

Information release

European Consumer Centres Network Calls for Reforms to Boost the Use of the European Small Claims Procedure

A report by the European Consumer Centres Network identifies five barriers hindering the use of the European Small Claims Procedure, ranging from low public awareness to the complexities of enforcing judgments in other Member States.

Madrid, 12 August 2025 – The European Small Claims Procedure (ESCP), designed to facilitate access to justice in cross-border claims under €5,000, remains underused by European consumers due to lack of awareness, procedural complexity, potential costs, and difficulties in enforcing judgments. This is the conclusion of an analysis by the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net), which identifies five key barriers and proposes measures to overcome them.

1. Low awareness of the procedure

Few citizens and legal professionals are aware of the ESCP, which limits its use. ECC-Net notes that even some judges are unfamiliar with the process, sometimes leading to cases being handled under national civil procedures instead. While the European e-Justice Portal offers extensive information, it can be difficult to understand for those without legal training.

2. Procedural complexity and language barriers

Translation requirements and document submission rules act as significant obstacles in some cases. Although standardised forms are available in all EU languages, certain sections require additional translations, leading to delays and extra costs that discourage claimants. ECC-Net recommends redesigning the forms using clearer language and developing interactive digital versions.

3. Court fees and recovery of costs

Court fees vary considerably across Member States. In some cases, they are disproportionate to the claim value, and it is not always possible to recover expenses such as translations or administrative fees. ECC-Net proposes harmonising fees, setting maximum limits, and ensuring the recovery of all reasonable costs.

4. Difficulties in enforcing judgments

Even after obtaining a favourable ruling, enforcing the judgment in another Member State can be challenging. Consumers may be unsure of which competent authority to contact, face costly translation requirements, and encounter complex national enforcement procedures. Differences in legal frameworks and the risk of the defendant's insolvency add to the problem.

5. Lack of digitalisation and inconsistent appeal options

Despite the 2015 reforms, the use of electronic means in the ESCP remains inconsistent. In countries with digital systems, proceedings are faster and more efficient, but not all Member States have reached this stage. In addition, appeal rules vary, creating a degree of legal uncertainty.

Conclusion and recommendations

ECC-Net stresses that the European Small Claims Procedure has great potential to become a fast, affordable, and consumer-friendly tool—provided that reforms are made to simplify fees, reduce language barriers, improve enforcement of judgments, and increase the visibility of the procedure. European Consumer Centres already play a key role in assisting citizens, but their impact could be greater if their visibility were enhanced and they were more effectively positioned as a reference network at EU level.

Source: [ECC-Net Report](#): Small Claims, Big Impact: Five Barriers to Justice in the European Small Claims Process.