

EU Citizenship Report 2013. EU citizens: your rights, your future

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The Council adopted the **conclusions** concerning the 2013 EU Citizenship Report.

The Council noted gaps between the applicable legal rules and the reality confronting citizens in their daily lives, particularly in cross-border situations. Moreover, taking account of the fact that the year 2013 is the European Year of Citizens and that the European elections will be held in 2014, the Council highlighted the importance of raising awareness about their electoral rights in these elections and about the relevance of their participation as voters and as candidates.

Whilst welcoming the EU Citizenship Report 2013, the Council noted with particular interest the proposed measures aiming at:

(1) Removing obstacles for workers, students and trainees in the EU: the Council stressed the need to **tackle unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis**. It endorsed a comprehensive approach to combat youth unemployment.

More specifically, the Council:

- stated that it will carefully examine the Commission's forthcoming proposal on a **revision of the social security coordination regulation** which has the objective of encouraging and facilitating intra-EU mobility;
- shall support the ongoing development by the Commission of the **Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information System (EESSI)**;
- recalled the establishment of the Alliance for Apprenticeships as well as the invitation to the Commission to finalise the **quality framework for traineeships**, and to propose the new **EURES** regulation;
- welcomed measures to improve the coordination of labour mobility in the EU, and to facilitate the exchange of information on job opportunities in the EU, including where applicable on traineeships and apprenticeships. The Council also awaits the Commission's proposal to set quality standards for traineeships.

(2) Removing administrative hurdles: in this area, the Council:

- welcomed the **idea of providing local administrations with tools** to fully comprehend and facilitate the free movement rights of EU citizens;
- welcomed the Commission's intention to study measures to **remove obstacles in relation to identity and residence documents** issued by Member States and strengthen their security;
- insisted on the need to ensure that **valid identity cards issued by the Member States to their nationals are recognised** throughout the EU;
- reaffirmed the importance of clarity and certainty with a view to identifying and **eliminating double taxation**.

(3) Eliminating barriers to shopping in the EU: the Council welcomed the adoption of the [Directive](#) on alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes, the [Regulation](#) on online dispute resolution for consumer disputes and the [Directive on consumer rights to solve problems faced by consumers](#) when shopping online. It is looking forward to considering the revision of the European Small Claims Procedure.

The Council also highlighted the need to strengthen administrative cooperation measures among market surveillance authorities in order to limit the procedural obstacles remaining in the internal market.

(4) Strengthening procedural rights: the conclusions emphasised the following issues:

- the importance of the **presumption of innocence and of the right to legal aid** in criminal proceedings, the importance of ensuring these procedural rights to all individuals residing in the EU, regardless of their citizenship status;
- the continuation of the Stockholm Programme and the roadmap aimed at **strengthening procedural rights of individuals**, when they are suspected or accused in criminal proceedings, taking into account the specific situation of children and other vulnerable groups.

(5) Strengthening and developing the European public space: underlining the importance of the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union as foreseen in Treaties, the Council:

- strongly emphasised the need to **raise EU citizens' awareness about their electoral rights under EU law**, the impact of EU policies on their daily lives, the role of the European Parliament and hence the importance of their participation in the European elections;
- underlined the importance of **safeguarding the right to political participation of the most vulnerable groups**, including people with disabilities;
- recalled the importance of **better informing voters about the issues at stake in next year's European Parliament elections**, to encourage a Europe-wide debate and to bring the EU closer to Union citizens;
- invited the Commission to explore ways within its competences to maintain and further promote the **voting rights of EU citizens**;

Lastly, the Council called on the Member States to contribute to this joint endeavour and take forward the process of raising awareness of and implementing the rights that come with EU citizenship.