



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Citizens' rights: European Commission kicks off the broadest public consultation ever and asks citizens to set future agenda



Brussels, 8 May 2012 – 9 May is Europe Day. This should be more than just a day of celebration for citizens. As of tomorrow, the European Commission will be calling on citizens all over the European Union to help set the policy agenda for the next years and shape the future of Europe in the biggest ever EU public consultation on citizens' rights. The consultation will be open for four months, until 9 September, during which time the public will be asked about the obstacles they face in exercising their rights as EU citizens, be it when travelling in Europe, when voting or standing as a candidate in elections or when shopping online. The public consultation comes ahead of the 2013 European Year of Citizens ([IP/11/959](#)). The input received from the public will feed directly into the Commission's policy agenda and form the basis for the 2013 EU Citizenship Report, to be presented in exactly one year's time: on 9 May 2013.

"Twenty years after we first created EU citizenship at the small border town of Maastricht, we must revitalise the European project – and we must do it with the direct help of our citizens," said Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's first Commissioner for Citizenship. "The European Union is there because of and to serve its citizens. People expect concrete results from Europe, and with cheaper roaming charges, better rights for crime victims and easier shopping online for consumers, that is exactly what we are delivering. Citizens' direct input will help us to continue doing our job – and to do it even better in the future. I call on everyone to take a few minutes and share your view with us: this is about your rights and your future."

The European Commission adopted the first EU Citizenship Report in 2010 with a list of 25 concrete 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](#))
- Slashing 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](#))

Progress made so far can be further tracked here:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/reding/factsheets/index_en.htm.

Nevertheless, many people still continue to face obstacles when exercising their rights as European citizens. The Commission therefore wants to hear about these problems that citizens might face when moving around in the EU, whether for work, study or holiday, when exercising electoral rights or their rights as consumers. The Commission also wants to hear what kind of European Union citizens would like to see by 2020.

Over the next four months (from 9 May until 9 September 2012), a short questionnaire can easily be completed online:

<http://ec.europa.eu/your-rights-your-future>.

Background

Thanks to EU citizenship – which does not replace national citizenship but complements it – all nationals of the 27 EU Member States have a set of additional rights as EU citizens. These include the right to vote and stand in local and European elections in the EU country they live in, the right to consular protection abroad under the same conditions as nationals and the right to petition the European Parliament, complain to the European Ombudsman, or, as of 2012, take part in a European Citizens' Initiative.

Freedom of movement is the most cherished right of EU citizenship (see [press release No. 14/2011](#)). Indeed, Europeans make over a billion journeys within the EU per year and more and more Europeans are benefiting from the right to live in another EU Member State: in 2009, an estimated 11.9 million citizens were living in a Member State other than their own; in 2010 this figure grew to 12.3 million ([STAT/11/105](#)). These numbers are far greater when considering those EU citizens who freely move cross border within the Union for short periods of time. What's more, around 40 million buy online from other European countries.

The [EU Citizenship Report 2010](#) (see [IP/10/1390](#) and [MEMO/10/525](#)) outlined 25 concrete actions to remove the remaining obstacles to EU citizens exercising their right to free movement in the EU. One of these is to strengthen people's awareness of their EU citizenship status, their rights and what these rights mean in their daily lives. The Commission therefore proposed to designate 2013 as the European Year of Citizens and to organise targeted events on EU citizenship and citizen-related policies throughout the Year.

During the European Year of Citizens in 2013, the Commission will publish a second EU citizenship report, which will serve as an action plan for the removal of the remaining obstacles that hinder citizens from fully enjoying their rights as EU citizens.

For more information

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

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

Public consultation:

<http://ec.europa.eu/your-rights-your-future>

EU Citizenship:

<http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen>

Justice Directorate General Newsroom:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/news/intro/news_intro_en.htm

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