

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Strasbourg, 12 March 2014

EU Citizenship: European Parliament supports Commission's efforts to foster EU citizens' rights

The European Parliament has today welcomed the European Commission's proposals to reinforce EU citizens' rights with a series of actions to tackle obstacles that citizens still encounter in their everyday lives. The European Parliament's own initiative Report (adopted 562 for, 95 against, 11 abstentions) on the European Commission's 2013 EU Citizenship Report ([IP/13/410](#) and [MEMO/13/409](#)) fully supports the Commission's approach in addressing the concrete problems citizens encounter, for instance when job-searching or studying in another EU country, as well as ensuring stronger participation in the democratic life of the Union.

"We receive over 1 million enquiries every year from citizens on issues that relate to their rights. Add to these the questions people ask during the Citizens' Dialogues and you get a long shopping list of what citizens want to see improved through the EU. That is why the Commission is acting to reinforce citizens' rights in everyday situations, like looking for a job, shopping online or participating in the democratic life of our Union," said Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship. *"I want to thank rapporteur Nikolaos Salavrakos for his committed work on the report adopted today. It shows: the European Parliament, like the Commission, puts citizens and their rights centre stage. This is important – not only in the run-up to the European Parliament elections but also on every other day. Together we are working to make EU citizenship a reality in people's daily lives."*

The European Parliament's report particularly welcomes the Commission's proposals making it easier for EU citizens to work and doing training in another EU country; reducing excessive paperwork for EU citizens living and travelling in the EU; and eliminating barriers to cross-border shopping. It underlines the role of Member States including local authorities in upholding citizens' rights. It also welcomes measures put forward to better inform citizens about their EU rights.

In the run up to the European elections, the European Parliament also expressed its strong support for measures enabling citizens to engage in the debate and fully participate in the democratic life of the Union, something the Commission has been spearheading with a series of over 50 [Citizens' Dialogues](#) across Europe.

Background

Two decades after 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](#)) which illustrates the hurdles they still face in the EU. Eurobarometer surveys on citizenship ([IP/13/119](#)) and electoral rights ([IP/13/215](#)), a series of [Citizens' Dialogues](#) with national and European politicians, a hearing in the European Parliament in February 2013, as well as large numbers of complaints and queries from the public to the Commission and the European Parliament confirm that more needs to be done. The Commission is responding to these concerns.

The [EU Citizenship Report](#) 2013 announced 12 new actions in six areas to strengthen citizens' rights (see full list of the 12 actions in the annex):

1. Removing obstacles for workers, students and trainees in the EU
2. Cutting red tape in the Member States
3. Protecting the more vulnerable in the EU
4. Eliminating barriers to shopping in the EU
5. Promoting the availability of targeted and accessible information about the EU
6. Strengthening citizens' participation in the democratic process

Many of the 12 actions have already been taken:

1. **Removing obstacles for workers, students and trainees in the EU:** Action 2 (quality framework for traineeships and modernisation of EURES) was implemented through a proposal for a Council recommendation on a quality framework for traineeships adopted by the Commission in December 2013 (see [IP/13/1200](#)) and a proposal for the modernisation of EURES adopted by the Commission on 17 January 2014 (see [IP/14/26](#))
2. **Promoting the availability of targeted and accessible information about the EU:** Action 11 (online guidance for citizens) was implemented with the launch in December 2013 of a [one-stop-shop website](#), where citizens can find information on their EU rights and on how to get redress. Action 12a, the handbook on rights, will enable citizens to have an overview of their main EU rights through short texts and pictures (10 rights at a glance). It is currently being produced and will be presented in the coming weeks.
3. **[Strengthening citizens' participation in the democratic process:](#)** Action 12c (tackling disenfranchisement) was implemented with the adoption of recommendations on 29 January 2014 (see [IP/14/77](#)) giving guidance to EU-Member States which have rules in place leading to a loss of voting rights for EU citizens in national elections, simply because they have exercised their right to free movement in the EU.
4. **Eliminating barriers to shopping in the EU:** Action 8 was implemented with a [proposal adopted by the Commission](#) (see [IP/13/1095](#)) to revise the Small Claims Procedure which will help consumers resolve their small civil and commercial disputes in a hassle-free way.

5. **Protecting the more vulnerable in the EU:** Under Action 7 (fair trial) a package of proposals was tabled by the Commission in November 2013 (see [IP/13/1157](#)) to further [strengthen procedural safeguards for citizens in criminal proceedings](#). The aim is to guarantee fair trial rights for all citizens, wherever they are in the European Union (respect for the presumption of innocence and the right to be present at trial; make sure children have special safeguards when facing criminal proceedings; guarantee access of suspects and accused to provisional legal aid at the early stages of proceedings, etc.).
6. **Cutting red tape in the Member States:** Action 3 was implemented with a Commission proposal (see [IP/13/355](#)) to do away with bureaucratic rubber-stamping exercises for citizens and businesses in the Member States. The initiative gets rid of a series of arcane administrative requirements, such as the Apostille stamp, which Member States still require to certify public documents for people living and working in other EU countries, and has already received the strong backing of the European Parliament (see [MEMO/14/76](#)).

The EU Citizenship Report formed the centrepiece of the 2013 European Year of Citizens and also took stock of progress made since the **first EU 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 table of progress can be viewed [here](#).

Some examples of the actions achieved after the first Citizenship Report in 2010:

- 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](#))
- Modernising the EU's Package travel rules to make sure an additional 120 million consumers who buy these customised travel arrangements will be protected ([IP/13/663](#)).

For more information

Press Pack:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/citizen/news/130508_en.htm

European Commission – EU Citizenship:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/index_en.htm

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

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

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

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.