



RESOLUTION:

Removing barriers at e-commerce with special regard to geo-blocking

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting, Helsinki, Finland on the 17th of December 2016

Recognizing that:

- Geo-blocking is a virtual barrier that prevents or restricts online costumers from accessing cross-border e-commerce in purchasing a product or a service online
- We welcome the strong interplay between competition enforcement and the digital single market strategy, particularly, in actions related to geo-blocking practices and licensing agreements, with a view to completing the digital single market
- On 6th May 2015, the European Commission unveiled its Digital Single Market Strategy in which inter alia it intends to remove barriers to e-commerce across Europe.
- The EC proposes to address the geo-blocking and its undesirable effects on three different levels: through legislative proposals, the instruments of the competition law and within the context of the copyright law reform.
- According to the European Commission, 74% of the complaints received by the European Consumer Centres Network¹ are based on price discrimination or other geographical discrimination.

¹ The European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net) is a network of 30 offices in the 28 Member States, Norway and Iceland. The ECC-Net is co-financed by the EC and national governments in order to assist every citizen in Europe to take advantage of the single market.

Acknowledging that:

- Technology, particularly, mobile technology has triggered a revolution in the way we manage our lives. It has caused the offline and online worlds merge; the modern consumer wants to shop anywhere and at any time.
- Most e-commerce takes place on a national level and a true internal European market without national barriers does not exist in this sector
- Geo-blocking can be considered in light of consumer rights as well: consumers should always have access to and be able to surf the webstores wherever they are based (except for legal access restrictions such as minimum age of alcohol consumption and tobacco products).
- The cost of living and work can vary widely in each country, and this may influence the final price of the products.

YEPP calls on:

- Member States to actively monitor all possible competition issues related to unjustified geo-blocking and other e-commerce barriers to make a delimitation possible
- The European Commission to define the term of "geo-blocking" in any proposals it makes, particularly in relation to small and micro businesses.
- European policy makers to endorse and support online merchants' rights to economic and contractual freedom.
- The EC to create a business environment ensuring and allowing for the development of innovative ideas.