

Information Guide



Citizenship of the European Union

A guide to information on Citizenship of the European Union, with hyperlinks to further sources of information within European Sources Online and on external websites

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Introduction

Citizens are and must be at the heart of European integration. To underscore this, the EU institutions made 2013 the European Year of Citizens to give new impetus to EU citizenship and to the citizens' dimension of the European project. At a time when the EU is taking major steps towards a deep and genuine Economic and Monetary Union, of which democratic legitimacy is a cornerstone, with a Political Union on the horizon, it is all the more important to focus on the things the EU is doing to make citizens' lives easier, to help them understand their rights and involve them in a debate on the Europe they want to live in and build for future generations.

EU citizenship brings citizens new rights and opportunities. Moving and living freely within the EU is the right they associate most closely with EU citizenship. Given modern technology and the fact that it is now easier to travel, freedom of movement allows Europeans to expand their horizons beyond national borders, to leave their country for shorter or longer periods, to come and go between EU countries to work, study and train, to travel for business or for leisure, or to shop across borders. Free movement increases social and cultural interactions within the EU and creates closer bonds between Europeans. In addition, it generates mutual economic benefits for businesses and citizens, including those who remain at home, as the EU steadily removes internal obstacles.

From: EU Citizenship Report 2013: EU citizens: your rights, your future, [COM\(2013\)269](#), 8 May 2013.

Background

The concept of European citizenship was introduced in 1993 when the Treaty on European Union (TEU) entered into force. It was thought that, after a decade or more of citizens' growing alienation towards the Community institutions, citizenship might stimulate enthusiasm for the EU and help create some sort of European identity.

The rights linked to citizenship were not new, but codified existing privileges largely derived from economic rights, such as freedom of movement and residence in the Single Market. This freedom, which initially only referred to 'free movement of workers' has gradually been extended and under the 1993 TEU covered all EU citizens, irrespective of their occupational status (employed, self-employed, retired, students).

The debate on the introduction of European citizenship was controversial, and although the concept was finally introduced into the TEU, it was later necessary to clarify that EU citizenship does not replace national citizenship, but complements it. As a concession to Denmark, which was highly sceptical of the issue (and had just rejected the TEU in a referendum), Heads of State and Government at the December 1992 Edinburgh European Council adopted a [Decision](#) stating:

The provisions of Part Two of the Treaty establishing the European Community relating to citizenship of the Union give nationals of the Member States additional rights and protection as specified in that Part. They do not in any way take the place of national citizenship. The question whether an individual possesses the nationality of a Member State will be settled solely by reference to the national law of the Member State concerned.

This was later added to the Treaty of Amsterdam as a [Protocol on the position of Denmark](#). Amsterdam also added the right to complain to the European Ombudsman and the right to petition the European Parliament in any of the official languages of the EU.

The subsequent revision of the Community Treaty by the [Treaty of Nice](#) (2001) extended qualified majority voting to a number of new policy areas, including the right of free movement and residence within the European Union (although not to 'provisions on passports, identity cards, residence permits or any other such document or to provisions on social security or social protection').

Legal basis

Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, provisions on citizenship are now set out in the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

Amongst other things, Article 9 of the [Treaty on European Union](#) states:

Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to and not replace national citizenship.

In the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#), Part Two (Articles 18 - 25) concerns non-discrimination and citizenship of the Union. Article 20 specifically addresses citizenship:

1. Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to and not replace national citizenship.

2. Citizens of the Union shall enjoy the rights and be subject to the duties provided for in the Treaties. They shall have, inter alia:

(a) the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States;

(b) the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in their Member State of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that State;

(c) the right to enjoy, in the territory of a third country in which the Member State of which they are nationals is not represented, the protection of the diplomatic and consular authorities of any Member State on the same conditions as the nationals of that State;

(d) the right to petition the European Parliament, to apply to the European Ombudsman, and to address the institutions and advisory bodies of the Union in any of the Treaty languages and to obtain a reply in the same language.

Freedom of movement and residence

All citizens of the European Union have the right to move and reside freely anywhere within the territory of the Member States. An EU citizen can go to another EU country to study, work or retire, while enjoying the same rights as nationals of that country.

At the 1974 [Paris Summit](#) (text courtesy of the Archive of European Integration), heads of government asked for a report, by 1976, 'on the possibilities for a passport union and uniform passport within the Community' in order to 'bring home the reality of the Community to the European citizens'. The first burgundy-coloured Community passports were subsequently issued in 1985, although the issuing of passports remains the exclusive right of Member States and the standardised format merely covers aspects

such as size, colour, and the fact that 'European Union' is followed by the name of the Member State on the cover of the passport.

Under the 1992 Agreement on the [European Economic Area](#) (EEA), nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway also share some of the rights of EU citizens, with job seekers, students and the self-employed from any EEA country able to live, work or study in any of the 30 EEA member countries.

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are all members of the [European Free Trade Association](#) (EFTA). The fourth EFTA country, Switzerland, is not part of the EEA, but is closely linked to the EU through a number of technical agreements, one of which is the June 2002 Agreement on the free movement of persons. On 12 December 2008, Switzerland joined the Schengen Area, in which controls at internal borders are abolished amongst participating countries (see Press Release [IP/08/1955](#); in addition to Switzerland, the Schengen countries are the EU Member States except the UK and Ireland, plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein).

In 2009, Iceland applied to join the EU and is now a Candidate Country alongside Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Montenegro. On 7 December 2011, Croatia and the EU signed Croatia's EU Accession Treaty allowing Croatia to become the 28th Member State of the European Union on 1 July 2013 (see [MEMO/11/883](#)). There are also four Potential Candidate Countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia.

Reiterating the desire expressed by the 1974 Paris Summit to make the Community (now Union) a reality for citizens, travel restrictions have been eased for many of the Candidate and Potential Candidate countries. On 7 December 2009, the General Affairs Council decided to establish a visa free regime for the citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. From 19 December 2009, noting that the move 'demonstrates that the implementation of concrete reforms brings tangible benefits for citizens', the Council called on the European Commission to table similar proposals for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina and - in the longer term - Kosovo (see Press Release [17217/09](#)). On 27 May 2010, the Commission adopted a proposal enabling citizens of Albania and of Bosnia and Herzegovina to travel to Schengen countries without needing a short-term visa (see Press Releases [IP/10/621](#) and [MEMO/10/218](#)).

Echoing the earlier Council statement, the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, said the proposal 'is of the utmost importance for the citizens of the countries concerned, since it will bring them closer to the EU. The visa-free regime will contribute to making the European perspective more tangible.'

On 8 November 2010, the Council of the European Union decided to introduce visa-free travel for citizens of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina holding biometric passports (See [MEMO/10/548](#)). The decision entered into force on 15 December 2010.

Štefan Füle, commenting on this decision, said: 'The visa-free regime is the best proof that reforms at home bring tangible benefits for citizens and progress in relations with the EU. We can build on this in order to further the reforms needed to bring the two countries closer to their European aspirations'.

Participation in elections

The provisions of the 1993 Treaty on European Union concerning the right to vote in elections are now expressed in the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#). A general right is given in Article 20 (2) (b):

Citizens of the Union shall enjoy the rights and be subject to the duties provided

for in the Treaties. They shall have the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in their Member State of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that State.

More details are given in Article 22:

1. Every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national shall have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections in the Member State in which he resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that State. This right shall be exercised subject to detailed arrangements adopted by the Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after consulting the European Parliament; these arrangements may provide for derogations where warranted by problems specific to a Member State.

2. Without prejudice to Article 223(1) and to the provisions adopted for its implementation, every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national shall have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament in the Member State in which he resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that State. This right shall be exercised subject to detailed arrangements adopted by the Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after consulting the European Parliament; these arrangements may provide for derogations where warranted by problems specific to a Member State.

For elections to the European Parliament, the detailed arrangements mentioned are set out in [Council Directive 93/109/EC](#). Amongst its provisions, Article 4 states:

1. Community voters shall exercise their right to vote either in the Member State of residence or in their home Member State. No person may vote more than once at the same election.

2. No person may stand as a candidate in more than one Member State at the same election.

Article 9 concerns entry onto the electoral roll, including the documentation required by prospective voters. Voters entered on an electoral roll remain on it until either they request to be removed or until they are removed automatically because they no longer satisfy the relevant requirements.

Member States were required to implement the Directive by 1 February 1994. In a report on the application of the Directive to the June 1994 European Parliament elections ([COM\(97\)731](#)) the European Commission identified 'two shortcomings in the participation of non-national Union citizens': a lack of information about the new voting rights and a 'dramatically low rate of successful non-national candidates'. The Commission also noted that:

Participation of non-national voters in the Member State of residence varied between 44.11% in Ireland where this right had been available since 1979, to 1.55% in Greece. The aggregate turnout of non-national Union citizens in the Fifteen was of about 5.87%. Only one non-national candidate was elected in her Member State of residence.

Detailed provisions for municipal elections are set out in [Council Directive 94/80/EC](#). Article 4 allows prospective voters and candidates to participate in elections provided they have spent any required minimum residency period in a Member State other than the one in which they wish to vote or stand for election. Article 5 concerns exclusions on

grounds of breaking civil or criminal law and also allows Member States to restrict the holding of senior local government offices to their own nationals.

Article 7 concerns entry onto the electoral roll, including the documentation required by prospective voters. Voters entered on an electoral roll remain on it until either they request to be removed or until they are removed automatically because they no longer satisfy the relevant requirements.

Member States were required to implement the Directive by 1 January 1996. In a report on the application of the Directive covering the period from 1 January 1996 to 31 May 2001 ([COM\(2002\)260](#)) the European Commission revealed that the first municipal elections under the Directive were held in 1996 in Germany and the United Kingdom.

The Commission concluded that, although legal implementation of the Directive was satisfactory, its practical application was not so successful, with the proportion of non-national EU citizens entered on electoral rolls being 'rather low' (the report looked at the situation in 13 Member States).

In December 2006, the Commission issued a Report on participation in the June 2004 European Parliament elections by EU citizens in the Member State of residence ([COM\(2006\)790](#)). In the elections, 45.6% of the total electorate voted. Whilst that figure was lower than in previous elections, the number of non-nationals registered to vote increased, growing from 5.9% in 1994, to 9% in 1999, and again to 11.9% in 2004. However, the number of non-national candidates fell slightly in 2004 compared to 1999.

(For further information, see Summaries of EU legislation: [Voting rights and eligibility in European Parliament elections](#) and the Commission's Justice [Electoral rights](#)).

Diplomatic and consular protection

The right to diplomatic and consular protection afforded under Article 20 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) is reiterated in Article 23, which also allows for detailed legislation to be adopted to achieve that aim. That detail is set out in [Decision 95/553/EC](#) 'regarding protection for citizens of the European Union by diplomatic and consular representations'. Entitlement to diplomatic and consular protection depends on:

- the absence, in the third country in which the citizen requesting protection is located, of an accessible permanent representation (embassy, general consulate or consulate) of the citizen's own Member State
- the absence of an accessible Honorary Consul competent for such matters of his or her own Member State or another State representing it on a permanent basis
- the citizen requesting protection being able to produce proof of his or her nationality (passport, identity card or other document) for the diplomatic or consular representation approached.

In the event of difficulties, protection must cover: assistance in the event of death, serious accident or illness, arrest or detention, or violent crime; plus the relief and repatriation of distressed EU citizens. The list is not exhaustive: Member States' diplomatic representations or consular agents are also allowed to offer additional assistance to citizens if requested and if they are able to do so.

In November 2006, the Commission published the Green Paper 'Diplomatic and consular protection of Union citizens in third countries' ([COM\(2006\)712](#)) setting out 'ideas to be considered for strengthening the right to Community diplomatic and consular protection' and launching a debate with interested parties. Subsequently, in December 2007, the

Communication 'Effective consular protection in third countries: the contribution of the European Union - Action Plan 2007-2009' ([COM\(2007\)767](#)) was issued, proposing a series of measures to improve protection and a Recommendation that Member States include the text of the relevant Treaty Article in passports (now Article 23 TFEU).

In addition to Decision 95/553, [Decision 96/409/CFSP](#) allows for the establishment of an emergency travel document - although as noted in the 'Fifth Report on Citizenship of the Union' ([COM\(2008\)85](#)) these two acts alone covering diplomatic and consular protection meant that legislation in the area was very limited.

In the EU Citizenship Report 2010 – Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights (action 8) ([COM\(2010\)603](#)), the Commission announced it would

increase the effectiveness of the right of EU citizens to be assisted in third countries, including in times of crisis, by the diplomatic and consular authorities of all Member States, by proposing legislative measures in 2011 and by better informing citizens via a dedicated website and targeted communication measures.

On 23 March 2011, the Commission published a Communication on consular protection ([COM\(2011\)149](#)) which set out concrete actions aiming at raising EU citizens' awareness of their rights and introduced future measures for the coming years (see Press Release [IP/11/355](#)). On the same day, the Commission launched a [website](#) dedicated to consular protection and intended for citizens travelling or living outside the EU. This website lists the addresses of consular or diplomatic missions in non-EU countries and provides access to all Member States' travel advisory services (see [MEMO/11/185](#)).

On 14 December 2011, the Commission made a proposal for a Directive on consular protection ([COM\(2011\)881](#)) for EU citizens caught in crisis situation (natural catastrophes, uprisings etc.) and day-to-day emergencies when travelling abroad in order to facilitate cooperation between consular authorities and reinforce European citizens' rights to consular protection (see Press Release [IP/11/1537](#)).

(See also Summaries of EU legislation: [Diplomatic and consular protection](#) and the Commission's Justice page [Consular protection](#)).

European Parliament and European Ombudsman

Article 20(2) (d) of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) gives the right:

to petition the European Parliament, to apply to the European Ombudsman, and to address the institutions and advisory bodies of the Union in any of the Treaty languages and to obtain a reply in the same language.

Petitioning the European Parliament

The right to petition the European Parliament was introduced to provide a simple way of contacting EU institutions with requests or complaints. This right is for EU citizens, EU residents and members of a company, organisation or association with its headquarters in an EU Member State.

The petition may be a matter of general concern, an individual complaint or a request for Parliament to take a stance on a matter of public interest. The subject must, however, fall within the scope of the Union's interests or responsibilities, which include:

- rights as a European citizen
- environment
- consumer protection
- free movement of persons, goods and services, internal market

- employment and social policy
- recognition of professional qualifications
- problems related to the implementation of EU law.

A petition must be in one of the official languages of the European Union and include the name, occupation, nationality and place of residence of the petitioner. It can be submitted in paper form (and signed) or electronically. Details of the petitions procedure can be found on the European Parliament's [Petitions](#) pages.

Once a petition is registered, it is forwarded to the [Committee on Petitions](#), which will first decide whether it is admissible (i.e. if it falls within the remit of the EU to deal with the issue). If it is not admissible, the petition will be filed and the petitioner informed of the reason for the decision. The European Parliament cannot pass judgment on or revoke legal decisions taken by Member States. The Petitions Committee may suggest applying to an alternative body, such as a national authority or the Council of Europe's European Court of Human Rights (which has information for [applicants](#) on its website).

If the petition is admissible, it will be considered and the Petitions Committee will decide what action should be taken. Depending on the subject of the petition, the Committee may:

- ask the European Commission for information regarding compliance with the relevant Community legislation (for example: recognition of qualifications, social security for migrant workers, etc.)
- refer the petition to another European Parliament committee for further action, possibly in its legislative activities
- submit a report to the European Parliament to be voted on in a plenary session
- draw up an opinion and ask the President of the European Parliament to forward it to the Council of Ministers or the European Commission for action.

Petitions entered on the register, and the main decisions taken on them, are announced at the plenary sessions of the European Parliament and appear in the minutes of the sitting. The texts of the petitions, and of any opinions accompanying forwarded petitions, are kept in the European Parliament archives, where they may be consulted by any Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

According to the 'Fifth Report on Citizenship of the Union' ([COM\(2008\)85](#)) the European Parliament received 1,002 petitions in 2004 (623 of which were admissible), 1,032 petitions in 2005 (628 admissible) and 1,021 petitions in 2006 (667 admissible). Between one quarter and one third of petitions are linked to - or give rise to - infringement proceedings.

In 2009, the European Parliament received 1,924 petitions and 1,655 in 2010 (653 of which were admissible). Environment was the main topic of these petitions, followed by fundamental rights, the internal market and justice (see [Press Release](#)).

Applying to the European Ombudsman

An Ombudsman acts as an intermediary between the citizen and the public authorities. The word Ombudsman is of Scandinavian origin as the first ever Ombudsman was appointed in Sweden in 1809. Not all European countries have a national ombudsman. An Ombudsman investigates complaints brought by individuals against the authorities and is required to be both impartial and independent of government.

The idea of creating a European Community Ombudsman was first put forward in the

1970s, but it was not until the 1993 Treaty on European Union that the European Parliament was required (under Article 195 of the Treaty establishing the European Community - now Article 228 [TFEU](#)) to appoint an Ombudsman:

empowered to receive complaints from any citizen of the Union or any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State concerning instances of maladministration in the activities of the Union institutions ...

Maladministration covers both incompetence (undue delay, failure to follow agreed procedures or to provide information) and deliberate wrong-doing (discrimination or abuse of power). The [European Ombudsman](#) can only investigate complaints about maladministration in EU institutions. He has no powers to investigate complaints about local, regional or national governments.

The Ombudsman's five-year term of office coincides with that of the European Parliament and he may be dismissed only by the Court of Justice at the request of the Parliament. The first European Ombudsman was Jacob Söderman of Finland, who was initially elected by the European Parliament on 12 July 1995 and re-elected in 1999. He resigned in 2003 and was succeeded by Nikiforos Diamandouros, who was elected in January 2003 to serve from 1 April 2003. He was re-elected on 11 January 2005 and again on 20 January 2010 (see Press Release [2/2010](#)).

Mr Diamandouros was succeeded by Emily O'Reilly, who took up her post as European Ombudsman on 1 October 2013 (see Press Release [14/2013](#)). Ms O'Reilly - previously Ireland's Ombudsman - said of her new appointment:

Europe faces not only an economic crisis but also a crisis of political legitimacy. Negativity and division are rising across Europe, the trust of citizens in European institutions is declining, and many feel their voice simply does not count. This makes 2014 a crucial year for Europe and the future of the European Union. One of my proactive roles as Ombudsman is to highlight citizens' concerns and help bridge the wide gap between them and the EU institutions.

The Ombudsman may make investigations either on his own initiative or on the basis of complaints brought to his attention, either directly or through a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), except in relation to matters that are or have been the subject of legal proceedings. The Ombudsman has no powers of sanction. The results of his investigations are sent to the European Parliament and the European institution concerned. When the Ombudsman concludes that maladministration has occurred in an EU institution, he refers the matter to the institution concerned, which has three months in which to reply. The European Parliament may, moreover, set up a temporary Committee of Inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions of or maladministration in the implementation of Community law.

The Ombudsman is required to submit to the European Parliament an annual report 'on the outcome of his inquiries'. [Annual reports](#) since 1995 are available in all the official languages of the EU. The [Ombudsman's website](#) also provides information about how to contact him and how to complain.

On 18 March 2002 the European Ombudsman, Jacob Söderman, published the [European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour](#). According to Mr. Söderman, 'It tells European citizens what they have a right to expect from the EU administration and gives guidance to officials on how to behave in dealing with the public.'

Active European citizenship

In May 2003, the Commission adopted a Proposal for a Council Decision 'establishing a Community action programme to promote active European citizenship (civic participation)' ([COM\(2003\)276](#)) with the aim of supporting bodies actively involved in promoting EU citizenship. The programme, covering the period 2004-2006, was adopted as [Council Decision 2004/100/EC](#). An [evaluation](#) carried out by independent consultants found 'a strong need for the Active Citizenship programme' and - although there were some areas of concern - highlighted significant impacts achieved through programme activities, including:

legislative changes and better understanding of EU debates by citizens in the areas covered by the programme, and the development of new activities in these areas, consolidation or creation of networks, improved access to institutions / development of civic dialogue, greater organisational visibility and beneficiary empowerment.

A proposal to continue the programme ([COM\(2005\)116](#)) was presented in April 2005 and in December 2006 [Decision 1904/2006/EC](#) established the successor programme 'Europe for Citizens'. Spanning 2007-2013, it has the general objectives of:

- giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European Union
- developing a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture
- fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens
- enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

Those objectives are to be pursued through a number of specific actions:

- Active citizens for Europe (town twinning, citizens' projects and support measures)
- Active civil society in Europe (structural support for European public policy research organisations / think-tanks and for civil society organisations at European level, and support for projects initiated by civil society organisations)
- Together for Europe (high visibility events, studies, surveys and opinion polls, information and dissemination tools)
- Active European Remembrance (preservation of the main sites and archives associated with deportations and the commemoration of victims).

On 14 December 2011, the European Commission adopted a proposal for the 2014-2020 Europe for Citizens programme ([COM\(2011\)884](#)) aiming at raising citizens' awareness and understanding of the European Union. The two central elements of this programme will be remembrance and European citizenship as well as democratic engagement and civic participation (see Press Release [IP/11/1538](#)).

(See also Summaries of EU legislation: [Active European citizenship \(2004-2006\)](#), [Europe for Citizens \(2007-13\)](#) and the Commission's page on [Citizenship](#)).

Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme

On 19 April 2007, the Council adopted [Decision 2007/252/EC](#) establishing the specific programme 'Fundamental rights and citizenship' within the general 'Fundamental Rights and Justice' programme. Spanning 2007-2013, 'Fundamental rights and citizenship' constitutes - according to the 'Fifth Report on Citizenship of the Union' ([COM\(2008\)85](#)) 'a new boost for the EU fundamental rights and citizenship policies, one of its main aims being the promotion of a European society based on respect of fundamental rights, including the rights derived from Union citizenship.'

The programme makes funding available to help achieve the general objectives of:

- promoting the development of a European society based on respect for fundamental rights, including rights derived from citizenship of the Union
- strengthening civil society and encouraging an open, transparent and regular dialogue with it in respect of fundamental rights
- fighting racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and promoting a better interfaith and intercultural understanding and improved tolerance throughout the EU
- improving the contacts, exchange of information and networking between legal, judicial and administrative authorities and the legal professions, with the aim of better mutual understanding among such authorities and professionals.

(See also Summaries of EU legislation: [Fundamental rights and citizenship \(2007-2013\)](#) and the Commission's Justice Page on [Fundamental rights and citizenship](#)).

European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship

On 27 November 2009, [Council Decision 2010/37/EC](#) established the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 (EYV). The overall purpose of the Year was to encourage and support the efforts of the Community, the Member States, local and regional authorities to create the conditions for civil society conducive to volunteering in the EU and to increase the visibility of voluntary activities.

In that context, the Year had four main objectives:

- work towards an enabling environment for volunteering in the EU in order to anchor volunteering as part of promoting civic participation and people-to-people activities in an EU context and address existing obstacles to voluntary activities, where appropriate and necessary;
- empower organisers of voluntary activities to improve the quality of voluntary activities in order to facilitate voluntary activities and help organisers to implement new types of voluntary activities and to encourage networking, mobility, cooperation and synergies within civil society and between civil society and other sectors in an EU context;
- recognise voluntary activities in order to encourage appropriate incentives for individuals, companies and volunteer-development organisations and gain recognition for volunteering at EU level and in the Member States by policymakers, civil society organisations, public institutions, the formal and non-formal education sector and employers for skills and competences developed through volunteering;

- raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering in order to raise general awareness of the importance of volunteering as an expression of civic participation which contributes to issues which are of common concern of all Member States, such as a harmonious societal development and social cohesion.

On 2 December 2010, the European Commission launched the 2011 European Year of Volunteering introducing the slogan 'Volunteer! Make a difference' (see Press Release [IP/10/1640](#)).

The main activities and projects carried out during this year were:

- EYV2011 Tour: volunteers toured EU countries, showcasing their work and engaging with policy makers and the public at each step of the tour
- EYV Relay: 27 'Relay' volunteer reporters followed the work of 54 volunteering organisations and produced audio, video and written reports to be broadcast by the media. At the end of the year, the combined reports had to be compiled to form a broadcast-quality documentary about the European Year and its tour
- Four thematic conferences to highlight key issues related to volunteering

On 20 September 2011, the Commission announced plans to improve the recognition and promotion of volunteering in the EU, including the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps and the development of a 'European Skills Passport' ([COM\(2011\)568](#)). This was the first time that the European Commission adopted a policy document dedicated exclusively to volunteering.

(See also the Commission's [EYV 2011 webpage](#), Summaries of EU legislation: [European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship \(2011\)](#) and Press Release [IP/09/1836](#)).

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) was established by [Regulation \(EC\) 168/2007](#). Its objective is to provide EU institutions and Member States with expertise and assistance on fundamental rights issues. Its remit includes issues associated with EU citizens' participation in the Union's democratic processes. The Agency operates in the context of the Union's [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#), which is divided into six chapters, one of which addresses citizens' rights. The FRA replaced the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC).

(See also [FRA website](#), Summaries of EU legislation: [Fundamental Rights Agency](#) and ESO Information Guide: [Human Rights](#)).

Report on Citizenship of the Union

The EU Citizenship Report 2010, entitled 'Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights', was published in October 2010 ([COM\(2010\)603](#); see also Press Release [IP/10/1390](#)). The aim of this report was to identify the main obstacles that citizens may encounter in the enjoyment of their rights in various roles in their lives, such as private individual, consumers of goods and services, students and professionals or political actors, when making use of their EU rights in their daily life as well as actions to eliminate these obstacles.

The EU Citizenship Report 2010 report was accompanied by another document, under Article 25 of the TFEU which requires the Commission to report every three years of the application of the provisions of this Part. Entitled 'On progress towards effective EU Citizenship 2007-2010', it took stock of major developments that occurred in the field of EU Citizenship in the period 1 July 2007 – 30 June 2010 ([COM\(2010\)602](#)).

Both reports referred to a 2010 Eurobarometer public opinion survey on European Union Citizenship ([Flash EB 294](#)), which found that:

Most European citizens (79%) currently claim some familiarity with the term 'citizen of the European Union'. However, only 43% know the meaning of the term and 48% indicate that they are 'not well informed' about their rights as EU citizens. Indeed, less than one third (32%) consider themselves 'well' or 'very well' informed about their rights as EU citizens.

For EU citizenship to acquire real significance in people's lives, it is necessary to increase awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

In its 31 May 2012 report [Citizenship education in Europe](#), Eurydice gave an overview of developments in five main areas:

- curriculum aims and organisation
- student and parent participation in schools
- school culture and student participation in society
- assessment and evaluation
- support for teachers and school heads

The report covered 31 countries (EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Croatia - before accession - and Turkey). It showed that:

Citizenship education is part of national curricula in all countries. It is delivered in schools through three main approaches: as a stand-alone subject, as part of another subject or learning area, or as a cross-curricular dimension. However, a combination of these approaches is often used. Twenty countries or regions dedicate a separate compulsory subject to citizenship education, sometimes starting at primary level, but more usually at secondary level. The length of time during which citizenship education is taught as a separate subject varies considerably between countries, ranging from 12 years in France to one year in Bulgaria and Turkey.

On 19 February 2013, a Eurobarometer survey showed that, 20 years after the birth of EU citizenship, people are broadly aware of their rights, but only 36% feel well informed about them (see Press Release [IP/13/119](#)).

On 8 May 2013, the European Commission launched its latest report on EU citizenship, setting out a series of actions aimed at reinforcing the rights of EU citizens. Key proposals in 'EU Citizenship Report 2013: EU citizens: your rights, your future' ([COM\(2013\)269](#)) included: making it easier for people to work and train in another EU country; reducing excessive paperwork for EU citizens living and travelling in the EU; and eliminating barriers to cross-border shopping (see also Press Releases [IP/13/410](#) and [MEMO/13/409](#) and DG Justice [news item](#)). On the same day, the Commission adopted the accompanying report 'On progress towards effective EU Citizenship 2011-2013' ([COM\(2013\)270](#)).

(Earlier reports can be found via Summaries of EU legislation: [Reports on citizenship of the Union](#)).

European Citizens' Initiative

Introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is described on the Commission's [ECI page](#) as 'a new form of public participation in European Union policy shaping'. The Initiative provides that:

not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the Commission ... to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

Under Article 11(4) of the [Treaty on European Union](#) and Article 24 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#), details of the ECI must be set out in a Regulation adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. On 11 November 2009, the Commission therefore published the 'Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative' ([COM\(2009\)622](#)), in order to seek the views of interested parties on how the ECI should work in practice. That was followed on 31 March 2010 by a draft Regulation, presented by the Commission as [COM\(2010\)119](#) (see also Press Release [IP/10/397](#)).

On 14 June 2010, the Council reached agreement on the draft and asked the Presidency to start negotiations with the European Parliament, on the basis of the general approach agreed, with the aim of enabling the Regulation to be adopted at Parliament's first reading (see Press Release [PRES/10/178](#); adopted as [Regulation \(EU\) 211/2011](#) of 16 February 2011 'on the citizens' initiative').

Under the Council's general approach, a 'significant number of Member States' is defined as at least one third of EU members, and a formula is established for calculating the number of supporters necessary from each Member State. The text also contains provisions on the verification of signatures and preventing potential abuses. Support for a proposal could be expressed either on paper or online. Organisers would have a year to collect the one million signatures required.

(See also Press Release [MEMO/10/116](#) and additional materials on the Commission's [ECI website](#)).

On 15 December 2010, a final agreement was reached between the Council and the Parliament, allowing the European Parliament to adopt an EU regulation governing the implementation of the ECI (see Press Release [IP/10/1720](#) and [MEMO/10/683](#)). The regulation stipulates that a committee composed of at least seven citizens coming from at least seven Member States are required to collect a million signatures within 12 months after the initiative registration for an ECI to be successful.

In each of these seven Member States, the minimum number of signatures required will be calculated by multiplying the number of MEPs from that country by a factor of 750. For example, 74,250 signatures will be required in Germany, the largest EU country, and 3,750 in Malta, the smallest.

Following the registration, the Commission will determine whether the initiative is 'well founded' and has a 'European dimension'.

About this regulation, Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President for Inter-institutional Relations and Administration and Member of the European Commission in charge of the European Citizens' Initiative, declared:

'The ECI will introduce a whole new form of participatory democracy to the EU. It is a major step forward in the democratic life of the Union. It's a concrete example of bringing Europe closer to its citizens. And it will foster a cross border debate

about what we are doing in Brussels and thus contribute, we hope, to the development of a real European public space’.

On 16 February 2011, the Parliament and the Council adopted [Regulation \(EU\) 211/2011](#) determining the specific practical rules and procedures for launching an ECI. They also fixed a starting date making it possible to launch the first European Citizens’ Initiatives from 1 April 2012.

On 17 November 2011, the Commission adopted [Regulation \(EU\) 1179/2011](#) laying down technical specifications for online collection systems under Regulation (EU) 211/2011.

On 26 October 2012, following certification of their online collection system by the Luxembourg authorities, *Fraternité 2020* became the first ECI to start collecting statements of support on the European Commission's own servers (see Press Release [IP/12/1160](#)). It was announced on 11 February 2013 that the *Right2Water* ECI had collected more than one million signatures (see Press Release [IP/13/107](#); details of all initiatives - open, closed, obsolete and refused - are on the [ECI website](#)).

Speaking on 9 April 2013, Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič gave an overview of the ECI project after the first year (see [SPEECH/13/292](#)). He ended by saying:

So to sum up, the ECI is the first step on our way to European transnational e-democracy and therefore we should deal with it with respect, full appreciation of its potential and in full understanding of what is coming up.

Ultimately, of course, the success or failure of an ECI will depend on whether organisers can really tap into the grass roots support they need to reach the million signature mark. That means not only choosing a subject that speaks to a wide range of citizens, but also one that is reflected in the day-to-day lives of people across the EU.

European Year of Citizens 2013

With 2013 marking the 20th anniversary of the concept of Union citizenship, established under the 1993 Treaty on European Union, the Commission proposed on 11 August 2011 that 2013 should be denoted European Year of Citizens (see Press Release [IP/11/959](#)). The formal designation was made in [Decision No 1093/2012/EU](#) of 21 November 2012, which set out the general objective of the European Year of Citizens as being:

to enhance awareness and knowledge of the rights and responsibilities attached to Union citizenship, in order to enable citizens to make full use of their right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. In this context, the European Year of Citizens shall also promote the enjoyment by Union citizens of the other rights attached to Union citizenship.

The Year was intended to facilitate Union citizens’ exercising their right to move and reside freely within the EU by ensuring easy access to information about their rights. More specifically, the Year aims to:

- raise citizens’ awareness of their right to reside freely within the European Union;
- raise citizens’ awareness of how they can benefit from EU rights and policies and to stimulate their active participation in Union policy-making;
- stimulate debate about the impact and potential of the right to free movement, in particular in terms of strengthening cohesion and people’s mutual understanding of one another.

By designating 2013 as the European Year of Citizens, the European Commission keeps its promise made in the [EU Citizenship Report 2010](#) (action 23), stipulating that the Commission 'will strengthen citizens' awareness of their EU citizenship status, their rights and their meaning in their daily lives by proposing the designation of 2013 as the European Year of Citizens and by organising targeted events on EU citizenship and citizen-related EU policies during this Year'.

This designation also answers the European Parliament's call for such a year in the article 16 of its [resolution](#) of 15 December 2010 concerning the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union saying that the European Parliament 'calls on the Commission to make 2013 the European Year of Citizenship in order to give momentum to the debate on European citizenship and inform EU citizens of their rights, in particular the new rights resulting from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon'.

The Year was formally launched on 1 January 2013 (see Press Release [IP/13/2](#) and also European Parliament Library Briefing [2013 European Year of Citizens](#)).

'Putting citizens at the heart of the European project in times of change' was the theme of a meeting on 30 May 2013 between representatives of the European Commission, European Council, European Parliament and Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu faiths. The ninth in a series of meetings launched in 2005, the 2013 event focused on how to intensify the dialogue with citizens and societal organisations on the future of Europe and about the fundamental, individual and collective rights that are guaranteed by European citizenship (see Press Release [IP/13/467](#) and Bureau of European Policy Advisers' page on [Dialogue with churches ...](#)).

Information sources in the ESO database

Find updated and further information sources in the ESO database:

[3.1 A people's Europe / Citizens' Europe \[all categories\]](#)

- [Key Source](#)
- [Legislation](#)
- [Policy-making](#)
- [Report](#)
- [Statistics](#)
- [News source](#)
- [Periodical article](#)
- [Textbook, monograph or reference](#)
- [Background](#)

Further information sources on the internet

- European Commission: DG Justice
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [Justice website](#)
 - [Fundamental rights](#)
 - [EU citizenship](#)
 - [Movement and residence](#)
 - [Electoral rights](#)
 - [Complaints and petitions](#)
 - [Consular protection](#)
 - [Consular protection for EU citizens](#)

- European Commission: DG Home Affairs
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [Schengen, borders and visas](#)
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- European Commission: DG Internal Market and Services
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 - [EU Single Market](#)
 - [Living and working in the Single Market](#)
- European Commission: Citizenship
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [Europe for citizens programme](#)
 - [European Year of Volunteering](#)
- European Commission
 - [European Citizens' Initiative \(ECI\)](#)
- Europa
 - Policy areas: [Justice and home affairs](#)
 - Summaries of EU legislation
 - [Citizenship of the Union](#)
 - Includes subsections on:
 - [Reports on citizenship of the Union](#)
 - [Fundamental rights and citizenship \(2007-2013\)](#)
 - [Europe for Citizens \(2007-13\)](#)
 - [European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship \(2011\)](#)
 - [Right of Union citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States](#)
 - [Participating in municipal elections: the right to vote and to stand as a candidate](#)
 - [Voting rights and eligibility in European Parliament elections](#)
 - [Diplomatic and consular protection](#)
 - [European Year of Volunteering 2011](#)
- European Commission: DG Communication
 - [RAPID](#) press releases database - [Justice, fundamental rights and citizenship](#) (pre-set search)
- European Union: EUR-Lex

The text of proposed and adopted legislation relating to public health can be found via EUR-Lex

 - [Proposed](#) (section: 20 People's Europe - [20.20 European citizenship](#))
 - [Adopted](#) (section 20 People's Europe - 20.20 European citizenship)
 - [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) Articles 18-25
- Court of Justice of the European Union: InfoCuria

[Homepage](#): 'at 'Subject-matter' box, click icon at far right to open list of subjects. Select 'Citizenship of the Union' and click 'Enter' to return to main search page. Select dates if required. Hit 'Search' at top or bottom of page.
- European Parliament: Legislative Observatory (OEIL)

[Homepage](#): Carry out a [Search](#): scroll down right-hand menu and expand 'Subject'; then expand 'European citizenship' and select appropriate sub-heading

- European Commission: PreLex
[Homepage](#). In [Standard search](#), use the option 'Search on words from the title of the proposal' with 'citizenship' or other appropriate keyword; or in an [Advanced search](#) choose 'Field of activity' and select 'European citizenship'.
- Council of the European Union
 - [Justice and Home Affairs Council](#) (JHA)
- European Parliament
 - [Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#) (LIBE)
- European Parliament: [Fact Sheets](#):
 - [Respect for fundamental rights in the Union](#)
 - [The citizens of the Union and their rights](#)
 - [Free movement of persons](#)
 - [The right of petition](#)
 - [The European Citizens' Initiative](#)
- European Ombudsman
 - [Homepage](#)
- Committee of the Regions
 - [Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs](#) (CIVEX)
- European Economic and Social Committee
 - [Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship](#) (SOC)
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
 - [Homepage](#)
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