



European
Commission

THE EU CITIZENS' AGENDA

Europeans have
their say

IT'S ABOUT EUROPE
IT'S ABOUT **YOU**

Join the debate

Justice

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European Commission – Directorate-General for Justice

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Listening to Citizens

After 20 years of EU citizenship, much has been achieved. It is time to reflect on where we stand and what the future should bring. Citizens expect concrete results from Europe, and they want to have a strong say in the debate about the future of Europe.

This is why we are dedicating a full year to those at the heart of the European project – the citizens. The European Year of Citizens 2013 is an opportunity for us to listen and learn how we can build the European Union of the future together.

The European Commission has started already: In 2012 we invited citizens all over Europe to tell us about their experiences with their EU rights – and about their expectations for the future. Nearly 12 000 people and organisations replied, making this the largest public consultation of the Commission ever.

But we do not stop there: we have also started a series of town hall meetings with citizens of all walks of life in all parts of the European Union – not only in the capitals, but also in many medium-sized towns. At each event hundreds of citizens tell us in the Commission, but also parliamentarians, members of national and regional governments, what they expect.

I am glad to present the key findings of the consultation and first trends of the dialogue meetings. The Commission will look at the reports when it prepares the Citizenship Report 2013 and the future architecture of Europe. Join the debate!

VIVIANE REDING

*Vice-President of the European Commission
Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship*



EU CITIZENS' AGENDA

People across the European Union want to have their say on EU citizenship and the future of the EU as a whole. Two closely linked new initiatives have enabled them to do just that. This brochure sums up:

- what people told the European Commission in its online **public consultation on EU citizenship**, held from 9 May to 27 September 2012 and
- the **citizens' dialogues** launched by the Commission in 2012 to engage with citizens locally, where they live, in a discussion about their concerns and suggestions for a better Europe.

If you are a national of an EU country, you are an EU citizen. Built into the EU Treaties 20 years ago, EU citizenship gives you **specific rights** under EU law, including:

- the right to **move and reside freely** within the EU
- the right **not to be discriminated against** on the grounds of your nationality
- the right to **vote and stand as a candidate** in municipal and European Parliament elections wherever you live in the EU
- the right to be **assisted by another EU country's embassy or consulate outside the EU**, if your own country is not represented, under the same conditions as a citizen of that EU country
- the right to **petition** the European Parliament, apply to the European Ombudsman and contact the EU institutions and
- the right to organise or support, together with other EU citizens, a **citizens' initiative to call for new EU legislation**.

These rights are yours to use in everyday life. The European Commission is working to make citizens' lives easier.

2013 is the **European Year of Citizens**. This is an important opportunity to put the citizens at the heart of the EU's agenda. Taking due account of citizens' feedback received and summarised in this brochure, an **EU Citizenship Report** will present in May 2013 new initiatives to promote EU citizenship and overcome the remaining hurdles that citizens face when exercising their rights across the EU.

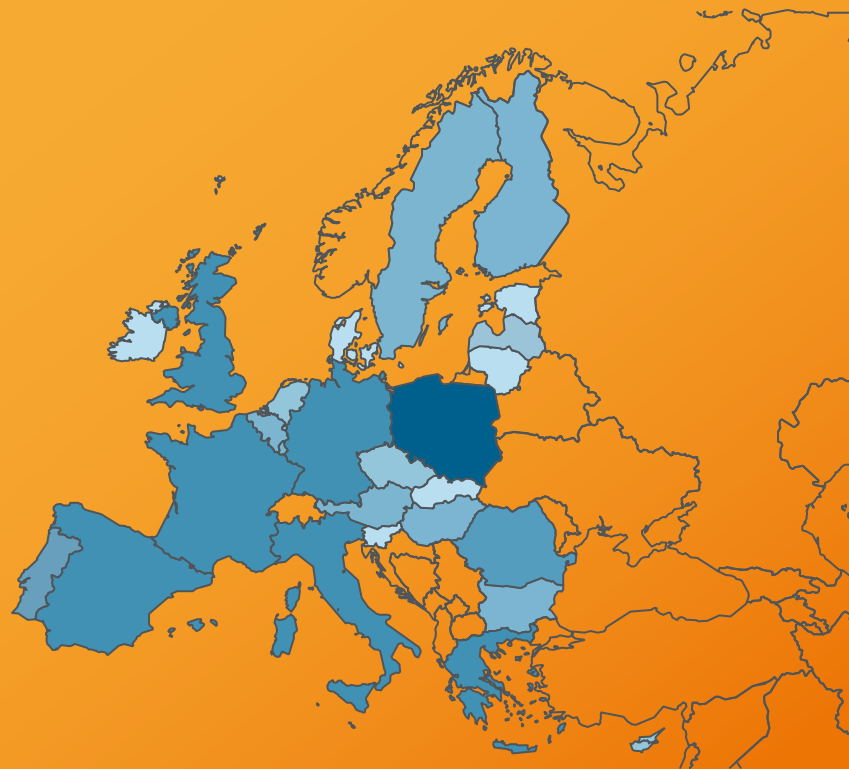
In the **online public consultation**, citizens said they are very attached to their EU rights – especially free movement and political rights. They would like to see a true European area in which they could live, work, move, study and shop without facing red tape or discrimination. But they also pointed out that there is still a long way to go. Problems do crop up, notably in getting EU rights respected at local level. They also came up with suggestions for tackling those issues, and this brochure lists some of the main points they made. More details on all these topics are given in the full report of the consultation at:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/report_eucitizenship_consultation.pdf

Highlights of the **citizens' dialogues** are presented in the second part of this brochure. These dialogues will continue throughout the European Year of Citizens, leading up to the **European elections** in 2014. They are an opportunity to listen and learn how we can build the European Union of the future together.

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON EU CITIZENSHIP

**Distribution of respondents
by nationality**



Scale 0%  18%

Who took part?

Europeans want to have their say on EU citizenship. No less than **11 598 people answered the online questionnaire.** Some 98% of them responded as individuals. The other 2% replied on behalf of organisations or associations. The Commission also received 115 contributions via a dedicated e-mail account. One-third of these were from organisations active in the field of EU citizenship.


The great majority of the individual participants were EU citizens residing in the EU (94%). There was a broad mix of EU **nationalities.** Polish nationals were the biggest group (18%), followed by the French, Italians and Germans (8% each). Looking at the participants' **countries of residence,** the pattern is very similar. The most common country of residence was Poland (15%), followed by France and Germany (8% each).

Young people responded enthusiastically to the poll. Some 34% of those who replied were aged 18-30, followed closely by the 31-45 age group at 33%. Of all the respondents, 61% were **men,** 35% were **women** and 4% did not specify their gender.



In all, **301 organisations sent in replies.** Some of them represent particular groups, such as workers, students, youth or people with disabilities. And some pooled the concerns and ideas of their local or national member associations.

The consultation also drew interest from **EU citizens living outside the EU** (149 replies) and **non-EU citizens** (154) living either in the EU (93, most often in the UK, Belgium or Spain) or outside the EU (61).

Have you ever used your right to move freely within the EU?

	Yes	No	
Total	87%	13%	
Age 			
	Less than 18 years old	78%	22%
	18-30 years old	91%	9%
	31-45 years old	90%	10%
	46-65 years old	83%	17%
Over 65 years	80%	20%	

Have you ever resided in an EU country other than the one of which you are a national?

	Yes	No	No answer	
Total	48%	49%	3%	
Gender 				
	Men	44%	54%	2%
	Women	55%	43%	2%
Age 				
	Less than 18 years old	15%	82%	3%
	18-30 years old	54%	44%	2%
	31-45 years old	51%	48%	1%
	46-65 years old	38%	59%	3%
Over 65 years	48%	50%	2%	

Moving freely in the EU

Nearly nine in 10 of those replying have made use of their right to move freely within the EU (87%). Half of those who make these journeys do so more than once a year; 3% move from one EU country to another on a weekly basis, and 1% every day.

The main reasons for moving around the EU are **tourism (87%)** and/or **work (45%)**, commuting included). But **consumers (39%)**, **students (33%)**, **patients (4%)** and **retirees (3%)** are also users of this right. Family visits, relationships and military service are among the other reasons given for EU travel. **Younger people are the most likely to use their free movement rights** – mostly for volunteering, jobs, studies and internships. Studying abroad was more common among women (61%) than men (44%). Older people travel mainly for family or property-related reasons. All EU nationalities use their free movement rights – but some more than others. Belgian, Danish and French participants were the biggest cross-EU travellers. In contrast, 32% of the Austrian and Czech participants had never used their EU right to free movement.

‘Economic motives drove me to move, but there was also a genuine desire to experience other countries and the European ideals.’

– UK citizen

‘New people with possibly different opportunities and ideas about how to make better conditions for living.’

– Slovakian citizen

Almost half of the participants live or have lived in an EU country other than their own (48%). In the case of women, more than half (55%). Most of the people who had resided in another EU country had done so for less than a year (39%), and a third for more than a year (33%). Smaller proportions had lived outside their country for over five years (17%) or over 10 years (14%). The younger participants were more likely to have lived in another EU country. **One in three of all participants had lived more than once outside the country of which they are a national (32%).** Answers across the EU are consistent when it comes to the number of times participants have lived outside their country. But more French people (39%), Latvians (34%) and Slovaks (32%) say that they have lived in another EU country on more than one occasion.

While free movement is a great boon to EU citizens, hurdles are still reported: **almost one in 5 of all participants reported some problems with moving to, or living in, another EU country.** Those who are resident in another country are particularly prone to these difficulties (27%). The main problems reported were:

- lengthy or unclear administrative procedures (62%)
- staff in local administrations were unaware of EU rights (47%) and
- citizens themselves did not know enough about their EU rights (19%).

'In some municipalities, the process is very long to get the final document. The whole process is too long, and it should be shortened, especially for EU citizens.'

– Italian citizen

Specifically, there were complaints of complicated bureaucratic procedures, including costly translation requirements. Civil status procedures when living in another EU country (marriage, divorce, registration of residence, births or names) caused particular difficulties. In fact, people were sometimes asked for documents that are not

issued in their country of origin. The recognition of diplomas can also be an issue. And there are often problems linked to double taxation, differentiation between home and non-national EU students when placing people in accommodation, and unequal access to funding and scholarships for locals and other EU students.

Of those moving between EU countries, only a small minority (12%) reported any **discrimination** due to their nationality. This tallies with the participants' **opinions about other EU nationals coming to their own country**. Most took a positive view of this. They associated free movement with **cultural diversity** (70%), a **different perspective** (56%), the creation of an **EU identity** (55%), **mutual understanding** (54%) and **economic growth** (44%). Some also suggested that the mobility of EU citizens helps to **resolve inequalities** in the labour force between EU countries, and brings **new skills** and **new investment** opportunities, while only 27% associated freedom of movement with **demographic growth**. Less than one in five (18%) thought that the arrival of people from other EU countries causes problems. The main concerns expressed were about **sharing limited resources, such as education and healthcare**.

'Mobility of EU citizens can bring to the labour market experience, knowledge and abilities that can help businesses to achieve more.'

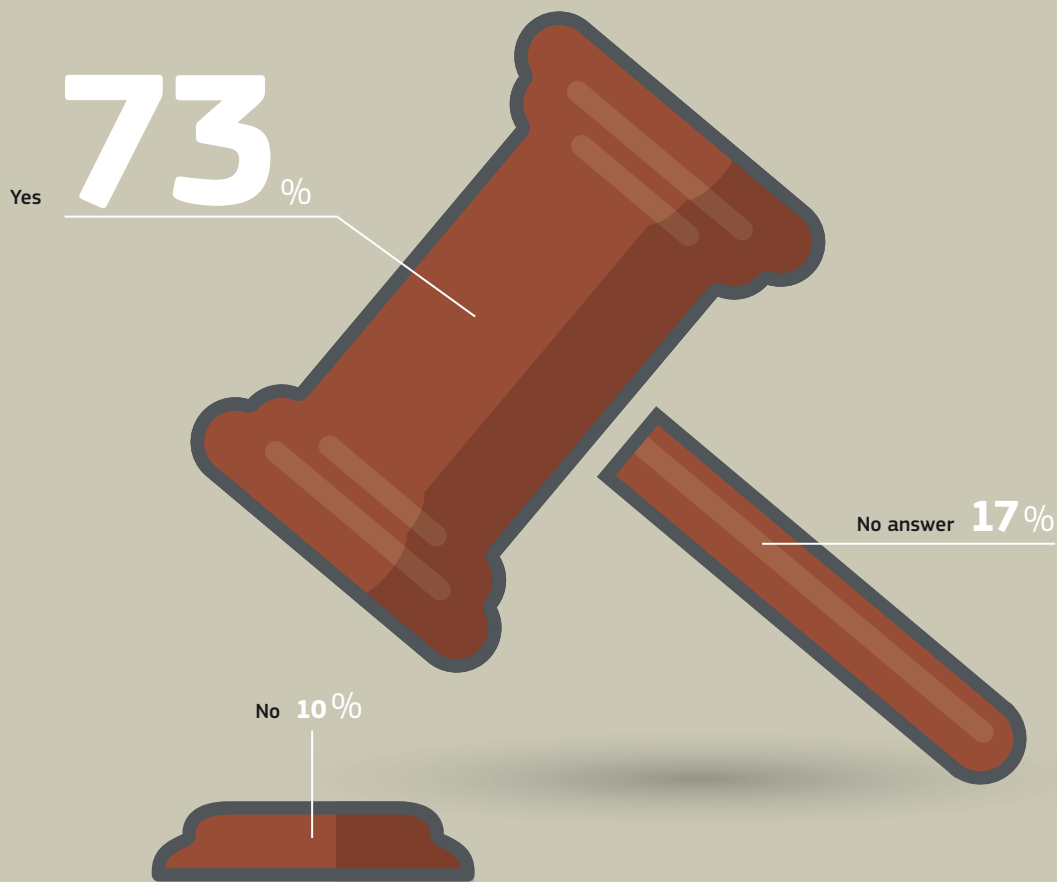
– Cypriot citizen

CITIZENS' IDEAS

Suggestions from the participants included:

- encouraging unified formats for issuing European documents in any of the official languages between the EU countries
- a common EU identity card
- better assistance for citizens in their place of arrival
- staff training in local administrations
- an online tool to exchange best practices with fellow citizens and
- better information about who to contact when a problem arises.

Should children and vulnerable adults who are accused of a crime be given protection (safeguards to ensure a fair trial) that must apply in every Member State?



Citizens as individuals

Problems over child custody in another EU country were reported by 2% of the participants; 57% had not experienced such issues, but a significant minority (41%) gave no answer. The problems often centred on which national rules to apply when the parents have different nationalities. Another issue is that some EU countries do not recognise certain statuses that are acknowledged by others, such as the legal status of same-sex partners.

'I'm divorced and I have three marvellous kids, but there is no common rule for shared custody. It is terrible.'

– Italian citizen

'In the case of international couples it is very difficult to come to an agreement due to distance, linguistic difficulties, who enforces the agreement, etc.'

– French citizen

Some 73% supported the idea of **giving children and vulnerable adults protection (safeguards to ensure a fair trial)** that must apply in every EU country. Among those who did not agree with this, the main argument was that all individuals should be treated equally. So rights and protection should be available to all and not just to a certain group. Some also felt this issue should be left for each country to decide.

'Not only children and vulnerable adults, every EU citizen!'

– Dutch citizen

'Most EU countries might already have such safeguards, but if not, the best practices should be harmonised.'

– Bulgarian citizen

Some 71% thought that people who have been **victims of crime** somewhere in the EU should have access to **financial compensation** for the harm suffered from, no matter where they live. But there were differing views about who should pay – the State, the offender or private insurance.

'People should make their own insurance provisions for the "normal" type of offences whether at home or in another EU country.'

– British citizen

'Yes, all victims should be compensated for damage suffered regardless of where and who carried out the crime.'

– Portuguese citizen

'We are still a long way from an EU where all Member States offer sufficient protections for suspects and defendants. We see hundreds of cases each year where EU citizens are denied access to an interpreter or to legal advice or have not been given information about their rights. These rights are particularly important when the country is not your own. [...] We hope that the Commission will continue to work with the Parliament and Council to agree strong directives for the remaining measures to strengthen the rights of the thousands of people who are arrested in the EU each year.'

– Organisation

'I think that all EU citizens must be treated equally in every EU member country.'

– Greek citizen

CITIZENS' IDEAS

While most people agreed that there should be equal treatment of crime victims across the EU, and they should receive some form of compensation, there was no real consensus on how to go about this:

- some thought the State should be responsible for paying compensation
- others said the compensation should come from the offender or, for minor offences, from personal insurance.

Have you ever had problems opening a bank account in another EU country?

Yes **13%**

No answer **25%**

No **62%**



Citizens as consumers

Almost one in four participants (24%) had run into problems when buying online from another EU country. For instance, some firms are unwilling to ship to certain EU countries or to accept foreign bank or credit cards. Or else the shipping charges are simply too expensive. There are also difficulties in making use of warranties, due to the costs involved. And some online sales sites require a phone number or postal address in a particular national format. This makes it impossible for people in other countries to fill in the necessary details.

'Many websites do not offer the option of shipping the goods to my country of residence.'

– Portuguese citizen

'Booking a hotel, with a secure payment system for action (discount) was only available for national banks in the destination country.'

– Belgian citizen

Different national taxation systems can cause problems for people shopping in other EU countries, especially in a business context.

One in 10 had experienced problems when opening a bank account in another EU country (13%), as banks required documentation and sureties that were difficult and sometimes even impossible for newly arriving people to provide. Among those who had resided in another EU country, this issue was particularly frequent (22%).

Certain banks require potential customers to have resided in the country for a specified period of time and/or to have a credit history. This is a problem for people who need a bank account to buy or manage property abroad but are not interested in registering as permanent residents of the country concerned.

'Banks do not recognise the history of income from other countries, do not accept property in other countries as surety, [and] do not give loans to purchase real estate in other countries.'

– Polish citizen

'When you have a job it is okay, when you don't it's a bit more problematic. It shouldn't be, any citizen should have the right to a bank account.'

– Greek citizen

Most of the participants (60%) had not encountered problems when trying to **buy property**, although a significant proportion (37%) gave no answer to this question. A small minority of (3%) confirmed that they had faced obstacles. Some said they had been discriminated against, on grounds of nationality, when trying to buy property abroad – notably in the Mediterranean and Eastern European Member States.

'It is a problem not being familiar with the local country's procedures and finding information on it. [...] Notaries in some countries, not in others, types of fees, taxes, mysterious forms to sign, etc.'

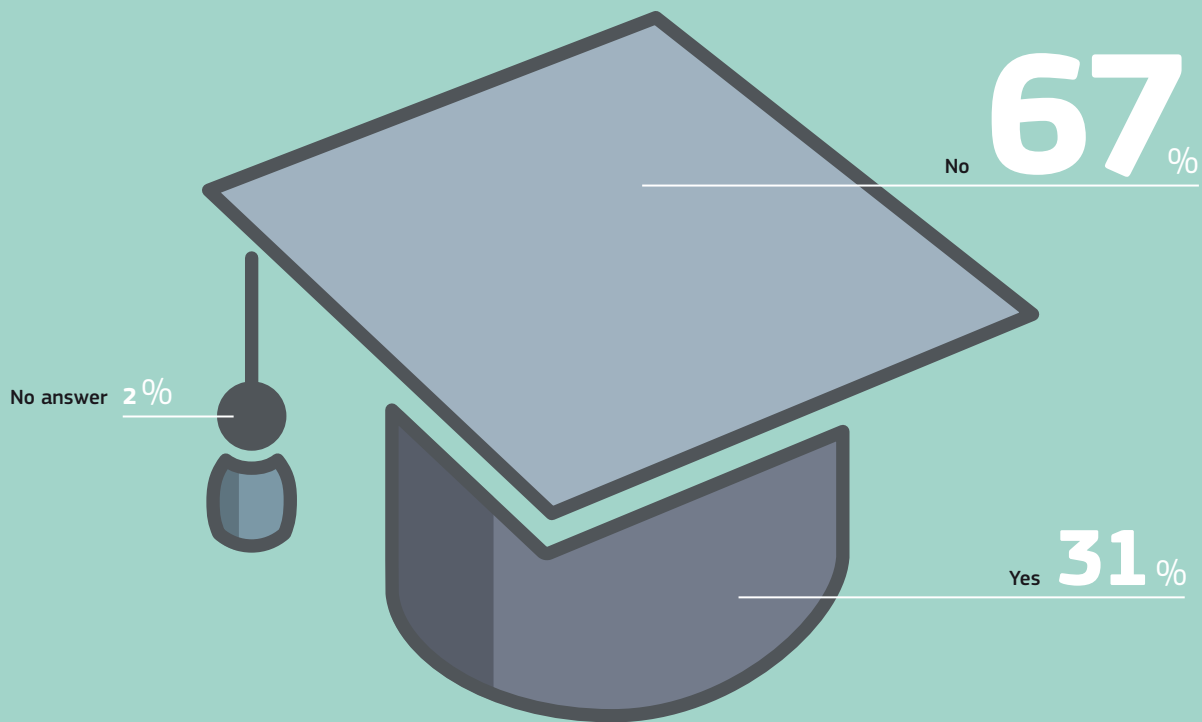
– Swedish citizen

Another hurdle is the difficulty of obtaining a mortgage in the EU country where the property is located, when not working and residing there. Banks often refuse to recognise income and other benefits paid in another EU country. Citizens may also find it difficult to obtain a mortgage in their own country on a property abroad, and they often face lengthy procedures, unclear requirements and communication problems due to different languages.

CITIZENS' IDEAS

- better information and protection for online-consumers
- improved delivery services throughout the EU when buying online from another EU country
- making it easier to obtain redress, such as by raising threshold for the European Small Claims Procedure
- the possibility to use any EU bank or credit card for online shopping in the EU.

Have you studied or are you currently studying in another EU country?



Citizens as students and professionals

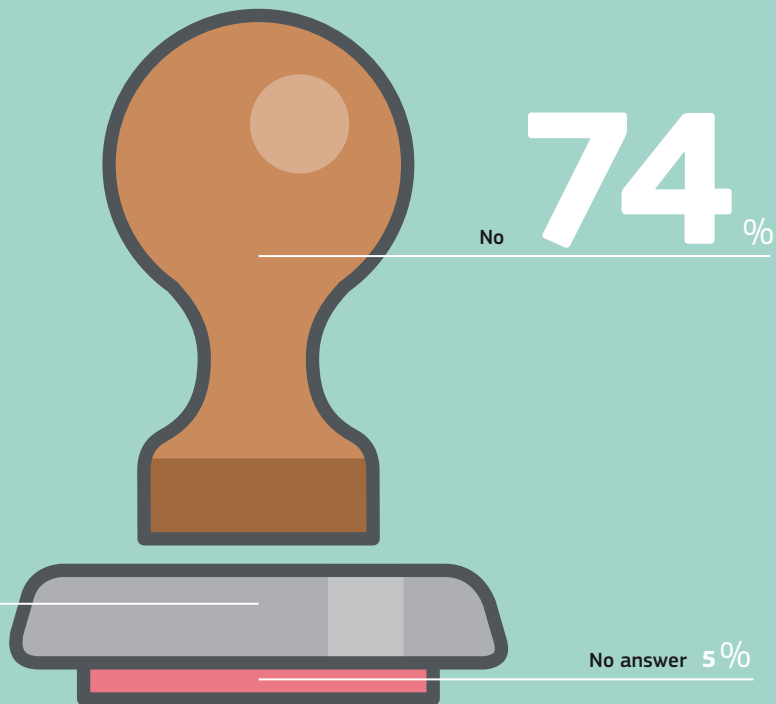
Almost one in three of the participants was studying, or had studied, in another EU country (31%). This proportion was considerably higher for women (40%) than for men (25%). About half of the young people aged 18-30 mentioned experience of study abroad.

'Difficulties in establishing proper communication between the two universities (Rome and Stockholm) resulting in minimal financial support and difficulties in aligning my study plan.'

– Italian citizen

To a question about the impact of students from other EU countries coming to their country, the most frequently selected answer was cultural enrichment (74%), followed at some distance by multilingualism (65%) and more opportunities to learn (39%). Only 5% of participants said that students from other EU countries are a source of obstacles to their education (mainly because they have to share existing resources with a larger number of students).

Have you had difficulties in having your period of study recognised?



Some argued that there are many benefits in being exposed to **different points of view**. Exchanges were often seen as an important and inspirational part of education, offering a **positive experience** and **new skills** (languages, openness, multiculturalism) to both guest and host students.

‘When we only have one perspective on history, geography, or world events, we lack the more complete knowledge that someone from abroad can provide.’

– Irish citizen

‘They let us experience a part of their culture outside their own country, while they in turn experience a new culture.’

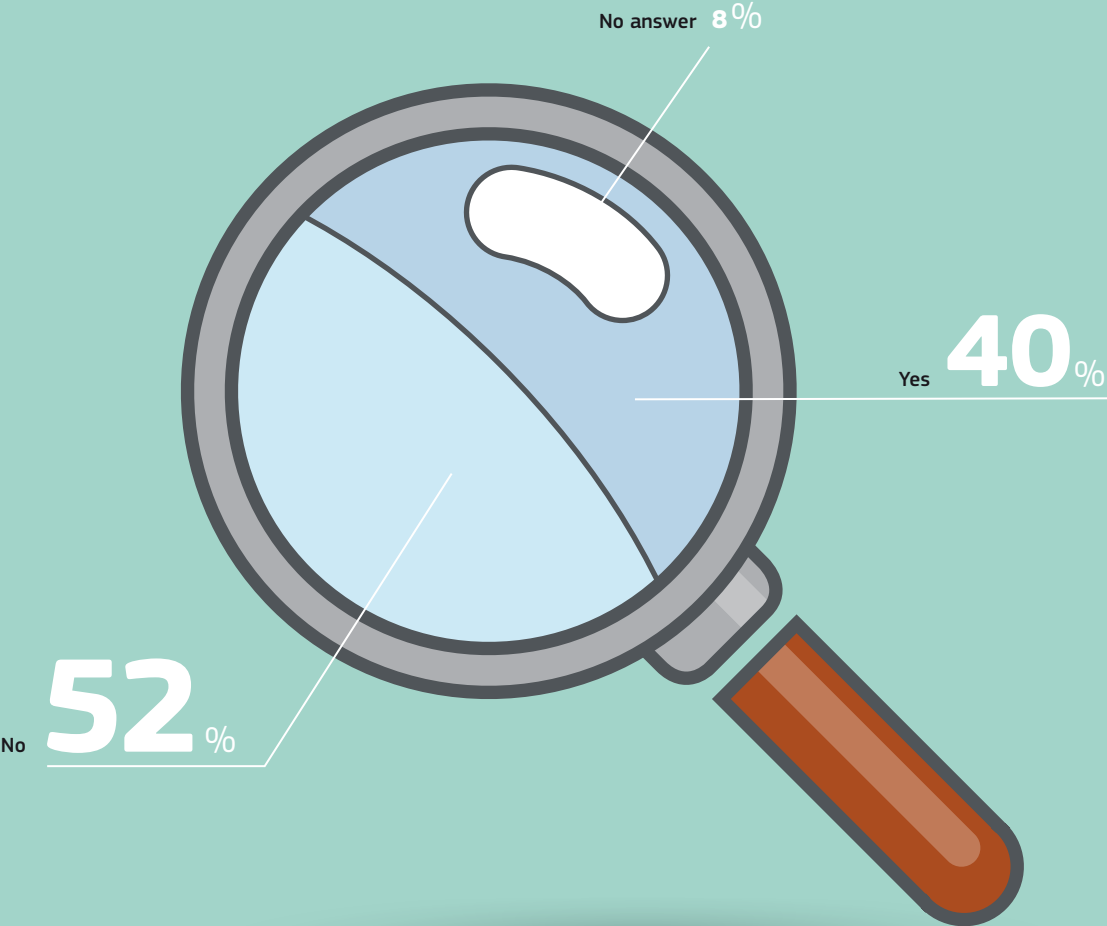
– Swedish citizen

Around one in five current or former students reported difficulties in having their period of study recognised in another EU country (21%). The main problems were red tape (such as a requirement to provide translations of official documents) and short deadlines for submitting relevant information.

‘Deadlines for communicating my credits to my home university did not fit with the amount of time it took to process my grades in the host country.’

– German citizen

Have you ever looked for a job in another EU country?



A significant proportion of the participants had looked for a job in another EU country (40%). Almost one in four (24%) said they had experienced difficulties when trying to find work in the public sector in another EU country. This was sometimes because they did not have the nationality of the country in question, or had not been living there long enough. Some pointed to the lack of information and the opaque recruitment procedures.

'Jobs in the French administration are through competitive exams which have a heavy cultural bias which favours nationals and does not necessarily reflect the capacity to do the job.'

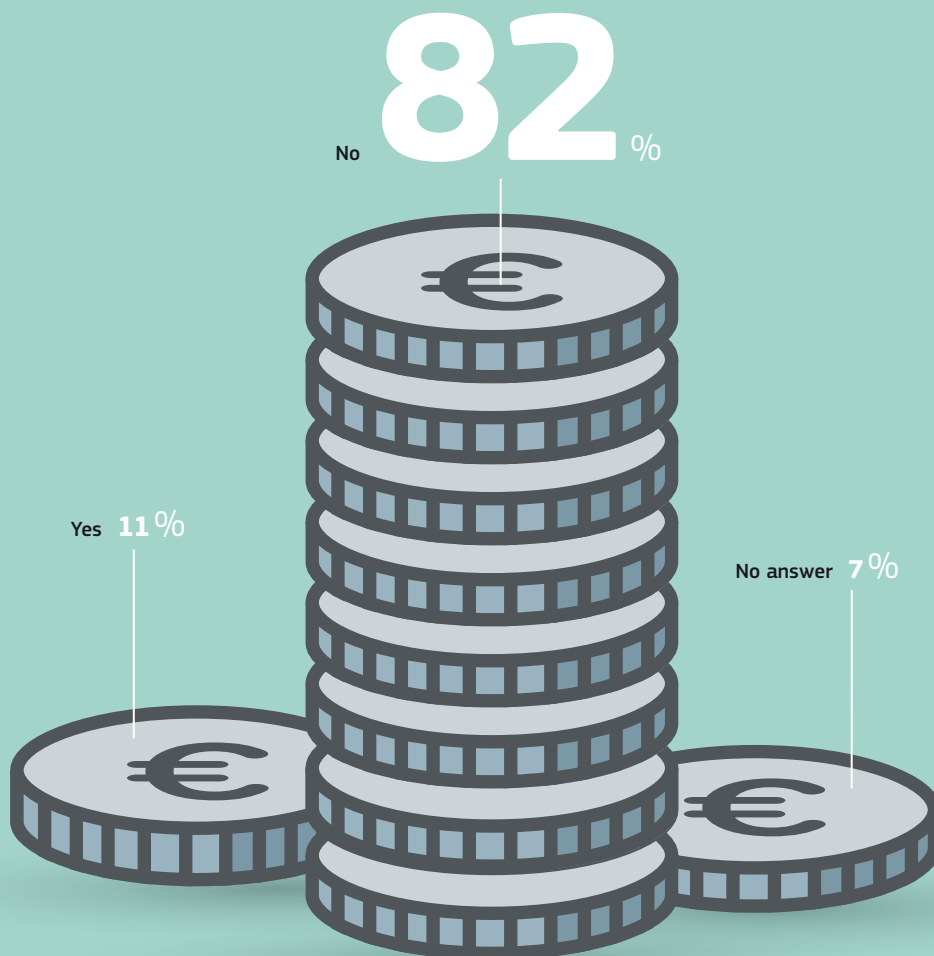
– UK citizen

'Investment required to attend interviews, coordinate the job search with finding accommodation and schools, children adapting to a new language, etc.'

– Spanish citizen

Those aged 18-45 were more likely to have looked for a job in another EU country (47%) than those aged 46-65 (29%) or those aged over 65 (20%).

Did you receive unemployment benefits from your home country while looking for a job in another EU country?



More than a third thought that administrative difficulties might prevent them from looking for a job in another EU country (36%). Other factors mentioned were:

- **uncertainty about how taxes would be calculated** in the other EU country and in their home country and what effect this would have on their economic situation
- the language barrier
- concerns about **differences in pay** and the risks of getting a lower-paid job back home if they work abroad for a while
- access to social security and
- giving up family/friends and their local network.

'Having a handicapped child, I am not sure about healthcare and educational opportunities.'

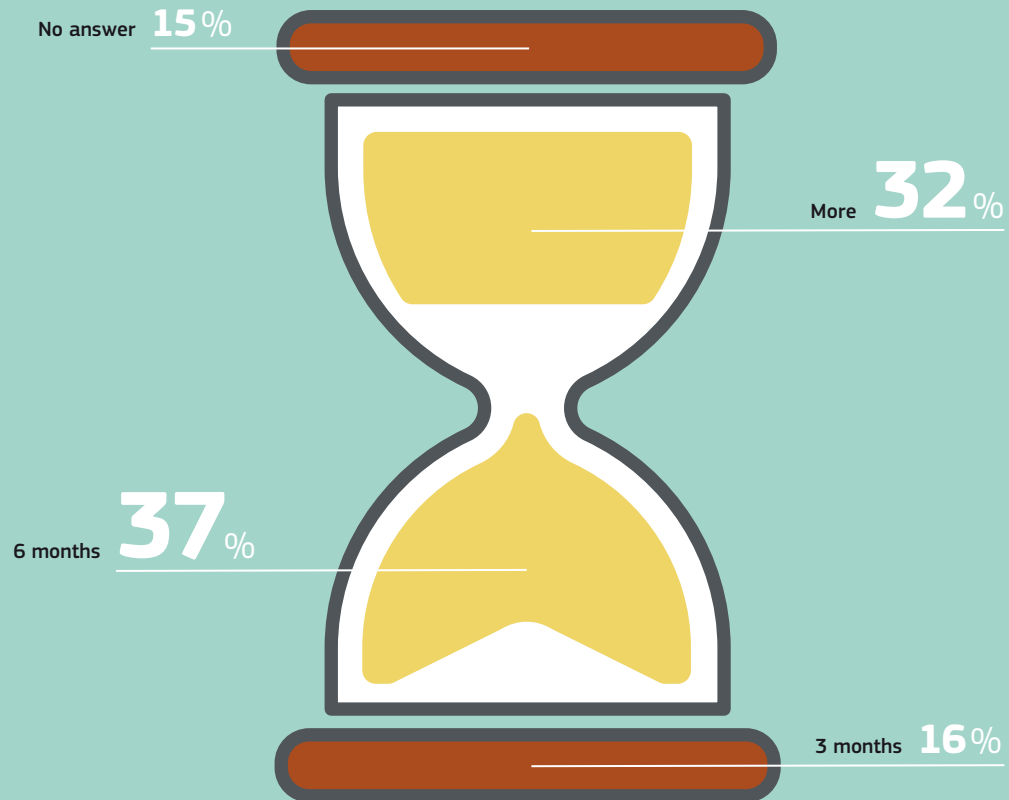
– Dutch citizen

Slightly more than one in 10 of those who had looked for work in another EU country had received **unemployment benefits** from their home country (11%). But most (82%) said they had not.

'I received unemployment benefits in France but it stopped as I was searching for a job in Scotland. I had no support either here or abroad, like a non-citizen. Very hard times.'

– French citizen

In your view, what would be the right period of time for receiving unemployment benefits from your home country?

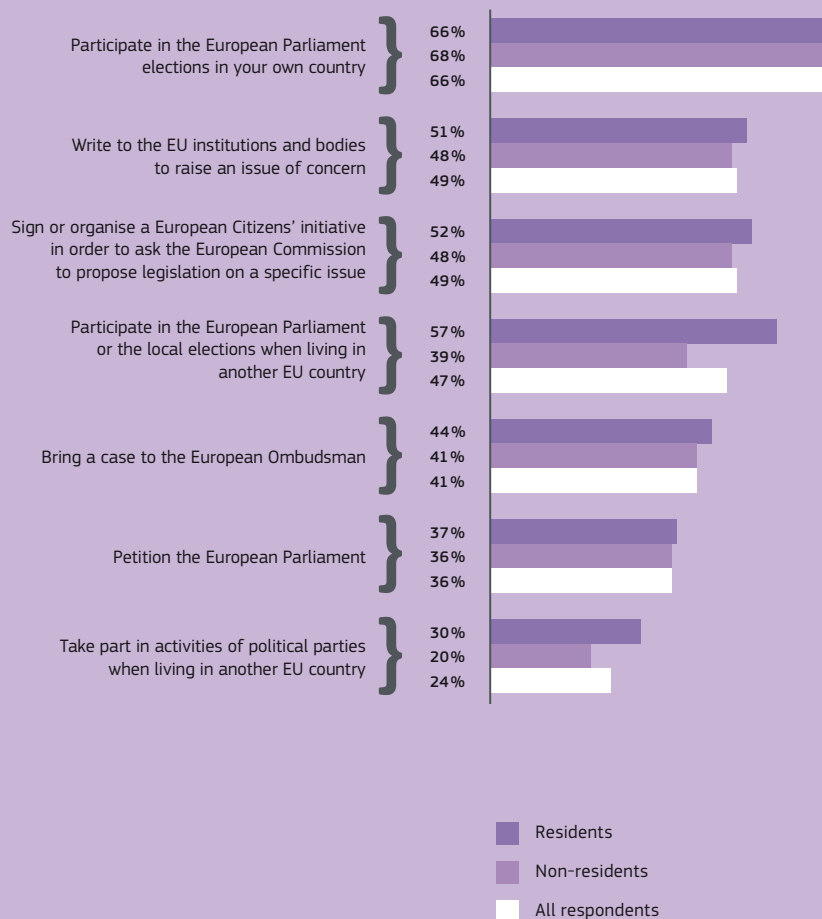


Some felt it was unjust that they had paid taxes in one EU country and had then been **cut off from welfare benefits** solely due to moving to another. Those who had looked for a job in another EU country were also asked how long they thought people should continue receiving unemployment benefits from their home country. Slightly more than one-third said that six months was the right period for this (37%) and a similar proportion felt it should be longer (32%). A small minority opted for three months (16%).

'I was unemployed in my home country. I decided to move to another EU country because I had the economic support of the unemployment benefits. Unfortunately, these benefits were only available for three months if staying outside my home country but I was lucky and found a job in that time.'

– Spanish citizen

As an EU Citizen you have a number of rights through which you can make your voice heard in the EU. Which of the following rights would you be most likely to use? Please choose one or more of the following:



Citizens and democracy

Most people said the main way of expressing their opinions in EU affairs is through participation in the European Parliament elections in their own country (66%).

Over half thought that a political programme to improve the daily life of EU citizens (58%) or to strengthen the EU economy (52%) would motivate them to vote in the European elections. Almost half would feel motivated by a programme for overcoming social disparities in the EU (47%) and a programme to give the EU a stronger voice at international level (46%). One in four mentioned they would feel motivated if an interesting candidate were running either as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) or as President of the European Commission.

Citizens would most often use one of the following ways to make their voice heard in the EU:

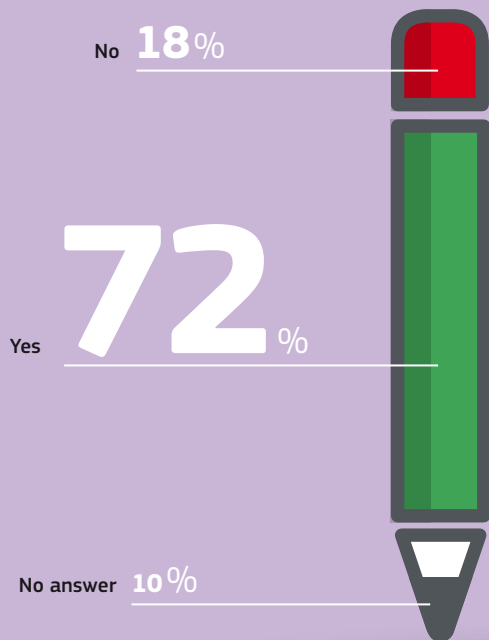
- participate in European Parliament elections in their own country (66%)
- sign or organise a **European Citizens' Initiative** asking the European Commission to propose legislation on a specific issue (49%)
- **write to EU bodies** to raise an issue of concern (49%)
- participate in European Parliament or local elections when living in another EU country (47%).

Some other ways of influencing the EU were also mentioned:

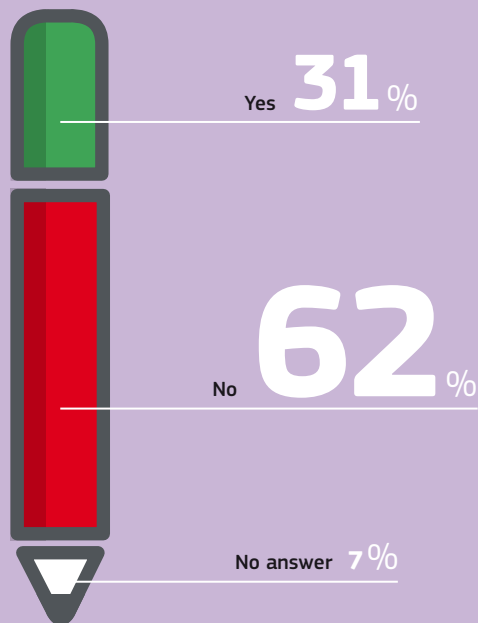
- bringing a case to the **European Ombudsman** (41%)
- petitioning the **European Parliament** (36%)
- taking part in **political party activities** when living in another EU country (24%).

As the graph shows, citizens who were residing in, or had resided in, another EU country (*'residents'*) were more likely to say they would use their right to participate in European Parliament or local elections in another EU country (57%) than people who had never lived abroad (*'non-residents'*) (47%).

If you would reside in another EU country, would you consider it justified to acquire the right to vote in national elections in your country of residence?



If you would reside in another EU country, would you consider it justified to lose your right to vote in national elections in the country of which you are a national?



A majority thought they should be granted the right to vote in national elections in their EU country of residence (72%). They argued for this on the grounds of better integration, non-discrimination among EU citizens and the democratic right to take part in national politics that have an impact on their daily lives. Many participants also felt that there should be no taxation without political representation.

'Taxation and representation are key. If you pay taxes in one country then you must have the right to vote for that country's parliament. If you pay taxes in two countries then two votes.'

– UK citizen

More than six in 10 (62%) thought there is no justification for losing their right to vote in national elections in their home country just because they reside in another EU country. However, a significant minority agreed that this could be justified under certain circumstances (31%). Men and those who have never resided in another EU country were more likely to see justifications for this, while people living outside the EU were less likely to do so. Some pointed out that people who move to another country are still affected by many decisions taken in their countries of origin, such as legislation on taxation, pensions and social security. Also, modern communications make it easier for them to stay in touch with developments 'back home'.

'It is only justified if you gain the right to vote in the new country of residence – and it depends on the period of residence. If it is not longer than one year, I would not consider it justified to lose the right to vote.'

– German citizen

Only a small minority of the respondents had experienced practical disadvantages because of their nationality when exercising their political rights as an EU citizen. A majority had never had such experiences (69%) and slightly less than one in four gave no answer (23%).

The main **barriers to democratic participation** mentioned were the following:

- **losing voting rights** in the country of origin, while not obtaining voting rights in the new country of residence
- **lengthy procedures** for obtaining the documents necessary to vote
- **lack of staff awareness** in local administrations
- **lack of information** in languages other than the local one
- **lack of information** about the right to participate in European Parliament elections while residing in another EU country.

EU citizens living outside the EU also mentioned that it was difficult for them to take part in European Parliament elections because the technical means have not been put in place by their EU home country.

CITIZENS' IDEAS

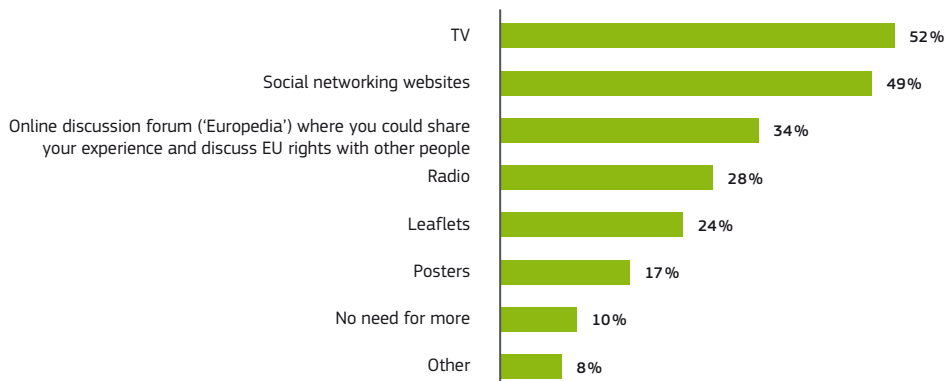
Various suggestions were made for overcoming the barriers to citizens' democratic participation:

- removing existing national rules that take away citizens' right to vote in their country of origin when they reside abroad
- providing more and better information about electoral rights
- developing e-voting.

Information and help on EU rights

To get the information they need on EU rights, about half of the participants would turn to TV (52%) and social networking websites (49%). There were some national differences here. People in 13 EU countries were most likely to answer 'TV', ranging from 42% in Luxembourg to 64% in Malta. But social networking websites were the first option in 13 other Member States, ranging from 34% in the United Kingdom to 68% in Greece. Some 34% favoured the idea of introducing an online discussion forum ('Europedia') for sharing experience and discussing EU rights with other people. A significant minority mentioned radio (28%) and leaflets (24%). Less than one-fifth would prefer the use of posters (17%). One in 10 said that they did not need more information (10%).

The European Commission runs a website which contains information about your rights and on national rules and procedures which will help you benefit from your rights at national level (Your Europe). How else would you like to get the information you need about your rights as an EU citizen?



More than six in 10 welcomed the idea of an online facility that would tell them whether a problem can best be solved at local, national or European level (63%). Half favoured a strengthened national contact point that can help citizens when they arrive in a new EU country (50%). Asked about the existing EU help and information services SOLVIT, Europe Direct Contact Centres and Your Europe Advice, many were unaware of them. The lack of feedback after submitting questions or complaints to these bodies was also mentioned. Some participants said they felt lost when they were facing a problem related to EU law and did not know if they should take it to their local administration, national government or the EU institutions.

'The press should cover more information about these rights for all the EU citizens, including frequent updates about the work done at the European Union level.'

– Spanish citizen

'An EU newspaper would be great.'

– Austrian citizen

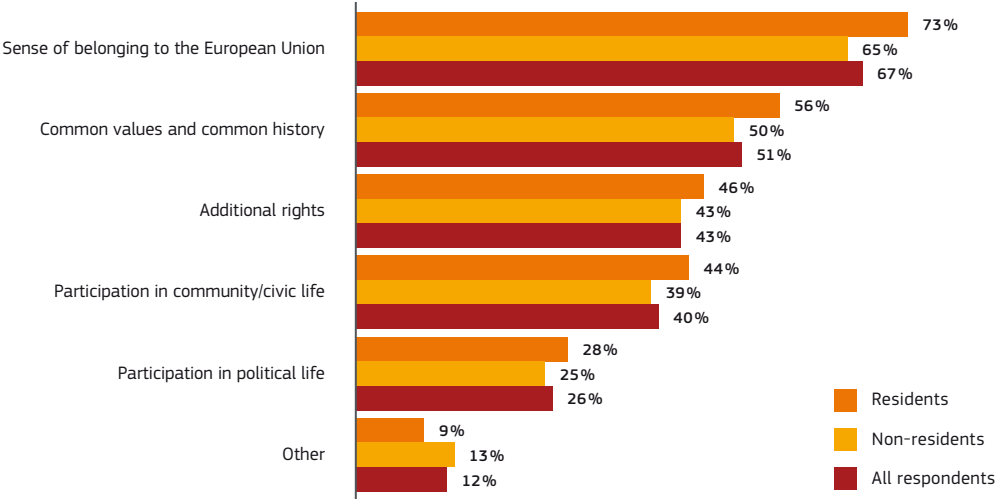
'The introduction of European Citizens' Advice Bureaux in medium- and large-sized European cities would be beneficial and would bring the European administrative and legal system closer to citizens.'

– Romanian citizen

EU citizenship and the EU's future

To nearly seven in 10 participants in the consultation, EU citizenship means first and foremost a sense of belonging to the European Union (67%). But there were national differences. While 79% of the Greek participants took that view, only 39% of the Czechs made this association. Slightly more than half of all the participants associated EU citizenship with common values and common history (51%). Here too, there were considerable national variations, ranging from the Austrians, French and Romanians (all at 64%) to the Swedes (31%). Also frequently mentioned are additional rights (43%), participation in community/civic life (40%) and participation in political life (26%).

What does EU citizenship mean to you? Would you associate it with (one or more of the following):

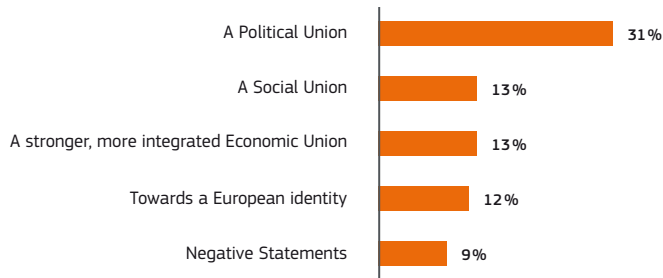


In the last question respondents were asked to comment in their own words on **how they would like the European Union to develop in the near future and in which kind of European Union they would like to live in 2020**.

The main themes highlighted by participants include the advancement of **political and economic integration**, fostering the development of a **Social Union** with common social policies in place, the **fight against discrimination and inequalities**, and building a **prosperous Union**. Many of the organisations stressed the importance of **EU citizenship** and the need to **increase awareness and enforcement of specific rights**.

Of the participants who described in their own words how they would like the EU to develop in the near future and how it should look in 2020, one-third (31%, 3 286 replies) envisage the **EU as a Political Union**. More than one in 10 also wrote about the EU as a **Social Union** (13%, 1 360 replies) and a stronger, more **integrated Economic Union** (13%, 1 333 replies). Various ideas were expressed about the strengthening of an **EU identity**, **EU rights** and more **focus on citizens** (12%, 1 227 replies). Less than one in 10 made remarks that were negative about the European Union (9%, 929 replies), such as wanting EU countries to return to inter-governmental cooperation only.

Main topics mentioned:



'Having the same rights in different countries, and knowing what your rights are in every EU country. It makes life much easier.'

– Spanish citizen

'Additional rights and responsibilities.'

– Lithuanian citizen

'The opportunity to have an influence at the international level, and to lead by example in climate policy. Multiculturalism and the opportunity to learn several languages and exchange opinions.'

– Finnish citizen

'Common values, common rights.'

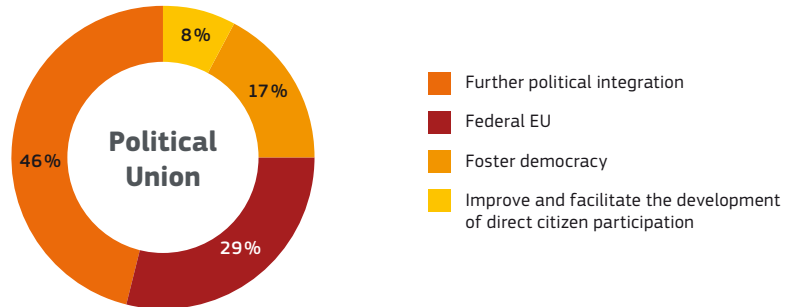
– Belgian citizen

'We actively support, together with other civil society organisations, the new instrument of the European Citizens' Initiative to bring fresh ideas to European politics, to realise the European democratic process...'

– Organisation

Further ideas mentioned by participants under the heading of **Political Union** were **political integration** (46%), a **Federal Union** (29%), **fostering democracy** (17%) and **direct citizen participation** (8%).

Distribution of 'Political Union' subtopics:

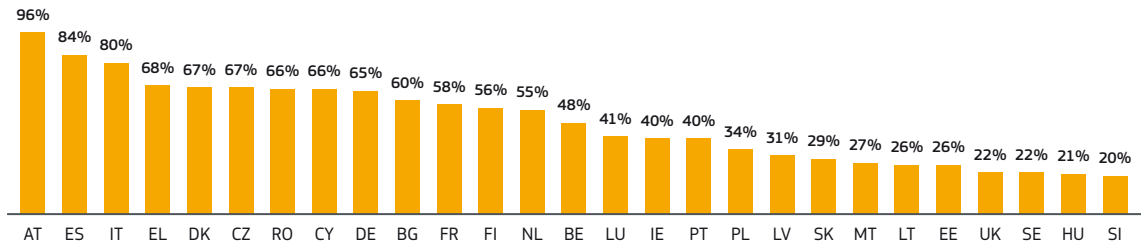


'...Before I die I'd like to see the United States of Europe.'

– Cypriot citizen

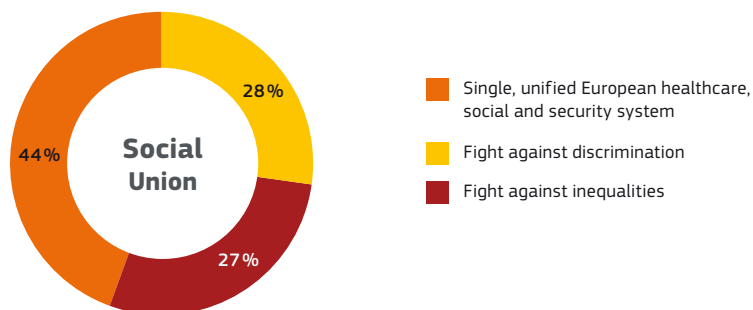
There was quite some variation related to nationality among those who considered that a Political Union was the way forward. The respondents who were most likely to write about further political integration were Austrian (96%), Spanish (84%) and Italian (80%). The least calls for a Political Union came from the UK and Sweden (22%), Hungary (21%) and Slovenia (20%).

A Political Union: views by nationality



Citizens' suggestions on a 'Social Union' included calls for a **unified European health-care, social and security system** (44%), the fight against discrimination and/or the fight against inequalities (28% and 27% respectively).

Distribution of 'Social Union' subtopics:

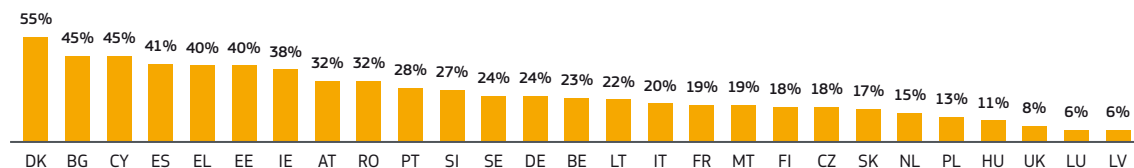


'In 2020 I would like to live in a EU which is more harmonised in terms of administrative procedures and more consistent especially in providing healthcare services and recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications.'

– Bulgarian citizen

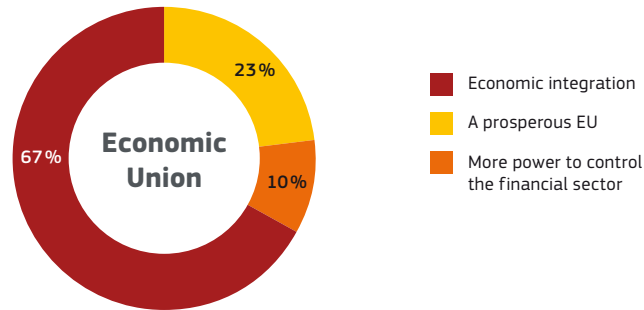
Support for a Social Union was particularly strong in replies from Danes (55%), Bulgarians and Cypriots (each 45%), and particularly weak in replies from nationals of the UK (8%), Luxembourg and Latvia (each 6%).

A Social Union: views by nationality



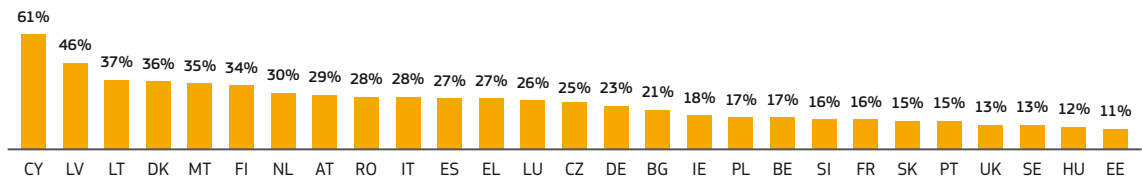
An absolute majority of participants who wrote about a stronger Economic Union asked for **economic integration** (67%), creating a Single Financial and Economic Union with a transfer of sovereignty to the European level. Some focussed on a strong, stable **Financial Union** that would base its practices on **sustainable development** policies, **democratic values** and working towards the **welfare of its citizens** (23%) while one in 10 would like to see more power delegated to the EU to **control the financial sector** (10%).

Distribution of 'Stronger, more integrated Economic Union' subtopics:



Support for a stronger, more integrated Economic Union was particularly strong in replies from citizens of Cyprus (61%), Latvia (46%), Lithuania (37%) and Denmark (36%), and the weakest amongst participants from the UK and Sweden (each 13%), Hungary (12%) and Estonia (less than 11%).

A stronger, more integrated Economic Union: views by nationality



'EU citizenship should become the real fundamental status of nationals of the Member States...'

– Polish citizen

'There's an urgent need to take actions and define a serious and committed policy for economic growth.'

– Portuguese citizen

'Common values with regard to justice. Free trade between countries, but limiting globalisation to protect the environment. Products should not have to travel around the world during manufacture. This is damaging in so many ways.'

– UK citizen

'Citizens should have the power to directly elect the President of the Commission [...].'

– Spanish citizen

'A more democratic EU and the European Commission directly elected. Fiscal integration and political support. Greater mobility of social rights and the promotion of labour mobility. Less "red tape" in all subjects, fewer restrictions. An ongoing battle against organised crime, through the harmonisation of penal policies and the organisational strengthening of existing institutions (Eurojust, Europol, Frontex, CEPOL).'

– Belgian citizen

THE CITIZENS' DIALOGUES

Debating the future of Europe



*European Commission
Vice-President Viviane Reding
is holding 'Citizens' Dialogues'
across Europe.*

*EU citizenship must be 'more than
just a concept,' she says.
'It must become a reality for
our 500 million citizens.'*

*And 'as we construct our new
European house, we need to take
citizens with us.'*

As part of the broad **'Debate on the Future of Europe'** the European Commission is holding **'Citizens' Dialogues'** across the EU as well as on the Internet. Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding, responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, and many other members of the Commission go to small and big cities all across the Union to listen to citizens' concerns.

The dialogues are open forums of 200-500 citizens from all walks of life. At many occasions national or regional governments or parliamentarians participate as well.

While these dialogues are not meant to replace formal consultation and decision-making processes, they do aim to further a genuine **European public space** where citizens can share their ideas about EU citizenship and the future of the EU.

First insights

The first three Citizens' Dialogues in Cádiz (Spain, 27 September 2012), Graz (Austria, 5 November 2012) and Berlin (Germany, 10 November 2012) gave valuable insights into citizens' visions of **European rights, policies and governance** and provided a wealth of ideas.

The **economic crisis** featured heavily in these dialogues. Citizens shared their concerns about its direct impact on enterprises and on individuals – in particular young people. Many of them stressed the responsibility of the **banks** and called for stricter supervision as well as a financial contribution from the sector in order to achieve recovery. At the same time, there was unanimous support for the position that higher investments in **education and research** are essential for sustainable growth. Participants stressed the need for stronger EU action to boost **employment**, in particular by facilitating **workers' and students' mobility within the European Union**.

People also pointed to a broad range of areas where they feel more needs to be done at EU level to reinforce the **rights** they enjoy as EU citizens in their everyday lives. Topics here included **freedom of movement, electoral rights, the European Citizens' Initiative, the situation of vulnerable people, linguistic diversity and gender equality**.

Concrete ideas emerging from these discussions included:

- **European identity cards** to avoid administrative hassles when living in another Member State
- measures to help **people with disabilities** to overcome the various difficulties they face and
- steps to solve the **taxation** problems that arise in cross-border situations.

These Citizens' Dialogues also confirmed the need for **better information on EU rights**. People want more information on what their rights are but also on how to make use of them in practice, and who to turn to when they think their rights are not being respected.



*Debating with citizens in Cádiz:
How can Spain and the EU exit
the economic crisis?*



*László Andor, Commissioner
for Employment, Social Affairs
and Inclusion at a Citizens' Dialogue
in Naples, Italy.*



*Dagmar Roth-Behrendt MEP
together with Commission
Vice-President Reding at the
Citizens' Dialogue in Berlin.*

Another recurring theme was **EU citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU**. Discussions centred on how to combat political apathy and promote the full inclusion of citizens living in another EU country. There were calls for them to have voting rights in national elections.

The Citizens' Dialogues confirmed the need for public spaces where the future of Europe can be discussed. Participants engaged in substantial discussions on the future of the European project. In particular, they called for **more transparency in the EU decision-making process and the promotion of a stronger European identity**. European citizenship must be to the Political Union what the Euro is to the Monetary Union. It was stressed that the **nomination of candidates for the Commission Presidency by the European political parties** in the 2014 elections would already be a step towards a more political Union with more democratic institutions. Participants also discussed long-term goals like a more federal Europe and asked for a directly elected President of the Commission and a European Parliament with stronger legislative powers.

You can check out the citizen's dialogues on the **Debate on the future of Europe** website at <http://ec.europa.eu/european-debate/> They will feed into the Commission's policy work.

'How can we reach out to ordinary citizens who are not using their right of free movement and feel that they are not concerned by EU initiatives?'

– Austrian citizen, Graz

'We do not want an EU at two different speeds. We want to be in the EU at the same level.'

– Spanish citizen, Cádiz

'Should there be more Citizens' Dialogues like this one?'

92.1% Yes, 7.9% No.

– Participants survey, Berlin, Germany

The European Year of Citizens aims to:

- raise citizens' awareness of their EU rights, and notably their right to move and reside freely within the European Union
- raise citizens' awareness of how they can benefit from EU rights and policies
- stimulate their active participation in EU policy making
- stimulate a broad debate about the impact and potential of EU rights, notably the right to free movement, of EU citizenship and of the development of the EU as a whole.

To get involved,
visit the European Year
of Citizens' website at:
europa.eu/citizens-2013



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