terms and conditions or instructions for cancelling. Read these general rules attentively! You should always announce your wish to cancel as early as possible. Otherwise, you would have to pay an important part of the costs for the hotel room. The hotel keeper must bear the saved expenses, but for a reservation for a night and breakfast, these costs are only 20 %. You would still have to pay 80% of the costs. So inform your hotelier on time, in general he is obliged to give the room to another guest, when the information about the cancellation took place duly, then you are exempted from the obligation of payment.

As a patient in Germany

Citizen of the European Union

◆ If you are a citizen of the European Union and you have a compulsory health insurance, you can get medical care from a German doctor or in a German hospital when presenting the **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)**. The card is available at your health insurance board. The reimbursement will take place as if you were insured in Germany.

◆ Customary payments, e.g. the **"Praxisgebühr"**, the one-time payment of 10 € in a quarter has to be paid by you prior to the treatment. If you have to visit another doctor, for example a specialist after your first visit, ask for an "Überweisung", so you don't have to pay the "Praxisgebühr" at the next surgery again. If you have a chronic condition and are likely to need treatment abroad, you should contact your usual health provider for information about appropriate medical centres for your stay in Germany and about any associated costs.

Third countries (non-EU countries)

◆ If you're coming from a country that isn't a Member State of the European Union and your home country has no special agreement with Germany in regard to social insurance, you are not protected by the compulsory health insurance in Germany. This is the case when you're coming from Brazil for example. Since you will have to pay the costs for the medical treatment yourself, we recommend you to take out **private health insurance** cover to meet any medical or repatriation costs.

Despite careful checks of the contents of this flyer, we cannot take any responsibility for its correctness. Last update: April 2006.

Useful phone numbers

Police	110
Fire brigade / Emergency	112
Directory assistance	11833 or 11880 (charges between 0,60 cents and 1,19 € per minute)
Service of the "Deutsche Bahn" (DB), the German railroad society	11861 (charges between 0,60 cents and 1,19 € per minute)

If you, as a foreign consumer, are feeling mistreated by a German professional, the European Consumer Centres (ECCs) will be pleased to help you to find an amicable settlement of the dispute. You can find further information and a complete list of all ECCs under:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/redress/ecc_network/index_en.htm

Here is only a small selection of all existing ECCs:



ECC Czech Republic (Czech/Slovak/English) +420 22406-2046 or -2017
ECC France (French/English/German) +49 7851/991 480 as well as 0820 200 999 for calls from France for only 9 Cents per minute
ECC Germany (German/English/French) +49 7851/991480 or +49 211/3809101 or +49 431 9719350
ECC Italy (Italian/German/English) +39/0471 98 09 39
ECC Netherlands (Dutch/English) +31/070 315 63 33
ECC Poland (Polish/English) +48/0022 05 56 01 14
ECC Portugal (Portuguese/English) +351/21 356 47 50
ECC Spain (Spanish/English) +34/91 82 24 555
ECC Sweden (Swedish/English) +46/8 429 0782
ECC UK (English) +44/19 02 71 00 68