



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 8 May 2013

## **EU Citizenship: Commission proposes 12 new actions to boost citizens' rights**



The European Commission has today unveiled a new push to reinforce EU citizens' rights with a series of actions to tackle obstacles that citizens still face in their everyday life. The 2013 EU Citizenship Report sets out 12 concrete ways to help Europeans make better use of their EU rights, from looking for a job in another EU country to ensuring stronger participation in the democratic life of the Union. Key proposals include making it easier for people to work and do training in another EU country; reducing excessive paperwork for EU citizens living and travelling in the EU; and eliminating barriers to cross-border shopping. During the European Year of Citizens the EU Citizenship Report is the Commission's answer to the numerous calls from EU citizens who have shared problems they have experienced when travelling, moving to or shopping in another EU country.

*"EU citizenship is the crown jewel of European integration. It is to Political Union what the euro is to our Economic and Monetary Union. Today's Citizenship Report places EU citizens centre stage,"* said Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship. *"Ever since it was first included in the Treaties in 1993, EU citizenship has been evolving - but it is not yet mature: people still face obstacles exercising their rights in everyday life. We receive over 1 million enquiries every year from citizens on issues that relate to their rights. That is why today we are taking action to reinforce citizens' rights in everyday situations, like looking for a job, shopping online or taking part in European decision-making."*

Two decades since the Treaty of Maastricht laid down EU citizenship rights, these rights are not always a reality in people's everyday lives. This has been confirmed by EU citizens in a wide-ranging public consultation on EU Citizenship ([IP/12/461](#)) where 12 000 EU citizens gave examples of bureaucratic hurdles they still face for example when exercising their right to free movement. Eurobarometer surveys on citizenship ([IP/13/119](#)) and electoral rights ([IP/13/215](#)), a series of [direct Citizens' dialogues](#) with national and European politicians as well as a large numbers of queries from the public about EU rights received through the Europe Direct information service confirm that more needs to be done. The Commission is responding to these concerns.

In the context of the financial and sovereign debt crisis, hurdles for citizens who want to look for qualified jobs in other EU countries or which deter them from buying goods across the internal market, need to be addressed. This is all the more relevant as the EU moves towards a genuine Economic and Monetary Union with a political union on the horizon.

The EU Citizenship Report 2013 announces **12 new actions in six areas** to strengthen citizens' rights (see Annex for the full list of the 12 actions):

### **1. Removing obstacles for workers, students and trainees in the EU**

- by looking into **extending the right of jobseekers to receive unemployment benefits from their home country** while they are looking for a job in another EU member state beyond the current mandatory three months to increase the mobility of workers; and
- by setting out a **quality framework for traineeships** that specifies the rights and obligations of the parties making sure that traineeships are not used as a form of 'unpaid employment'

### **2. Cutting red tape in the Member States**

- by **facilitating the acceptance of identity and residence documents** when citizens want to travel or have to prove their identity in another EU country, including through **optional uniform European documents** that citizens could use in all EU countries; and
- by making it easier to **recognise roadworthiness certificates for cars** cross-border in the EU

### **3. Protecting the more vulnerable in the EU**

- by developing an **EU disability card** to be mutually recognised across the EU making sure that the 80 million disabled people can also take advantage of the benefits that come with national cards (for example access to transport, tourism, culture and leisure) when exercising their right to free movement; and
- by proposing a set of laws to further **strengthen citizens' procedural rights**, especially those of **children** and vulnerable citizens, when they are suspected or accused of a crime

#### **4. Eliminating barriers to shopping in the EU**

- by **improving rules to settle cross-border disputes** over small amounts when buying products online or in another EU country; the European Small Claims procedure can help consumers get their money back swiftly; and
- by working on an **online tool that makes the purchase of digital products more transparent** and that allows citizens to compare deals cross-border

#### **5. Promoting the availability of targeted and accessible information about the EU**

- by making **e-training tools available to local administrations** and providing citizen-friendly information about who to turn to to solve their problems.

#### **6. Strengthening citizens' participation in the democratic process**

- by working on ways to **enable EU citizens to keep their right to vote in national elections in their country of origin**. The practice in some Member States of depriving their citizens of their right to vote once they move to another EU country effectively is tantamount to punishing citizens for having exercised their right to free movement.

The EU Citizenship Report forms the centrepiece of the 2013 European Year of Citizens and also takes stock of progress since the first Citizenship Report in 2010 (see [IP/10/1390](#) and [MEMO/10/525](#)) - with the Commission delivering on the 25 action items announced in October 2010.

The initiative comes as the Commission adopts the latest report on the application of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights (see [IP/13/411](#) and [MEMO/13/411](#)), including citizens' rights such as the right to personal data protection. It is also accompanied by a report looking at progress made towards more effective EU citizenship, a track-record of enforcing EU citizens' rights, such as free movement, political rights or consular protection, and fighting discrimination on the grounds of nationality.

### **Background**

EU citizens still face obstacles in their everyday lives when exercising their right to free movement. The Commission is listening to these concerns and acting to strengthen citizens' rights. The EU Citizenship Report 2013 comes at a timely moment during the debate about the future of the European Union. Deeper integration has to go hand in hand with greater democratic legitimacy.

With the 2013 Citizenship report, the Commission is also taking stock of achievements recently made and identifying remaining obstacles which prevent citizens from making full use of their rights.

The first EU Citizenship Report was adopted in 2010 with a list of 25 actions to address problems faced by EU citizens when exercising their rights. Since then the Commission has been working to deliver on its promises by:

- Strengthening the rights of around 75 million crime victims a year across the EU ([IP/11/585](#));
- Cutting red tape for 3.5 million people registering a car in another EU country each year, with savings of €1.5 billion ([IP/12/349](#));

- Banning extra credit card charges and pre-ticked boxes for online shoppers ([MEMO/11/675](#));
- Reinforcing fair trial rights for all EU citizens, applying to around 8 million proceedings a year ([IP/12/430](#), [IP/10/1305](#));
- Clarifying property rights for Europe's 16 million international couples ([IP/11/320](#)).

## **For more information**

[MEMO/13/409](#)

Press Pack:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/citizen/news/130508\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/citizen/news/130508_en.htm)

European Commission – EU Citizenship:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/index_en.htm)

2013 European Year of Citizens:

<http://europa.eu/citizens-2013>

Homepage of Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner:

<http://ec.europa.eu/reding>

Follow the Vice-President on Twitter: [@VivianeRedingEU](#)

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## ANNEX: Twelve new key actions to improve EU citizens' lives

In its 2013 EU Citizenship Report the Commission is putting forward twelve new actions in six key areas to further remove obstacles standing in the way of citizens' enjoyment of their EU rights:

1	Propose a revision of the social security coordination regulation and look into extending the export of unemployment benefits for longer than the mandatory three months, to make it easier for citizens to look for a job in another EU country. Urge Member States to make full use of the current rules in allowing jobseekers to receive their unemployment benefits for up to six months while looking for a job in another Member State.	7	By the end of 2013, propose a package of legal instruments to further strengthen citizens' procedural rights when they are suspected or accused in criminal proceedings, taking into account the specific situation of children and vulnerable citizens.
2	Help young EU citizens develop their skills and enter the labour market by developing, in 2013, a quality framework for traineeships. Put forward an initiative in 2013 to modernise EURES to enhance the role and impact of employment services at national level and improve the coordination of labour mobility in the EU. Launch a pilot initiative to improve the exchange of information about traineeships and apprenticeships opportunities through EURES.	8	By the end of 2013, the Commission will revise the European Small Claims Procedure to facilitate the settling of disputes regarding purchases in another EU country.
3	In 2013 and 2014, work on solutions to remove obstacles faced by EU citizens and their family members who live in an EU country other than their own in relation to identity and residence documents issued by Member States, including through optional uniform European documents for citizens, where applicable.	9	By spring 2014, develop in close cooperation with national enforcers and relevant stakeholders, a model for the online display of key requirements to make the information on digital products clearer and easy to compare. By spring 2014, launch a dedicated EU-wide awareness raising campaign on consumer rights.
4	In 2013, take initiatives to promote best tax practice in cross-border situations and ensure the correct application of EU law so as to make it easier for European citizens moving or operating across borders to deal with different sets of tax rules and, in particular, to avoid double taxation.	10	Take actions to ensure that local administrations are given the tools to fully comprehend the free movement rights of EU citizens.
5	Building on its work to improve EU citizens' safety on the roads, in the course of 2014, take steps towards establishing a 'vehicle information platform' to facilitate the recognition of roadworthiness certificates, making it easier and safer for citizens to travel to another EU country with their car.	11	In the course of 2013, make it clearer and easier for citizens to know who to turn to for their rights to be redressed by providing user-friendly guidance on its central Europa web site.
6	Facilitate the mobility of persons with disabilities within the EU by supporting, in 2014, the development of a mutually recognised EU disability card to ensure equal access within the EU to certain specific benefits (mainly in the areas of transport, tourism, culture and leisure).	12	Promote EU citizens' awareness of their EU citizenship rights, and in particular their electoral rights, by launching on Europe Day in May 2014 a handbook presenting those EU rights in clear and simple language;  Propose constructive ways to enable EU citizens living in another EU country to fully participate in the democratic life of the EU by maintaining their right to vote in national elections in their country of origin;  Explore in 2013 ways of strengthening and developing the European public space, based on existing national and European structures, to end the current fragmentation of public opinion along national borders.