



Qualitative Study



European  
Commission

## EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP – CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

### Aggregate Report

August 2010

Qualitative study – TNS Qual+

This survey was requested by Directorate-General for Justice (DG JUST) and coordinated by Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM - "Research and Speechwriting" Unit)

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission. The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

## **Qualitative Eurobarometer**

### **EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP – CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY**

Conducted by TNS Qual+ at the request of the  
European Commission's Directorate-General for  
Justice (DG JUST)

Survey co-ordinated by the European  
Commission's Directorate-General for  
Communication (DG COMM - "Research and  
Speechwriting" Unit)

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**Country Abbreviations employed in this report<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
Austria	AT
Belgium	BE
Bulgaria	BG
Czech Republic	CZ
Denmark	DK
France	FR
Germany	DE
Greece	EL
Ireland	IE
Italy	IT
Lithuania	LT
The Netherlands	NL
Poland	PL
Romania	RO
Spain	ES
Sweden	SE
The United Kingdom	UK

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<sup>1</sup> In the body text of the report the listing of Member States in parentheses indicates that the relevant issue was primarily raised by individuals who had moved to the countries indicated.

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Directorate General for Justice of the European Commission (DG JUST) commissioned this Qualitative Eurobarometer study to investigate the experiences of European citizens exercising their rights to move to and live in another European Union (EU) Member State. The full study consisted of a programme of 100 in-depth interviews and 12 focus group discussions, conducted amongst European citizens who had moved to a new country. Interviews were conducted in seventeen Member States of the EU.

Three types of respondent were interviewed; those who had moved to a country 3-6 months ago ('new movers'); those who had moved to a country between 6 months and 5 years ago ('established'); and those who had returned to their home country from another Member State within the last two years ('returners'). The study included people of both sexes, from a range of age groups and family situations with a variety of reasons for moving. Overall, the study included 63 new movers, 88 established and 21 returners.

The overall aim of the study was to **investigate the experiences of EU citizens in several Member States who have exercised their right to intra-EU mobility** and, specifically, **to understand any obstacles they encountered** and consider possible mechanisms and initiatives which could better support and facilitate cross-border mobility. This study focussed specifically on the **administrative aspects** of people's moves rather than the practical aspects, such as finding work or accommodation. The discussion also investigated respondents understanding of their rights as citizens and some issues regarding voting in European Parliament and local elections.

The study allows us to draw three overall conclusions which provide a context for the more detailed findings:

- The **right to free movement that EU citizens enjoy has been fully internalised** by the people who are taking advantage of this right. This right is mostly 'taken for granted' which affects how respondents see themselves as citizens of the EU; how they plan their moves (often at very short notice, paying attention to administrative aspects of the move only after arrival in the new Member State); and what their expectations are of their rights in other EU Member States.
- More than half of the respondents had **experienced some form of administrative difficulty** after arriving in their new Member State. The main issues that people encountered were the length of administrative procedures and a lack of clarity about what is required from citizens moving to another EU Member State.
- EU citizenship is seen to broadly imply having similar rights and obligations in each Member State and as virtually **synonymous with freedom of movement** between Member States. The rights to mobility (freedom of movement), working and studying in any Member State are clearly implicitly assumed as fundamental rights by EU citizens.

## 1.1 *Moving to another Member State – planning the move*

Participants in the study included citizens of 25 of the 27 EU Member States of whom **nearly a third had previous experience of living in another Member State** prior to the move on which this study focussed. Respondents cited a variety of reasons for their most recent move:

- Just under half the respondents cited **work as their primary reason for moving**.
- About a quarter of respondents moved in order to **study** in the new Member State.
- The remainder had moved either for family reasons or for a ‘new experience’.

There are **three broad stages** that respondents went through when planning their move; the decision to move; waiting for approval; and confirmation that the move will take place. The ways in which these stages manifested varied based on the context of people’s moves; moving with an existing employer or moving for study purposes; moving independently; moving with family (not moving on their own) or for a longer period of time.

**Those moving with an existing employer or for study purposes did the least amount of planning** and most of the administrative arrangements were taken care of by their employer or university. Those whose move involved other people or was expected to be for a longer period of time tended to do the most planning as the move did not just involve their own administrative requirements and was more ‘permanent’.

The amount of time that people had spent planning their moves or, in the cases of those relocating with an existing employer, the amount of notice they had been given, varied widely. However, **most people appeared to have spent between two and six months planning their move**.

The findings show that in many cases respondents did **very little administrative research and planning before the move** and that the majority of this work took place in the new country as and when circumstances required it.

The **types of information** that respondents looked for before moving varied depending on the reasons for the move. However, amongst the administrative issues which people had looked at prior to moving, two items were mentioned most often: **social security and welfare**, and the **recognition of academic diplomas**.

Most respondents had begun their search for information via informal sources; friends, family, colleagues or other acquaintances that had been through similar experiences themselves. When considering **more formal information sources**, **public authorities** stood out as being the most frequently used, with more than half the respondents mentioning them.

Many respondents had made use of **the internet as a route to find information** when investigating a new country. However, when provided with a list of EU internet sites and services, the majority of respondents said that they had not used them, and many had not heard of any of the sites or services. Where people had used EU websites they had not generally gone to them directly but been directed to them via

internet search engines such as Google. **Roughly a quarter of respondents recalled accessing the EUROPA website and slightly fewer had used EURES.**

## ***1.2 Arriving and living in another Member State***

More than half of the respondents had experienced some form of administrative difficulty after arriving in their new Member State. The vast majority of those experiencing problems mentioned **lengthy administrative procedures as part of the problem**. For many, these lengthy procedures were combined with other problems, to lead to a frustrating and time-consuming experience.

The second most frequently cited source of difficulties related to the **lack of clarity in administrative requirements** with nearly three quarters of those who had experienced some sort of problem including this in their list of issues. It is clear that the length of administrative procedures and a lack of clarity about what is required from citizens moving to another EU Member State are the main issues that people encountered.

Looking at the findings in more detail it is evident that there is a range of contributory factors which serve to create or exacerbate these problems, the most widespread of which include:

- Citizens having difficulty understanding the administrative processes because of language differences
- Local administration staff not being aware of citizens' rights
- Differences between the social security systems of Member States

A number of other issues were mentioned by some respondents but these were less widespread:

- Requirements to have documents translated or legalised
- Discrepancies in regulations between Member States (ID codes, dual nationality, rights to work)
- Progressive requests for documents
- Citizens being insufficiently informed about / aware of their rights
- The complexity of legislation

Respondents were presented with a list of possible actions that the European Commission could take to make intra-EU mobility easier. **The most popular ideas included:**

- The provision of a **guide by each Member State on the rights of other Member States' nationals who reside there**. Closely related to this (respondents sometimes had difficulty distinguishing between these ideas) was the provision of trusted and well-known sources of information on the rights of EU citizens and a user-friendly guide produced by the EU on all the rights of Member States' nationals as EU citizens.

- **Civil status certificates** (such as marriage or birth certificates) and other official documents from a Member State **should be generally accepted** in all other Member States without any additional formalities.

The majority of the spontaneous suggestions put forward by respondents about how a move to a different EU Member State could be made easier fell into one or other of the solutions presented. However, there were some additional suggestions put forward by a number of respondents, including:

- Access to documents written in and officials speaking the language of the person moving to the Member State or in a range of different languages.
- Provision of information about comparative tax, social security and pension legislation
- Measures to make it easier for new movers to open bank accounts in their new Member State.

### **1.3 Citizenship**

Respondents understood the term **'citizen of the EU' to mean anyone who is, or who becomes, a citizen of any EU Member State**. EU citizenship was also seen as closely related to having similar rights and obligations in each Member State and was felt to encompass freedom of movement with the EU.

When respondents were provided with a short 'quiz' about the nature of European citizenship almost all of them correctly identified that they were simultaneously citizens of their home country and of the EU. However, a very small number thought that it might be possible to choose not to be a European citizen, whilst remaining a citizen of their home country.

Respondents interviewed in about half of the countries felt that, **although they were aware of some of their rights as EU citizens, they would not consider themselves to be well informed**, or could be better informed. A smaller, but still significant number of respondents felt confident that they knew and understood their rights, while a small minority were of the view that they knew their rights very well.

When respondents were asked what they believed to be their rights as EU citizens, it was clear that the rights to mobility (freedom of movement) and to working and in some cases studying, in any EU Member State are foremost in their minds.

When respondents were shown a list of some of the **rights which European citizens have** the most well-known were:

- The right to reside in any Member State of the EU
- When living in another Member State, the right to be treated in the same way as a national of that State.

The least well-known or recognised right was the right to launch or participate in a Citizen's Initiative.

## 1.4 Voting

The findings show **widespread uncertainty amongst respondents about their voting rights after they have moved to a new EU Member State**. Some respondents thought that they were only allowed to vote in their country of origin, while others thought that, although they could not vote in local elections, they were allowed to participate in the European elections.

Only just over a third of respondents voted in the last European Parliamentary elections and the majority of these voted in their home country.

As with European elections, **only a small minority of respondents had participated in local elections in the Member State to which they had moved**. About twice the number had voted in local elections than had voted in EU elections in their new country of residence (but, as noted above, many had voted in EU elections in their home country). The reasons for not voting in local elections included: lack of interest (often in politics in general); insufficient knowledge about the parties, candidates and election objectives; the assumption that the process would be difficult and troublesome; laziness; and language barriers because election information was provided in the local language which not all respondents had yet mastered.

Amongst the few who had exercised their right to vote in their new Member State the majority did not experience any difficulties.

When asked if having **access to more information about the European Parliamentary elections and the programmes and objectives of candidates and parties** would have made them more likely to vote in the last European election, well over half the respondents indicated that this would have been the case.

Respondents were also asked whether switching the polling date from June to May would have an impact on their participation in European elections. **The majority held the view that it would make no difference to them personally if the date was changed**.

## 1.5 Recommendations

There are a number of issues highlighted by the report which represent clear opportunities for the European Commission to take action to improve EU citizens' experience of their right to intra-EU mobility. The following section identifies some of the key areas where we feel action would be of benefit.

Many respondents had **made use of the internet as a route to find information sources when investigating a new country**, yet, were not very familiar with EU websites. Respondents also expressed the **need to have relevant information pertaining to their move in one place** and to have information that is trusted and reliable.

- It is therefore recommended that guides be produced by Member States and / or the EU which provide **information on the rights of EU citizens residing in other Member States than their own**. It is further recommended that this information be **available via a one-stop-shop information point on the internet, well-advertised, country-specific and very practical in nature**.

The findings illustrate that the length of administrative procedures and a lack of clarity about what is required from citizens moving to another EU Member State are the main problems experienced during a move. These difficulties are exacerbated by respondents having difficulty understanding the administrative processes because of language differences.

- It is recommended that **administrative procedures be streamlined and that citizens be provided with clear and reader-friendly information in printed form in different languages** or that **local authorities employ, or have access to, people who are able to speak the languages of other EU Member States.**
- In order to increase voter turnout at both local and European Parliament elections it is recommended that **citizens be better informed about their right to vote and the procedures involved in voting when living in another Member State.** This information could be included in a guide by each Member State on the rights of other Member States' nationals who reside there. Specifically regarding **European Parliament elections, it is recommended that citizens be better informed about these elections and the programmes and objectives of candidates and parties.**

## 2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Background and objectives

The Directorate General for Justice of the European Commission (DG JUST) commissioned a Qualitative Eurobarometer study to investigate the experiences of European citizens exercising their rights to move to and live in another EU Member State. The full study consists of a programme of 100 in-depth interviews and 12 focus group discussions, conducted amongst European citizens in seventeen Member States of the European Union.

**The overall aim of the study was to investigate the experiences of EU citizens in several Member States who have exercised their right to intra-EU mobility, and specifically, to understand any obstacles they encountered and consider possible mechanisms and initiatives which could better support and facilitate cross-border mobility.**

### 2.2 Methodology and sampling

#### 2.2.1 Design

The study consisted of a mix of in-depth interviews and group discussions with three different types of individuals:

- New movers (those who moved to a country 3-6 months ago<sup>2</sup>)
- Established (those who moved to a country 6 months to 5 years ago)
- Returners (those who returned to their home country from another Member State within the last two years)

These three variables formed the primary recruitment criteria, although it was also envisaged that there would be differentiation amongst respondents based on variables such as age, gender, family situation, country of origin and reason for moving.

This report is based on the combined responses from individuals from the three main groups (new movers, established, returners) and provides an overview of the key issues identified in the study. The breakdown of the number of in-depth interviews and group discussions per country is provided below.

Member State	In-depth interviews	Focus groups
Germany	10	2
Spain	5	2
France	5	2

<sup>2</sup> In NL and FR the definition used for new movers was those who had moved with the last 3-12 months. The definition of established was also adapted accordingly.

The Netherlands	5	2
Poland	5	2
UK	10	2
Italy	5	-
Ireland	5	-
Bulgaria	5	-
Czech Republic	5	-
Denmark	5	-
Greece	5	-
Lithuania	5	-
Romania	5	-
Belgium	10	-
Austria	5	-
Sweden	5	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12</b>

Overall, across the in-depth interviews and focus groups, 172 respondents participated in the study, 63 of whom were new movers, 88 were established, and 21 returners.

### 2.2.2 Discussion content

The discussion in the in-depth interviews and focus groups explored the same topics and covered the stages of the process of moving to a new country. This included the decision to move, planning the move and the information sources used. The study also explored respondents' experiences and the challenges they faced once they arrived in the new Member State. This was followed by a discussion of European citizenship and the right to vote whilst in another Member State. Finally, ideas of how to make such moves to a different EU Member State easier were investigated.

The discussion guide used in the study is included as an annex to this report.

### 2.2.3 Timings

The in-depth interviews and groups were conducted between 4 June and 19 July 2010.

### 3 MOVING TO ANOTHER MEMBER STATE - PLANNING THE MOVE

This chapter introduces those who participated in the study, providing background information such as their countries of origin and the reasons they decided to move. The chapter will furthermore explore the ways in which people planned their moves and the investigations, if any, they undertook before moving.

#### 3.1 Key findings

- Participants in the study represented 25 of the 27 EU Member States and **nearly a third had previous experience living in another Member State prior to the move on which this study focussed**. Respondents cited a variety of **reasons for moving**; the most frequent of these, mentioned by just under half of respondents, was **work**. About a quarter of respondent moved in order to **study** in the new Member State.
- There appeared to be **three broad stages** (the decision to move, waiting for approval, and confirmation that the move will take place) that respondents went through **when they planned their move**. These stages were applicable in different ways to three main groups of people – those moving with an existing employer/moving for study purposes, those moving independently, and those moving with family (not moving on their own) or for a longer period of time. Those moving with an existing employer or for study purposes did the least amount of planning and most of the administrative arrangements were taken care of by their employer or university. Those who did not move by themselves or moved for a longer period of time tended to do the most planning either because the move did not just involve their own administrative requirements or because it was more permanent.
- The amount of time that people had spent planning their moves or, in the cases of those relocating with an existing employer, the amount of notice they had been given, varied widely. However, **most people appeared to have spent between two and six months planning their move**.
- The findings show that, in many cases, respondents did **very little administrative research and planning before the move** and that the majority of this work took place in the new country as and when circumstances required it.
- The types of information that the respondents looked for varied depending on their reasons for moving. However, amongst the **administrative issues which people had looked at prior to moving**, two items were mentioned most often: **social security and welfare** and the **recognition of academic diplomas**.
- Most respondents had begun their **search for information via informal sources**; friends, family, colleagues or other acquaintances that had been through similar experiences themselves. When considering more **formal information** sources one category stood out as being the most frequently used, with more than half the respondents mentioning it; the **public authorities**.

- Many respondents had made use of the **internet as a route to find information when investigating a new country**. When provided with a list of EU internet sites and services the majority of respondents said that they had not used any of them, and many had not heard of the sites. The EU websites are not necessarily searched for directly, but people are directed to them through internet search engines such as Google. **Roughly a quarter of respondents recalled accessing the EUROPA website and slightly fewer had used EURES.**

### **3.2 Profiles of respondents**

The individuals whose experiences form the basis of this report came from a range of backgrounds and were moving to a new Member State for a variety of different reasons.

The individuals who participated in the study **included citizens of 25 of the 27 Member States** of the European Union – there were no participants who had moved from Luxembourg or Slovenia to a new Member State. Three Member States were represented by more than 15 individuals - Spain, France and Italy – while two other Member States were represented by more than ten individuals – Germany and the UK.

Many of the citizens who participated in the study were experienced in moving from one Member State to another. **Nearly a third of respondents had previous experience of living in another EU Member State prior to the move which was the focus of this study.** This had an impact on the amount of information they required prior to their current move and some of these respondents reported that having lived in a different EU country before had made their recent move easier.

**Just under half of the respondents cited work as the primary reason for their move to another EU Member State** and approximately one out of every ten people who moved primarily because of work moved with an existing employer. It is clear that many of the respondents who moved for work purposes (both with existing and new employers) relied mostly on their employers to provide them with information, advice and support as they arrived in and settled into a new country.

Of the remaining respondents **just under half (i.e. about a quarter overall) moved as part of their education.** Those moving for this reason tended, like those moving with an employer, to find the process relatively easy since the Erasmus programme, the recognition of qualifications between member States and arrangements made through universities serve to simplify the process.

Amongst the remaining respondents there were three predominant reasons for moving: to live with a partner/get married, to follow family members who had already moved to the new country, or simply because respondents wanted to have 'new experiences' such as learning a language or experiencing a different culture and way of life.

The findings show a slight age differentiation between new movers and those who are established in a new country, with more than half of those in the established group being 30 years or older, while just less than a third of individuals in the new mover group were 30 years or older. There is also some indication that those who had no dependents and few possessions at the time of moving, and those who had made previous visits to the country they moved to, found it easier to move.

### 3.3 Planning the move

This part of the report describes respondents' planning of their move including the information they sought and what resources they used to assist them in this process.

#### 3.3.1 The stages of the process

This section discusses the extent to which there was a structure to the way people planned and investigated the administrative parts of their move. It is difficult to identify such a broad structure or pattern as individual circumstances differed; as did the reasons for moving and the number of people who were included in the move. The findings also illustrate that, for some individuals, moving was an organic process that developed as they discovered the need for more information or additional documents. However, in general terms there were three main stages to the process of moving that were applicable in different ways to three groups of individuals.

	<b>Moving with an existing employer/moving for study purposes</b>	<b>Moving independently</b>	<b>Moving with family (not moving on one's own) or for a long period/permanently</b>
	<i>Least amount of planning</i>	<i>Moderate amount of planning</i>	<i>A fair amount of planning</i>
<b>Stage 1 – The decision to move</b>	Asking for a transfer in the company (for those not offered one). Deciding which university to study at, which does not appear to be difficult considering that some universities have better reputations and that people participate in existing structures and exchange programmes, e.g. Erasmus programme	Applying to a university or looking for a job	People in this group tended to spend more time researching and planning as the move did not just involve themselves, but sometimes spouses and children; and the move was more permanent
<b>Research and planning in Stage 1:</b>			
In this stage respondents had obtained some very general information about the country (and academic institution) that they would like to move to. Those who were not moving by themselves, for example with children, researched schools and administrative processes and requirements.			
<b>Stage 2 – Waiting for approval</b>	Waiting for university or employer to confirm move	Waiting for university or employer to confirm move	Waiting for university or employer to confirm move or that of spouse/partner
<b>Research and planning in Stage 2:</b>			
Research and planning seems still quite superficial and mostly concerns general information about the			

country that the respondent wants to move to.	
<b>Stage 3 – Confirmation that the move will take place</b>	In some cases this was seen as the incentive to start planning in earnest and respondents often had very little time between confirmation of move and moving.
<b>Research and planning in Stage 3:</b>	
More detailed and specific planning now takes place, although mostly on a practical level – travel arrangements, accommodation, tying up loose ends in the country they are moving from (ending leases, closing bank accounts, etc.). Often stage three will be quite short, meaning that even some of those who have been considering a move for some months will feel they have very little time for planning and research prior to their move.	
<b>MOVE TO THE NEW COUNTRY</b>	
<b>Research and planning:</b>	
On a broad level the findings show that, apart from those who did not move by themselves, respondents predominantly only investigated administrative processes and information once they had arrived in the country that they had moved to.	

The amount of time that people had spent planning their moves or, in the cases of those relocating with an existing employer, the amount of notice they had been given, varied widely. A significant minority had been planning the move for a year or more. At the other extreme, a larger number had moved with a month's notice or less and some had only had a week to plan their move. At the most extreme, one respondent had moved on a day's notice.

*“One day! I bought my ticket on impulse.” (FR, established, female)*

However, **most people appeared to have spent between two and six months planning their move.**

*“Three months, during the holidays, to pack up, find accommodation, deal with the paperwork, and that's it.” (FR, new mover, female)*

The findings show that in **many cases respondents did very little administrative research and planning before the move** and that the majority of this work took place in the new country as and when circumstances required it.

*“I did not deal with the administrative aspects before leaving home. I did everything in Italy.” (IT, established, male)*

*“The administrative stuff was sorted out once I got there” (BE, established, female)*

Even when respondents had, from the beginning of the process, wanted to move for a longer period, or even permanently, and therefore took more care in their planning process as the decision had more serious implications, some of the administrative

processes were only researched and gone through after arrival in the new country. (CZ, DK, ES)

*“I was planning to move since 2003, and it took me three years. I needed some time to prepare for such a big change. Before moving, I had to unregister in Hamburg, cancel my phone number, end my lease...on the other hand, the majority of administrative things and information needed when moving to another EU country were done just after moving to the Czech Republic.” (CZ, established, male)*

And those who arrived with the thought of staying permanently or for a long time thought first of all about solving any administrative problems there might be with their country of origin. (IT, ES)

Respondents provided a number of **reasons why they tended to administrative matters after arrival in the new Member State rather than prior to departure:**

- Students were provided with most of the information they needed in advance by the universities they were enrolling with and those moving with an existing employer, or even with a new employer, had a lot of the administrative aspects dealt with by their employers. (CZ, DK, FR, IT, LT, PL, RO)

*“I started planning the trip I guess six months before moving. I looked at the list my university had prepared to aid students going abroad on exchange... The university helped me with finding a place to live in Denmark and told me all I needed to do.” (DK, new mover, male)*

Those moving without the support of employers or universities had a longer planning process and went through a more extended information search. (DK)

- Respondents felt that they knew enough about their rights in other EU Member States before moving. They knew, on the one hand, that they did not need specific permits to reside in the country, and on the other hand, that it was quite easy to establish oneself in another EU Member State (BE). They felt that before moving to another EU Member State no special preparation was required (CZ, FR). A minority of respondents were of the view that the administrative procedures that are involved in moving between countries should be done away with as it seems almost contradictory to the idea of free movement within the EU. (FR, LT, NL, UK).

*“Well, as I remember, I just bought my ticket. Bulgaria is an EU member after all, why should I plan any administrative aspects of the move? I prefer to organise the administrative procedures while in the country I am going [to].” (BG, established, male)*

Despite this more relaxed attitude found amongst many respondents, some who were originally from Romania took more time in preparing for their move. This is in part because they felt less sure about their rights as EU citizens and therefore began with inquiries into the administrative requirements of their move in the stages early of move planning. They had also anticipated more difficulties as a result, they believed, of Romania not being granted the same work benefits as other EU Member States; and obtaining a work permit was seen as a necessary part of their preparations. (NL)

- Moving alone, without a spouse or children, meant that such respondents felt that they had very little to prepare and plan (BE, IE, PL). Those who moved with children had additional factors to consider, such as the integration of children into the school system (BG, ES, UK, IT).
- Having lived elsewhere before, often in the EU, or having travelled before to the intended destination country respondents felt that they knew what to expect. (BE, LT, RO, SE)

**Addressing administrative matters only after arrival in the new Member State meant that information searches prior to the move were largely confined to other practical aspects of the move** such as looking for a job (BE), and finding accommodation in the new country (BE, LT, DE).

*“What you need first of all when you move here is a flat. The other things you can sort out later.” (DE, established, male)*

### 3.3.2 Information and sources

**Almost all the respondents had sought at least some information whilst planning their move.** However, a small minority (moving with an employer or to study) claimed to have done no research before moving. They simply trusted the information provided to them by their employers and expected their employers to provide them with the information that they need to know (DK, FR, RO, NL, IE, IT).

*“My job has lists of things to take care of when being stationed abroad. They are the experts; they send people out all the time – so I just trusted their word – and why shouldn’t I, right?” (DK, established, female)*

Some of those who moved for study purposes claimed not to have looked for a lot of information because they had already been sent information by the universities at which they were going to study (AT, CZ, DK, DE, BG).

*“I already had info packs sent by post from Charles University’s international office on everything that had to be done upon arrival...all the forms were in English. It was easy.” (CZ, new mover, female)*

As already discussed, some respondents were of the view that it was substantially easier to obtain the information they required after arrival in their new country. (IE, BE, IT, DK, UK)

*“Then, once you are here, you start getting to know people, you get inside information and it becomes easier.” (IE, new mover, male)*

The most frequently sought types of information related to practical aspects such as personal finance and accommodation and, for many, their planning did not include a great deal more detail than this. For some respondents finding a job or a course of study also formed a key part of their move-related information search.

The types of information that the respondents looked for varied depending on their reasons for moving. However, **amongst the administrative issues which people had looked at prior to moving, two items were mentioned most often:**

- **Social security and welfare** (AT, BE, DK, DE, EL, IT, NL, ES, SE, UK, FR)
- **Recognition of academic diplomas** (AT, DK, EL, IT, NL, PL, ES, SE)

Other areas in which information was sought, but to a much lesser extent, included:

- Recognition of professional qualifications (EL, IT, NL, PL)
- Documentation relating to civil status (DK, FR, DK, BG)

*“I have never paid attention to the administrative details so much. Lately I had to because of the marriage – I was told that I would need my birth certificate, a document proving that currently I am not married, etc.” (BG, established, male)*

- Residence permits (DK, DE)
- Work permits (AT, DK)
- Requirements and procedures to acquire the nationality of the country that the respondent had moved to (DK, UK, PL)
- Car-related issues and recognition of drivers licences (DE, IT)
- Voting in municipal and / or European elections (AT), although some respondents who had moved to the UK and Germany looked up information on how to participate in elections in their home countries.

**Very few respondents had sought information about family related matters as most of them had moved on their own.** However, information that was looked for in instances where children were also moving related to children’s education. (BG, IT)

*“What interested me was the education of the children. I was looking for information on how to enrol them in the Bulgarian schools, what exams they are supposed to have.” (BG, returner, female)*

**Most respondents had begun their search for information via informal sources;** friends, family, colleagues or other acquaintances that had been through similar experiences themselves. The value of the formal information provided by such sources clearly varies but they can also be sources of support and reassurance (BG, CZ, EL, LT, IT, RO, ES, UK, DE, PL). The advantage of friends as a source of information lies in the expectation that they will report the situation as it is and can describe the reality, having been through processes themselves (EL, IE, IT, NL).

*“My friends have been living in Greece for more than 15 years. They know the country well. They helped me find my first and my second job, they offered me their home to stay for as long as I needed...” (EL, established, female)*

*“I asked my friend who actually lived here...so there was no need to search for any additional information.” (LT, new mover, male)*

When considering more **formal information sources** one category stood out as being the most frequently used, with more than half the respondents mentioning it;

the **public authorities**. It is clear that people recognise that, if they require accurate information about administrative issues around moving to another Member State, national, regional and local authorities are the most appropriate places to go for help and advice. However, there were respondents who were not entirely satisfied with the information or treatment that they had received from the public authorities.

*“I did not get all the information I needed from the public authorities. However, I found all the information I needed from the internet.” (AT, new mover, male)*

*“It was surprising that the authorities on both sides before the move thought that everything would run smoothly and they both just wanted to transfer the responsibility to the authority in the other country – ‘they know about this in Finland / Sweden.’ I thought that the cooperation would work better. My feeling was that I was the first human who moved from Finland to Sweden. There were no prepared routines for how to do it.” (SE, established, female)*

*“I have the impression that I am not welcome in Greece to work. I am Polish and it seems that Greek people believe that Polish women are good just for cleaning. The truth is that this is what I do; I clean houses. Still, it is not nice to be treated like that. Especially when I tried to get a number for tax registration; I could not understand what they were asking me to do, what paper I had to bring to them. I did not manage to do it and then I decided that I could not be bothered.” (EL, established, female)*

Apart from the public authorities, a wide range of other sources of information were referred to by respondents. Nearly a quarter of people mentioned EU institutions (whether accessed directly or via the internet). As noted earlier a number received information from their employers. Other sources mentioned, in each case, by a small number of respondents included chambers of commerce and some form of private or specialist expatriate organisation.

**Many respondents had made use of the internet as a route to find information sources when investigating a new country.** However, recall of specific websites tended to be relatively limited. The benefit of using the internet to search for information was that people could specify what information they were looking for as finding information of direct and practical relevance appeared to be more important than general background information (AT, DK, DE, IE). Those who used the internet generally tended to search websites from the countries that they were planning on moving to (AT, IT, LT), but also found it useful to read the stories of other people who had made similar moves and that could be found in internet forums (BG, DE).

*“I checked the website of the consulate and the foreign affairs office. I checked the site of the Bulgarian government, and so on.” (BG, established, male)*

*“[I found that] an internet forum for expatriates was useful but you have to separate the information into what is current and what was posted perhaps three years ago.” (DE, returner, female)*

*“If you check the forums [of others who have moved to a different EU country], you would see that there are always the same issues – visa and residence permits, etc. It is a good source of information for the subjects of long-term stay.” (BG, established, male)*

In the majority of cases those who used the internet as a source of information ‘Googled’ general phrases like ‘work permit in Denmark’ and were guided through the search engine to relevant websites (DK, DE, PL, RO, ES, UK, IE, IT, BG, NL, LT).

*“I Googled ‘living in the Netherlands’. I wasn’t interested in generic EU information; I preferred it to be country specific.” (NL, new mover, female)*

*“I did an awful lot through the Internet. I entered some key words [on Google] and that brings me to the sites” (BE, established, female)*

### 3.3.3 European Union websites

When provided with a list of EU internet sites and services<sup>3</sup> **the majority of respondents said that they had not used any of them, and many had not heard of the sites.** However, some acknowledged that they might have looked at one or more EU websites during an on-line search without recalling that they had done so. This is the case because the EU websites are not necessarily searched for directly, but people are directed to them through internet search engines such as Google (BG, DK, FR, DE, EL, LT).

*“I am surprised by the fact that there are so many [EU] sites, I was not aware of them, no-one ever told me about them.” (IT, established, male)*

*“Probably I have visited some EU sites, but I am not sure. I normally put some keywords and I search by them. I do not really notice which sites I read the information from.” (BG, established, male)*

Of the EU sites and services listed there were two which appeared to have been used more widely than the others:

- **Roughly a quarter of respondents recalled accessing the EUROPA website.**

This site is seen as a main starting point when looking for information in order to be directed elsewhere rather than providing movers with all the information they need (AT, FR), although some found it more useful than others depending on the specific information they were looking for.

*“Well, actually I used the EUROPA site quite a lot since the Youth Programme site is part of it and my project is part of the Youth in Action programme.” (BG, new mover, female)*

*“It [the EUROPA site] was about the EU’s bodies and something about the institution... it was a long way from our everyday concerns.” (FR, established, male)*

- **Slightly fewer had used EURES.**

*“Yes, I remember I consulted [the] EURES website when I wanted to work in France, to know what my rights were concerning work within the EU.” (CZ, returner, female)*

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<sup>3</sup> The list shown to respondents is included in the annex as part of the discussion guide.

EURES's multi-lingual nature was particularly appreciated by individuals from Eastern European countries who speak neither English nor French. (FR)

*"I've been familiar with it [EURES] for ages. In Poland, many people know it because it's easy to find information, because there are few sites in Polish." (FR, established, female)*

However, one concern was raised about the value of information provided on the EURES site for those who are not engaged in low-skilled employment. (IT)

*"EURES can be helpful, you find the jobs made available and the ads with the conditions of employment, which you can also negotiate. But they are only jobs requiring low qualifications; it's not very useful for people who, like me, do managerial types of jobs." (IT, established, male)*

The other services on the list, such as the EC representation in respondents' home countries, the Enterprise Europe Network and the EC's guide on the right of EU citizens to free movement and residence had been used by only a small minority of respondents. A number of services had not been used by any of those who participated in the study, although a few respondents thought that they might have heard of Europe Direct, the Citizen Signpost service and the EC's eYouGuide but were unsure.

There was a minority of respondents, especially those who had moved to the Czech Republic, Denmark and the Netherlands, who claimed to not have even considered the possibility of searching for information on EU websites when they were planning their move. This was either because it had not occurred to them that this would be a place to look for information on the specific country that they had been interested in moving to, or they assumed that an EU website would be too complicated.

*"Looking at them [the list of websites] right now, they don't really ring any bells at all. I guess I never really thought of the EU in this way – as someone guiding you. I mostly thought about the German government and the Danish government and their official rules and what applies, etc. I never thought to look at these." (DK, established, female)*

Because the websites had not been widely used by respondents or had been indirectly accessed without necessarily a clear recollection of them, respondents generally had a vague impression of the information they contained, their usefulness and accessibility. For some the websites on the list did provide the information they required (DK); while others felt that the websites were text rich, difficult to navigate and largely irrelevant for their particular purposes since they do not provide practical information applicable to moving between Member States (NL, RO). In one instance there was concern about the number of websites offering information since having multiple websites can result in a lack of clarity about which contain what information, leaving users feeling overwhelmed and confused (UK).

*"[It would be good to have] one website... describing the whole situation in Britain, about employment, how to get the papers, how to find an employer." (UK, established, male)*

## 4 ARRIVING AND LIVING IN ANOTHER MEMBER STATE

Having understood the way in which respondents planned their moves and the sorts of information they accessed before departing, this chapter covers their experiences on arrival in the EU Member State that they had moved to and during their first few months. In particular, it will focus on any problems encountered and how these were addressed.

### 4.1 Key findings

- More than half the respondents reported experiencing some form of administrative problem or difficulty after moving to the new Member State.
- Amongst those who had experienced difficulties after arriving in the new Member State, the vast majority mentioned **lengthy administrative procedures** as part of the problem. For many, these lengthy procedures were combined with other problems, to lead to a frustrating and time-consuming experience. The second most frequently cited source of difficulties related to the **lack of clarity in administrative requirements**, with nearly three quarters of those who had experienced some sort of problem including this in their list of issues.
- Looking at the findings in more detail it is evident that there are a **range of contributory factors which serve to create or exacerbate these issues**: respondents having difficulty understanding the administrative processes because of language differences; local administration staff not being aware of citizens' rights; and differences between the social security systems of countries.
- At the end of the interview or focus group respondents were presented with a list of possible actions that the European Commission could take to make intra-EU mobility easier. **One of the most favoured ideas was the provision of a guide by each Member State on the rights of other Member States' nationals who reside there.** Closely related to this (respondents sometimes had difficulty distinguishing between these ideas) was the provision of trusted and well-known sources of information on the rights of EU citizens and a user-friendly guide produced by the EU on all the rights of Member States' nationals as EU citizens. These suggestions speak to respondents' needs to have relevant information in one place and to have information that is trusted and reliable. Another popular idea was that **civil status certificates** (such as marriage or birth certificates) and other official documents from a Member State **should be generally accepted** in all other Member States without any additional formalities.
- The majority of the spontaneous suggestions put forward by respondents about how a move to a different EU Member State could be made easier fell into one or other of the solutions that they were presented with. However, there were some additional suggestions put forward by a number of respondents, including: access to documents written in and officials speaking the language of the person moving to the Member State or in a range of different languages; provision of information about comparative tax, social security and pension legislation; and measures to make it easier for new movers to open bank accounts in the new Member State.

## 4.2 Experiences and challenges

Well over half of respondents reported experiencing some sort of problem or difficulty associated with moving to their current Member State. Many of these issues were **viewed as relatively minor difficulties, with some respondents feeling that such things were almost inevitable and accepting them.** However, some did not experience any problems at all.

*“Since we are in the EU, the move itself was like moving from one city to another in Germany.” (AT, established, female)*

*“No, I haven’t had any difficulties with the administrative steps... no difficulties.” (FR, new mover, female)*

*“[It was] not complicated. I received an answer to all my questions.” (DE, established, female)*

Some respondents commented explicitly that the reason they felt they had experienced no problems was because their university or employer had taken care of most of the administrative aspects.

Amongst the majority who experienced some sort of difficulty there was a wide range of problems. The following table sets out the main areas of difficulty which respondents encountered in the administrative processes having arrived in a new Member State.

Lengthy administrative procedures	
<p>The time it takes for requests to be addressed, processes to be completed and to receive documents applied for</p> <p><i>“Getting a health insurance card was excessively complicated, it took me a year!” (FR, established, female)</i></p> <p><i>“Everything went OK, but it just took a long time; standing in front of the local government offices at 7 o’clock in the morning along with about 400 other people.” (DE, established, male)</i></p>	<p>BE, CZ, FR, EL, DE, IE, IT, LT, RO, ES, SE, UK</p>
<p>A number of respondents had experienced difficulties with a particular aspect of the administrative process which, in turn, hampered the acquiring of other documents</p> <p><i>“It was back and forth, over and over. Like a snake biting its own tail. I couldn’t get a bank account, so I couldn’t get an apartment, so I couldn’t get a CPR-number which meant I couldn’t get a bank account... it was ridiculous!” (DK, established, female)</i></p> <p><i>“In order to register I needed a rent contract, but at first I was living with a friend and didn’t have a flat of my own. And if you are not registered you cannot open a bank account, take out insurance, etc. It is a bit of a vicious cycle, you need everything in order to get everything.” (DE, established, female)</i></p>	<p>DK, LT, SE, EL, UK, DE</p>
<p>Complex organisation and administration at the institution of study</p>	<p>AT</p>

<b>Unclear administrative requirements</b>	
<p>Unclear administrative requirements such as under what conditions a residence permit will be granted and a lack of clarity on the documents to be provided to the authorities.</p> <p><i>“When I had got my 5-month card, after 5 months I brought in the proof of employment, and they extended my card and told me to come back to demonstrate again that I was working. At one point I wasn’t going to make the deadlines and it wasn’t clear what I had to submit.” (BE, established, female)</i></p>	EL, LT, BG, BE
<p>Lack of knowledge about the authority responsible</p> <p><i>“Finding the information was not so easy because I didn’t always know whether I could find the answer in France, Germany or England.” (DE, established, female)</i></p>	DE, ES
<p>Requesting documents that respondents had not thought were necessary and that had to be obtained from the country of origin, e.g. birth certificates in addition to passports in order to register in a new country</p>	DK
<p>Lack of centralized information system which makes it necessary to move between offices and respondents did not always understand the inter-dependencies between the various departments</p>	PL
<p>Problems that occur when one is not seen as having a ‘valid’ reason to be in another EU country (when one moves to be with a partner instead of having a signed employment or education contract beforehand) and consequently cannot obtain a residence permit</p>	DK
<b>Language difficulties</b>	
<p>Difficulty understanding the administrative processes because respondents did not understand the local language</p> <p><i>“When you want to make an appointment the answering machine is only in Dutch, which makes it very hard.” (NL, established, male)</i></p> <p><i>“Language... initially language. I think if you’re going to be in the EU then you got to have a section for foreigners, that queue should speak English. I’m not saying that because I’m English.” (RO, established, male)</i></p> <p><i>“I was lucky I spoke Lithuanian and could go and fight and argue... I can’t imagine how other people are doing it.” (LT, established, male)</i></p>	BE, BG, DE, LT, NL, PL, RO, ES
<b>Staff at the local administration was not aware of respondent’s EU rights</b>	
<p>Lack of knowledge on the part of officials about the rights of people from new EU Member States, for example, officials not being able to provide information on what respondents needed to do to work in a different Member State; social welfare/social security personnel not being aware of the rights of those from particular Member States</p>	CZ, EL, PL, RO

<p>Lack of clarity about the correct procedures and regulations</p> <p><i>“When I went to take my residence permit and asked for ID, they told me to come back in one year and probably they will issue one for me. I think they just did not know what the procedure is, what are the regulations. The administration is not sure what the procedures are and actually what they do is not inform people, but spread disinformation. They do limbo; they promise something, then they change their mind. Something radical should be done to solve the problem.” (BG, established, male)</i></p>	<p>BG</p>
<b>Differences between social security systems of countries</b>	
<p>Lack of information about the system, and ignorance of the procedures to be carried out in both the country of origin and the host country.</p> <p><i>“I had my first job here, but I wasn’t covered [with health insurance] for three years... I didn’t know that the European card did not cover us. Fortunately nothing happened. I didn’t fall ill, that was until 2008 and then I got my health insurance card. At the time I had to pay the doctor whereas in Italy I didn’t, you don’t pay the family doctor; you pay for medicines but not to see the doctor. I didn’t know about this aspect of the system, I admit.” (FR, established, male)</i></p>	<p>FR, NL, PL</p>
<p>Length and complexity of the process required and the waiting period, in order to secure their social welfare entitlements</p>	<p>IE, BE</p>
<b>Requirement to have documents translated and / or legalised</b>	
<p>Having documents pertaining to education and previous employment translated which provided some annoyance but was generally perceived as normal and had been anticipated by some who had their documents translated or legalised before the move.</p>	<p>CZ, EL</p>
<p>This is seen as an onerous process for students who have to pay for each translation</p> <p><i>“You have to get your bac certificate translated, a sworn translation is expensive, you have to go to see someone.” (FR, established, female)</i></p>	<p>FR</p>
<p>Being sent ‘from pillar to post’ by different institutions who claim that it is not within their area of responsibility to accredit a qualification obtained elsewhere to equivalent as a qualification in the new Member State</p>	<p>SE</p>
<b>Differences in regulations between EU countries</b>	
<p>Some countries offering dual nationality while others don’t.</p> <p><i>“[It] turns out he [my husband] cannot get citizenship here [in Denmark] if he also has Italian citizenship – which is strange as the Italians are happy to grant me citizenship while I am still a citizen of Denmark. And my kids - they cannot be citizens of both Italy and Denmark when they turn 18...which is irritating and frustrating since my kids are both Italians and Danes.” (DK, returner, female)</i></p>	<p>DK, LT</p>

In some countries citizens have a personal code, in others a personal identification of another format	LT
Different restrictions on sectors in which non-locals can work in different EU countries	UK
<b>Progressive requests for documents</b>	
Having to come back repeatedly with more documents and certificates  <i>“The biggest problem was getting my health card. Every time I went there they asked me for new papers and documents. I would go there and the lady would ask me for some documents, but the following day a different lady would ask for something else.” (ES, established, female)</i>	BE, ES, AT
<b>Individuals not sufficiently informed / aware of rights</b>	
Some respondents had believed they knew what their rights were as EU citizens but, when they needed this knowledge, they realised that it was rather sketchy and incomplete.  <i>“I didn’t know that you have to register within four weeks: we never registered.” (DE, established, female)</i>	EL, ES, DE
<b>Complexity of legislation</b>	
Complicated legislation regulating the move from one country to another that makes the processes very bureaucratic. Local legislation is also perceived to be complex, for example refuse collection tax and English Council Tax experienced by a returner to Italy.	EL, IT

**Other areas of difficulty that respondents experienced** related to finding accommodation (BE, NL, BG), difficulties with banks such as opening an account and applying for a loan (BE, IE, IT, UK), finding a job (BG), taxation and a lack of knowledge about tax jurisdictions (FR, IT, IE).

*“When I received the form for the property tax I didn’t know, it was the first year, so I looked into it and that’s how I discovered that I had to make a declaration and I called the tax centre.” (FR, established, female)*

*“The banks made it difficult for me to open an account because I had not yet received a wage. They don’t trust you if you don’t have credentials or guarantees.” (IT, new mover, male)*

Some respondents received help from friends, especially those who could speak the local language, to overcome some of these challenges.

### 4.3 Suggested actions to facilitate moving to a new Member State

Throughout the discussion respondents were encouraged to suggest ways in which their experiences could have been made easier and, in particular, to identify things which the European Commission could do in this area. At the end of the interview or focus group respondents were also presented with a list of possible actions and asked to identify those which they felt would be most useful. The majority of the spontaneous suggestions made were in line with the specific services introduced which are summarised in the table below and then discussed in detail. Other spontaneous suggestions are discussed at the end of the chapter.

The following table represents the proposals from the possible list of actions that the respondents from the different countries most favoured.

	Trusted sources of info	Guide on rights of new movers	Guide to all EU nationals' rights	EU rep to provide advice	Inter-country comms.	Well-trained officials	Standard certificates	Standard consumer legislation
Austria		X						X
Belgium		X	X					
Bulgaria					X	X		X
Czech Republic				X			X	
Denmark		X				X		
France		X					X	
Greece		X					X	X
Germany		X		X			X	
Ireland	X	X		X				
Italy		X	X			X	X	
Lithuania			X	X			X	
Netherlands		X		X			X	
Poland					X	X		
Romania						X	X	
Estonia		X				X		
Sweden	X						X	
UK						X	X	

#### 4.3.1 Most favoured ideas

One of the most favoured ideas was the provision of a guide by each Member State on the rights of other Member States' nationals who reside there. Closely related to this (respondents sometimes had difficulty distinguishing between these ideas) was the provision of trusted and well-known sources of information on the rights of EU citizens and a user-friendly guide produced by the EU on all the rights of Member

States' nationals as EU citizens. These suggestions speak to respondents' needs to have relevant information in one place and to have information that is trusted and reliable. Some respondents referred to the difficulties they encountered because they needed to use multiple sources in order to find all the information they required. As a result, the ideas on the suggestion list which went some way to addressing this issue were very well received.

### **A user-friendly Guide produced by each Member State on the rights of other Member States' nationals who move and reside there**

This proposal received wide support amongst respondents (DK, FR, EL, DE, IE, IT, NL ES, SE, UK) as some respondents realised that they are not very well informed about their rights (IT).

*“You should always be able to access information easily. And the language shouldn't be too complicated; the rules should be explained in the simplest, most down-to-earth way possible. So yes, if this doesn't exist already, then it should be first priority.” (DK, new mover, male)*

It is seen as advantageous that this guide be drawn up at the country level as there is a lot of information that needs to be known for each country and in some cases there are country level differences in requirements that should be documented. (EL, DE, NL, RO, ES)

The information listed in such a guide could be used as a check-list so the risk of not being aware of information on important aspects is avoided (AT). It could provide answers about the essential points new movers need to know, e.g. the rights and obligations regarding social security and the tax system which people have found to be very vague (FR, BE, IE). The guide should be available in different languages and must use accessible language that is easy to understand (ES, UK, RO).

*“That could be very useful as well because when you arrive you don't necessarily know everything...At least that would provide us with the information much more rapidly and it would be more reliable.” (FR, returner, male)*

The guide could be available in different formats, e.g. on the internet or as a booklet in European embassies (BE), although the internet is generally preferred (DE).

This guide is favoured for the practical information that respondents thought it would provide and its 'user-friendliness' (DE, IT); and for the fact that the information would be localised and provide useful contact information (IE).

*“A guide that makes me immediately understand what is the right thing to do and who to contact. What is needed are practical things and not generic administrative information.” (IT, established, male)*

However, there were those who were not in favour of this proposal and who thought that this idea was too general, abstract and complicated; the purpose was not clear to them as this information can be searched for on the internet; and it wasn't clear who would provide this guide and where. (BG, DE, CZ)

*“It sounds complicated, not at all user friendly. I do not think there is a simple way to do it, because the EU is complicated, 26 states means 26 user-friendly*

*guides that I would have to compare if I were about the decide where to move.” (CZ, established, male)*

### **A user-friendly Guide produced by the EU on all the rights of Member States' nationals as EU citizens**

This proposal is seen as relevant and was welcomed by respondents (DK, EL, LT). Again, this is seen as important because some respondents realised that they had not been sufficiently aware of their rights as EU citizens and about the differences between nationals from different countries. (BE)

Respondents imagine this to be a quite general publication and therefore perhaps less practical than the guide discussed above (BE, FR). For some this was a point of criticism; a possible lack of practical application made some respondents question the value of such a guide (DE, IE, IT, UK). It would be enough for this guide to be available online and in EU institutions where it would be available to those who need it, without being an unnecessary drain on resources (CZ). One guide would also be less expensive to produce (LT).

*“Not each state has to produce a guide. If we have the same rights in all Member States then one guide would be enough.” (LT, new mover, female)*

Concerns and reservations about such a guide centred around the following issues: As EU Member States have certain country specific rules and regulation, unless this changes, a generic guide on the rights of EU citizens will not provide any benefit (NL); the language used might be legalistic and therefore overly complicated (IE); access to this specific information is already provided by different institutions and therefore there is no need for such a guide (AT).

### **Provide trusted, well-known sources of information on the rights of EU citizens that could be relied upon by everyone**

This suggestion is highly appreciated since all involved parties are using the same source of information, removing some of the uncertainty and lack of clarity that can exist. (AT, CZ, DK, EL, DE, IE, IT, PL, RO, ES, UK)

*“That is important because there are a lot of rumours going around about what you can and cannot do – I heard this, I heard that. We browsed around, but we really didn't know what the facts were until we actually spoke to immigration.” (DE, new mover, male)*

It would be useful if there was one website, or portal, featuring all the relevant guidelines in various languages, as currently information has to be searched for in different places, which takes time (NL). Such a guide would help structure the searches for those who intend to move and help guide them through the vast range of information sources available (BE). Preference was also expressed for this information to be provided on the internet as opposed to a brochure (DE).

*“[Put it] on the internet. It would be much easier there to explain new rights and to provide information. Paper is not up-to-date and just costs a lot of money.” (DE, established, female)*

A number of respondents were of the view that such information sources already exist somewhere, and the problem is rather that the sources are not well-known and well-advertised and that it is difficult to determine what the most important information

is (BE, FR, DE, IE, LT, ES, RO). They feel such sources should therefore be well advertised and this information should be accessible and provided in local languages (ES, UK).

Some respondents thought that this proposal was too abstract and general (BG, FR) and that practical instructions to those who are moving country are more important than abstract information about their rights (DE).

*“To tell the truth, you don’t really want to know so much about your rights, but you want to know: what do I have to do? I have my doubts about the helpfulness of that in simplifying your move.” (DE, returner, female)*

It was also felt that people already know about their right to live and work in another EU Member State, which would be sufficient knowledge to take the next step. (IE)

Another idea on the proposed list that was equally well received concerned the general acceptance of civil status certificates. Some respondents had first hand experience of these kinds of difficulty during their moves and therefore welcomed the idea of some form of standardization.

**Civil status certificates (such as marriage or birth certificates) and other official documents from a Member State should be generally accepted in all other Member States without any additional formalities**

This proposal would be welcomed by respondents in a number of different countries as they believe it would make administrative processes simpler and faster, would avoid too many bureaucratic procedures and would be of high symbolic value because it gives people the idea of really being part of a European community. (AT, CZ, DK, BG, FR, EL, DE, IE, IT, LT, NL, PL, RO, SE, UK)

*“The civil status certificates should be standardized. It would make it easier for us. My official papers from Spain ought to be good enough.” (DK, new mover, male)*

*“These are the kind of things that really help me every day and which have taken up a lot of my time over the last two years.” (DE, established, female)*

*“It takes too much time to deal with all the paperwork so that you don’t feel like you are European... it takes time to translate paperwork.” (UK, new mover, female)*

The suggestion was offered that these documents should be standardized either in their entirety through the issuing of standardised versions, or through some form of validation via, for example, a uniform stamp. (NL)

The findings show a difference of opinion about whether such standardization should apply to all documents. In the case of educational certificates it was emphasised that the qualifications concerned needed to be fully harmonised first.

*“This sounds OK. But if we talk about education, we should have the same standards everywhere, before the diplomas are accepted everywhere. There should be common standards and then the diplomas could be accepted. Otherwise it is not fair, or even it is dangerous.” (BG, new mover, male)*

However, others would welcome standardization of educational qualifications. (FR, LT, SE, UK, RO)

*“This certificate problem is the most important and affected me personally. Many people, even if they are qualified and have a diploma cannot use it in other countries because they obtained it in a poorer country.” (RO, returner, male)*

#### **4.3.2 Other ideas**

The majority of the other suggested ideas were also well received, with respondents recognising that there are always things which could be done to make it easier for those moving from one Member State to another.

##### **National administrations should be well trained about the rights of EU citizens and should know who to turn to in case of doubts**

This proposal was well received although many commented that this was something that should already be in place. (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DK, FR, EL, DE, IE, IT, LT, NL, PL, RO, ES, SE, UK)

*“[It is] very, very important, but not working yet.” (CZ, returner, female)*

*“Yes, well trained employees would make everything easier.” (DK, new mover, male)*

*“Well, it is self-evident that the authorities should know about the rights. But at the same time they should not have the role of babysitter. That is not their job. As long as they explain the rights, that’s OK.” (DE, established, female)*

This idea suggests a one-stop-shop concept to some respondents in which new movers can be helped with all their requirements at one location. (NL)

However, some also feel that this proposal might be difficult to achieve because of a lack of openness and accessibility from officials that respondents had come across (FR, SE) and because of the cost of training all administrators (IE).

*“It is surely good to provide such training, but if there are is interest from the person behind the desk it doesn’t help you as a citizen because they will still not be able to answer your question.” (SE, established, female)*

##### **The Representation of the European Commission in every Member State should have a dedicated service which could provide advice and information to EU citizens**

Respondents felt that this would be a helpful service as it could assist people in obtaining the relevant information without having to look for it on their own in multiple places. (AT, SE, CZ, FR, EL, DE, IE)

*“[It would be] useful to have a physical point of contact for all these questions, rights and procedures.” (FR, new mover, female)*

*“It’s good to have an office or a group of people, who you can actually talk to if you get stuck with a document or read something you can’t understand.” (DE, new mover, male)*

Some respondents were of the view that such a service would have to be provided face-to-face (UK, NL), while others thought it could also work as an online support service. (RO)

There were, however, those who felt that building this information source up and keeping in running would be too complex, particularly bearing in mind that all the information the service would provide is already available on the internet (AT). There was also concern about the cost of such a service to the European Commission (BG, DK, LT).

*“To me, it seems almost spoiled to wish for this. You should be able to do that yourself, seek information online, etc. They shouldn’t have to build offices just to guide you.” (DK, returner, female)*

*“I don’t see why [the] EU should throw money out of the window just to establish offices through [the] EU. People are free to find information online or they can do the same thing in the national offices.” (LT, new mover, male)*

Further concerns were raised about the possible unnecessary duplication between the responsibilities of embassies and the European Commission Representation in providing such a service (IE, IT) and about how practical the advice provided would be (IT). Indeed, some respondents had difficulty imagining what this service would look like and how it would operate (BE).

Although seen as important by some respondents, the two remaining suggestions were far less popular, only being widely liked by respondents in two to three countries in each case.

**Consumer legislation should be harmonised so that, when citizens buy goods in another Member State, either when travelling or at a distance (for instance online), they can benefit from the same rights as if they were buying in their own Member State**

This was seen as an important and useful suggestion by at least some respondents from a number of different countries as a result of the growing importance of on-line shopping and e-commerce. (AT, BG, CZ, DK, EL, LT, RO, PL)

*“Yes, because online commerce nowadays is getting more and more important. If this legislation is not harmonised it is kind of [a] barrier to trade and that is what we want to remove.” (LT, new mover, female)*

However, a wide range of reservations was raised about this suggestion, which included:

- The fear that standards will be lowered as a result, or that consumers will not really be protected. (DK, SE, UK)

*“If harmonisation would lead to better protection for consumers it is a good idea, but the risk is that it will be worse when so many countries are supposed to be in line with each other.” (SE, established, male)*

- Concern that the implications of this idea are too complicated and would mean too much regulation of commercial law in every country. (CZ)

A minority of respondents thought this suggestion was already being implemented (EL), or did not quite understand what was meant by it (DE), or what its relevance was in the context of migration (IE, IT).

*“It is a secondary issue, in my opinion it has more to do with financial union than with the rights of European citizens.” (IT, returner, male)*

**National administrations should be able to communicate with their counterparts in other countries to obtain the information they need in order to find an appropriate solution for the citizen’s problems without asking the citizen to obtain the information**

This idea was supported by respondents in a number of different countries (BG, CZ, DK, BE, FR, EL, DE, IT, NL, RO, UK, IE, LT, ES, SE) although it was only listed as a ‘favourite idea’ in two countries. It was felt that it reflects the idea of the EU as one community and they felt that if there is direct contact between the administrators a lot of the bureaucratic requirements would disappear (BG, UK).

*“This is something we need. Different administrations should be able to communicate with their counterparts in other countries.” (ES, new mover, female)*

However, an equally large number of respondents were concerned about issues of data protection and privacy, especially if this information forms part of a central data bank (SE, BE, DE, EL). Some felt that the sharing of information should only be allowed if a citizen’s permission is asked to obtain that information (NL, EL). Others felt that case studies and past experiences should be shared, but not personal information (RO).

*“Yes, if this doesn’t include absolutely private information. It should be listed, that and that is what we are going to share; we won’t share how much money is in your bank account.” (DE, new mover, male)*

In addition to concerns about individual privacy, respondents raised concerns about the practical and administrative implications of the policy. Concerns included:

- The potential complications involved in negotiating numerous languages and country-specific processes. (UK, FR, IE)
- Adding to the workload of officials (BE, IT) and difficulty in implementation due the amount of training of state officials that would be required. (CZ)

*“It is fine in an ideal world and it would be fantastic for us citizens, but I don’t think it is possible in the real world. The offices would get overloaded with work.” (IT, returner, male)*

- There were also concerns that processes might become over-bureaucratized (IT)

The majority of the spontaneous suggestions put forward by respondents about how a move to a different EU Member State could be made easier fell into one or other of

the solutions discussed above. However, there were some **additional suggestions** put forward by a number of respondents:

- Access to documents written in and officials speaking the language of the person moving to the Member State or in a range of different languages. (CZ, DE, LT, NL, RO, ES)
- Provision of information about comparative tax, social security and pension legislation. (DE, IT)
- Measures to make it easier for new movers to open bank accounts in the new Member State. (IE, IT, UK)

## 5 CITIZENSHIP

Following the discussions about moving from one EU Member State to another we introduced the topic of the rights of European citizens in order to evaluate the extent to which respondents were aware of their rights in a cross-border context.

### 5.1 Key findings

- Respondents understood the term **‘citizen of the EU’ to mean anyone who is, or who becomes, a citizen of any EU Member State**. EU citizenship was also seen as closely related to having similar rights and obligations in each Member State and was synonymous to freedom of movement.
- When respondents were provided with a short ‘quiz’ about the nature of European citizenship **almost all the respondents correctly identified that they were simultaneously citizens of their home country and of the EU**. However, a very small number thought that it might be possible to choose not to be a European citizen whilst remaining a citizen of their home country.
- **Respondents from about half of the countries covered by the study felt that, although they were aware of some of their rights as EU citizens, they would not consider themselves to be well informed, or could be better informed**. A smaller, but still significant number of respondents felt confident that they knew and understood their rights, while a small minority were of the view that they know their rights very well.
- When respondents were asked what they believed to be their rights as EU citizens, it was clear that the rights to mobility (freedom of movement) and to working and in some cases studying, in any EU Member State are foremost in their minds.
- When respondents were shown a list of some of the rights which European citizens enjoy they expressed mixed views. As might be expected amongst people who had moved from one EU Member State to another, **almost all the respondents were aware of their right to reside in any Member State of the EU**. Somewhat fewer (but still a significant majority) were aware that, when living in another Member State, they in principle had the right to be treated in the same way as a national of that state. The **least known right was the right to launch or participate in a Citizen’s Initiative**.

### 5.2 Knowledge of rights

When asked what they understood by the term **‘citizen of the EU’**, respondents saw this as applying to anyone who is a national or who becomes a citizen of any EU Member State. To be a citizen of the EU is to have similar rights and obligations in each of the EU countries (BG, UK, BE, DK). EU citizenship is also seen as synonymous with the freedom of movement, which is discussed later in this section.

*“A European citizen is someone who has roots in one State but in actual fact forms part of something on a broader scale.” (IT, returner, male)*

*“Being a citizen is synonymous with rights, in connection with knowledge of the law” (BE, established, female)*

*“The first thing I imagine is ‘me’; any member of a state that is a part of the EU.” (CZ, returner, female)*

*“I understand it as overcoming all the administrative, political or economic obstacles” (BG, returner, female)*

For some of the respondents who had moved to France or Ireland the concept of European citizenship is something that is still being developed or that is sometimes abstract because of the lack of any ‘real federal project’ and because of weak relationships between some of the EU countries. For respondents who had moved to the Netherlands the ‘real’ EU citizens were the ones who were making use of the rights that they have been afforded.

*“If you don’t interact with the EU, it [EU citizenship] doesn’t mean anything. If someone doesn’t use the EU union, calling a person a citizen of it is valid, but it doesn’t mean anything.” (NL, new mover, male)*

**All respondents regarded themselves as citizens of the EU**, however, the majority of those who commented on how they see themselves in terms of their national and European identity saw themselves first as a citizen of their own country and then as citizens of the EU. (BE, CZ, FR, IE, PL)

*“First of all English, secondly British, and thirdly EU. I make use of the advantages, but I feel myself to be English.” (DE, established, male)*

When respondents were provided with a short ‘quiz’ about the nature of European citizenship **almost all of them correctly identified that they were simultaneously citizens of their home country and of the EU.**

*“It’s like being born in Italy and being Italian, if you are born in Europe, you are a citizen of the European Union.” (DE, new mover, male)*

However, a very small number thought that it might be possible to choose not to be a European citizen whilst remaining a citizen of their home country. (BG, SE, LT, FR)

Respondents from about half of the countries felt that, **although they were aware of some of their rights as EU citizens, they would not consider themselves to be well informed, or could be better informed.** (BE, CZ, FR, EL, IT, LT, PL, RO, SE, UK)

*“I think that I probably do not know enough about my rights as an EU citizen, and I think there is not enough info available or being properly presented, especially for different audiences.” (CZ, new mover, female)*

*“I am not well informed on the matter. For now the information I have seems to me to be sufficient... [but] if I were to find myself in difficult situations then perhaps I would get better informed.” (IT, new mover, female)*

*“I do not feel well informed, but this is my own fault, because I did not inform myself about it.” (LT, new mover, female)*

As the latter quote illustrates, some respondents blame themselves for not being as informed as they would like to be, rather than placing the blame on others for not informing them. (LT, PL, RO)

A smaller, but still significant number of respondents felt confident that they knew and understood their rights (BE, BG, FR, IE, LT, UK), while a small minority were of the view that they know their rights very well (BG, DE, RO, SE, DK).

*“The rights aren’t really that difficult to understand; I think I understand them quite well. You can move freely from country to country... you can buy things... you can work. I don’t know enough about the specifics, but yeah, that’s pretty much the basics.” (DK)*

*“Free to travel, and work, and benefits... amenities, housing, my democratic right to vote.” (UK, established, female)*

**When asked about how they understand their rights as EU citizens it is clear that the rights to mobility (freedom of movement), working and in some cases studying, in any EU Member State is foremost on respondents’ minds** and is a constitutive element of their EU identity and therefore citizenship. (AT, BE, BG, CZ, FR, DE, IE, IT, LT, PL, ES, SE, UK)

*“It’s really fun for me because I grew up in a socialist regime and I still have this thing about being able to just get on a train or a plane. There’s nothing more wonderful.” (DE, new mover, male)*

*“The whole EU is like your own country – you have the same rights and obligations. The borders are not important, we are all together.” (BG, new mover, female)*

*“You have the feeling that the world is closer to you, there are fewer barriers than our parents experienced.” (SE, established, female)*

**Other rights that respondents mentioned** include:

- The right to participate in local community and EU elections. (DE, FR, ES, SE, IE, IT)
- The right to equal treatment and non-discrimination in the different Member States. (AT, LT, IT)
- The right to make use of healthcare services when travelling to other Member States. (IE, ES, SE)
- Trade and consumption: the right to move between Member States without customs requirements (IE, LT), consumer protections (DE), special discounts for EU citizens. (ES)

*“I can buy things without problems from other EU countries. There are no trading barriers, tolls.” (LT, new mover, female)*

### 5.3 Discussion of specific rights

When respondents were shown a list of some of the rights which European citizens enjoy they expressed mixed views. Most claimed to be unsurprised by most of the rights included but also acknowledged that they had not been explicitly aware of the specific elements.

As might be expected amongst people who had moved from one EU Member State to another, **almost all the respondents were aware of their right to reside in any Member State of the EU.** This right was considered to be the fundamental right of EU citizens and one of the main advantages of EU membership. However, some respondents raised questions about the true nature of this right, particularly whether it applies equally to all EU members. This is because citizens of the newer EU Member States face work restrictions in certain countries (BE); in Denmark some respondents had experienced difficulties obtaining a CPR-number which was required to be able to live there and one respondent had to leave Belgium after five months as he had been unable to find a job (NL). These experiences raised questions about how this right operates in practice. Nevertheless, nearly all respondents were aware of this right and those in Italy even acknowledged that it is a right that is ‘taken for granted’.

*“For me this is the most important right... of course, I already knew about it.” (AT, established, male)*

*“A fundamental right.” (FR, established, male)*

*“I didn’t know that you can live anywhere. That would have helped me overcome some of my anxieties.” (DE, established, female)*

*“But I’m not sure if I didn’t have a job or no money and decided to live in Berlin for two years – could I do that? I don’t know.” (DE, new mover, male)*

**Somewhat fewer respondents (but still a significant majority) were aware that, when living in another Member State, they in principle had the right to be treated in the same way as a national of that state.** However, there was again a number of respondents who questioned the full applicability of this right since their experiences have illustrated that people are not treated the same when seeking employment, health insurance and social security and that the right to vote in national elections is not granted to nationals of other EU countries. (BG, DK, FR, DE, EL, IE, NL, PL, ES)

*“This is right [that this right exists], but... that right is fact in the first 12 EU countries. I [am fortunate] to be a citizen of one of those 12 countries and I know that everything is much easier for us, but for citizens of the new members, like Bulgaria, there are still many restrictions.” (BG, established, male)*

*“In Italy they didn’t grant me my permit, despite the fact that I had work, a place to stay etc. They said they already had too many Romanians and I should go back and try to get this permit in Romania.” (NL, established, female)*

*“Well... this... I can say it’s a right. However... it’s not really like that. Because I am not a Romanian citizen, I don’t have all the rights as a national... I have*

*certain rights, yes, but I still remain an Italian citizen, even if I live here. I am still Italian, that's it.” (RO, new mover, male)*

A very small minority of respondents held that it would not be fair for citizens of other Member States to have exactly the same rights as local nationals because of the burden it places on the state. (CZ, DE, LT)

*“Maybe it is not true in terms of things like you won't get your pension; you would have to be a national of that country. I don't think it's true. It's not fair to expect to get all these things.” (CZ, new mover, female)*

*“That could include a lot, like just moving there and claiming benefits or jobless support. I don't think that should be 100% possible at the moment, I think the person should be able to support themselves.” (DE, new mover, male)*

Beyond these two rights awareness of the specific rights of citizens was much less widespread. Just over half of the respondents were aware, in principle, that they had **the right to make complaints via the European Commission, Parliament or Ombudsman**. For some of the respondents who had moved to Poland this right was felt to provide a sense of security for someone who has moved to a new Member State and they feel it prevents discrimination. Respondents who had moved to Italy thought that this right might be easier for organised groups, such as farmers, to exercise than the individual citizen who wouldn't know how, where and who to make the complaint to. It was clear from the findings that respondents were not familiar with the sorts of issues that could be taken up with these authorities or the process involved in doing so (ES, LT, IT, EL, BG, FR, DK).

*“This is something you have heard about through the media; you have read about someone who has done this. I don't know any details about it though.” (SE, established, female)*

*“You can definitely complain to some EU minister, I can remember the parents of one student I knew complaining. But I have never heard this word 'ombudsman'.” (CZ, established, male)*

*“I did not know about it, but I can imagine such a right existing.” (IT, new mover, female)*

*“I don't know if citizens have this right or whether you have to go through someone else who represents you to make a complaint.” (FR, established, female)*

**Slightly less than half of respondents were aware that they could use other Member States' embassies in countries outside the EU where their own country did not have an embassy.** One respondent had exercised this right when travelling to a country where Spain did not have an Embassy. He then contacted the Italian embassy instead who helped him with his problem. He described his experience as follows:

*“It really wasn't a problem for me. They were nice and helped me – just like as if I had been an Italian.” (DK, new mover, male)*

For many other respondents it was not a right that they would have mentioned spontaneously but, when thinking about it, it was something that would be logical

given their status as EU citizens and something that was valued and gave them a sense of security.

*“I have not heard this one, but I assume it is something I would expect.” (BG, established, male)*

**The least known right was the right to launch or participate in a Citizen’s Initiative** (a request signed by at least 1 million EU citizens from a significant number of EU Member States for the European Commission to propose new policy measures). Only around a quarter of respondents were aware of this right. For those who hadn’t known about this right before it was raised in the interview or focus group, it seemed to be natural and in line with the spirit of freedom and rights that exist in the EU.

*“It’s simply freedom of expression... it’s a natural condition.” (FR, established, female)*

*“Why not, it seems logical to me.” (FR, established, female)*

*“Well, if you have a good idea and you have enough support to get a million signatures – why not?” (DE, new mover, male)*

However, some respondents regarded the right as not really of direct relevance to them and considered the collection of 1 million signatures a daunting prospect.

*“Well, in theory that sounds fine, but 1 million people is too much. I do not imagine collecting 1 million signatures to defend a personal right. This refers more to group rights.” (BG, established, male)*

Confronted with the false statement that **EU citizens have the right to acquire nationality after 5 years living in a given Member State**, slightly less than half assumed that this is part of their rights as EU citizens. A number of respondents were aware that the minimum length of stay required varies in different EU countries depending on national immigration policies and other requirements, such as being able to speak the local language (ES, RO, NL, LT, IT, IE, EL, FR, DK, BE) but were not always sure about what the minimum time was. Respondents expected minimum lengths of stay of around seven or ten years.

*“I think that is governed internally by each individual country, how long the period is and what conditions have to be fulfilled.” (DE, returner, female)*

*“I asked the police and they said it was a minimum of ten years paying national insurance. Then you can get your Spanish passport.” (ES, established, male)*

A small minority of respondents were quite clear about the possible redundancy of such a right within the context of free movement within the EU.

*“If I can live here, I can work here. Why would I change my Hungarian nationality to German?” (DE, new mover, male)*

*“So, why should I change my citizenship? I’m an EU citizen, so why should I change my citizenship within the EU countries? There is no need for a citizenship of any particular country within the EU.” (AT, new mover, female)*

## 6 VOTING

Since EU citizens from one country living in another Member State have the right to vote in both local and European elections in the country, our discussion covered this right; whether it had been exercised and, if it had, whether any difficulties had been encountered.

### 6.1 Key findings

- The findings show **widespread uncertainty amongst respondents about their voting rights after they have moved to a different EU Member State**. Some respondents thought that they were only allowed to vote in their country of origin, while others thought that although they could not vote in local elections, they were allowed to participate in the European elections.
- Only **just over a third of respondents voted in the last European Parliamentary elections and the majority of these voted in their home country**.
- As with European elections, **only a small minority of respondents had participated in local elections in the Member State to which they had moved**. About twice the number had voted in local elections than had voted in EU elections in their new country of residence.
- The reasons given by those who had not voted in local elections included lack of interest (often in politics in general), insufficient knowledge about the parties, candidates and election objectives, the assumption that the process would be difficult and troublesome, laziness, and language barriers as election information was provided in the local language which not all respondents had yet mastered.
- Amongst the few who had exercised their right to vote in their new Member State the majority did not report experiencing any difficulties.
- When asked if having access to **more information about the European Parliamentary elections and the programmes and objectives of candidates and parties would have made them more likely to vote in the last election**, well over half the respondents indicated that this would have been the case.
- Respondents were also asked whether switching the polling date from June to May would have an impact on their participation in European elections. **The majority held the view that it would make no difference to them personally if the date was changed**.

### 6.2 Participation in local or European elections

The findings show **widespread uncertainty amongst respondents about their voting rights after they have moved to a different EU Member State**. Some respondents thought that they were only allowed to vote in their country of origin, while others thought that although they could not vote in local elections, they were allowed to participate in the European elections (AT, BE, BG, FR). Some were not

really interested in looking for information on their voting rights as they were only interested in elections in their country of origin (DE, BE).

*“I am not sure I have the right to vote in Bulgaria. I should become Bulgarian in order to vote in Bulgaria. I think I can vote for European parliament only.” (BG, new mover, female)*

*“I don’t exactly know when I will be able to vote in the administrative elections, perhaps after I have lived in Italy for five years.” (IT, new mover, male)*

**Only just over a third of respondents voted in the last European Parliament elections and the majority of these voted in their home country.** Of those who hadn’t voted a small minority maintained that they had wanted to vote but were discouraged by what they had perceived to be overly complicated procedures (AT, CZ).

*“I didn’t vote because I was abroad and it was too complicated. It should be done on the Internet with an e-pass, everyone should be able to do it online. The biggest barriers were the necessity of going to London, sending a registration application to Lithuania, getting it sent back, getting a voting pass, going to London again to vote, etc. etc.” (CZ, new mover, female)*

Interestingly, some respondents of Swedish origin demonstrated a very strong sense of civic duty which led them to vote at least in the European elections:

*“I shall do what is necessary so I can vote in future, because now I live here and it concerns me too, just as much as everyone else who lives here.” (FR, established, female)*

In addition to many respondents being unclear about their right to vote, the lack of participation in both European and local elections should also be viewed in the light of some respondents’ (initial) intentions to only move to the new Member State for a short period of time.

**As with European elections, only a minority of respondents had participated in local elections in the Member State to which they had moved.** About twice the number had voted in local elections than had voted in EU elections in their new country of residence (as opposed to voting in their home country).

*“I participate out of principle. It’s where I live, so I should have an opinion.” (DK, returner, male)*

*“I checked my rights at the German embassy here in Denmark when there were local elections. And I was actually surprised that I was allowed to vote in local elections here in Denmark, I didn’t think that was the case” (DK, established, female)*

The reasons given by those who had not voted in local elections included lack of interest (often in politics in general), insufficient knowledge about the parties, candidates and election objectives, the assumption that the process would be difficult and troublesome, laziness, and language barriers as election information was provided in the local language which not all respondents had yet mastered (DE, BE, FR, LT, NL, PL).

*"It's difficult enough, you don't know what to do, I'm sure you have to register in advance." (FR, established, male)*

Amongst the few who had exercised their right to vote in their new Member State the majority had not reported any difficulties. It is difficult to draw any clear conclusions about problems encountered when voting since very few respondents had been in this situation. However, the following quote suggests that the issues were very similar to those experienced with moving to a new Member State.

*"Last year I voted in the European Parliament elections in the embassy, but when there are elections in Poland it gets tricky, as I need to get some document, as my permanent place of residence is at my grandma's in some village in the middle of nowhere...I am just fed up with it." (PL, established, male)*

None of the respondents had stood as candidates in local or European elections.

### **6.3 Increasing turnout in European elections**

When asked if having **access to more information about the European Parliamentary elections and the programmes and objectives of candidates and parties** would have made them more likely to vote in the last election, well over half the respondents indicated that this would have been the case. Respondents were keen to receive more information.

*"I didn't vote because I didn't know when the election was. And I didn't know where I could get information from." (DE, established, female)*

*"If I had more information perhaps, more information about the programmes, the objectives, the action plans but also the measures which had been taken, and their results." (FR, returner, male)*

*"I guess I would take part in the European elections the next time. It is important to give the citizens an understanding of the activities of the European Union. I would then be highly motivated to vote." (AT, established, female)*

*"If they gave people a rundown of what their ideas are and what they are fighting for, then I would [vote]. If I was informed enough I would definitely vote." (UK, established, female)*

*"If the information doesn't come to us, we don't go out looking for it. I don't even know when the Parliament elections are. The European thing is above our heads, it's all hazy. If I had more information I'd go. I think it's a great concept." (BE, established, female)*

In addition to providing more information, respondents suggested that voter participation could also be increased in the following ways:

- By providing information to people ahead of their move on the voting rights of EU citizens; what steps to take, where to go to register, and registration deadlines. Providing information that is easier to obtain. (FR, IT)

*“Receiving a little document telling you to register before you go.” (FR, established, male)*

- Making it as easy as possible to register to vote. (FR, IT)

*“If only the administrative procedures weren’t too complicated!” (FR, established, female)*

- Information on how the EU impacts on peoples’ daily lives and about the completed work of European Parliament members. (DK, LT, UK)

A minority of respondents explained that, even if they were provided with more information about programmes, objectives and candidates they would not be more likely to vote. This is because although a lack of information was cited as an important reason for non-participation in European elections, it was by no means the only reason:

- Some respondents expressed a general lack of interest in elections (DE, IE, IT, LT, ES, UK). The findings show that this is largely because people see a disjuncture between their everyday lives and the European elections (DE, FR, LT, PL, RO, ES, UK).

*“The European election is not something I feel is very close to me. Normally, I only vote in my home country.” (DE, established, female)*

*“It’s something that I see as rather distant, people taking decisions whose impact and importance you really can’t measure...” (FR, returner, male)*

- People consider the national issues in their country of origin as much more important. (BG)

Respondents were also asked whether **switching the polling date from June to May** would have an impact on their participation in European elections. **The majority held the view that it would make no difference to them personally if the date was brought forward** (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EL, IE, IT, LT, PL, RO, ES, SE, UK). Others agreed that it would make no difference to them personally, but were mindful that it might make a difference to others who are on holiday in June (DE, EL). A small minority of respondents felt that moving the date would make a difference to voter turnout (CZ, DK, LT, RO, SE).

*“No, I don’t think that would change anything for me” (FR, established, female)*

*“It [moving the date] doesn’t matter at all.” (LT, new mover, female)*

*“To change the date of the election is something mechanical and probably would make the participation a bit higher, but the time of the election is not the main problem. The main problem is that the EU citizens do not really believe that these elections will have some effect on their everyday life.” (BG, established, male)*

*“Because these people go away on holiday, it’s better in May.” (FR, established, female)*

*“I would say yes, it matters [when the polling date is]. Because now the polling date is close to the holiday season, people are stressed, they are getting ready for their vacation, they don’t have time, they don’t think about the European elections... It’s better before, in May.” (RO, new mover, male)*

## ANNEX

### QUALITATIVE EUROBAROMETER - CITIZENSHIP IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS - DISCUSSION GUIDE – Final

*This qualitative discussion guide is intended to assist the moderator in conducting the groups and interviews, providing them with guidance on the topics to be discussed as well as suggested prompts and probes. As with all qualitative discussion guides it is not intended to be a definitive list of questions but provides a clear agenda for the interviews.*

*The guide will be supported by a detailed briefing of moderators via 6dTV, when they will be given further guidance on the project objectives and the key issues to be explored during the study.*

**Note to moderators:** *the overall objectives of this study are to gain an understanding of European citizen's experiences in exercising their rights to intra-EU mobility (the right to live in other Member States). In particular we are interested in identifying and understanding any obstacles they might have encountered.*

*The guide is intended to be used with three different types of respondent:*

- *new movers (moved to your country 3-6 months ago)*
- *established (moved to your country 6 months to 5 years ago)*
- *returners (citizens of your country who returned from another Member State within the last two years)*

*Most of the questions will be relevant for all three groups (it will be clearly indicated where sections are only for one or two of the groups) but the guide is written primarily from the new mover / established perspective and you will need to adapt your questioning approach for returner interviews. In returner interviews we are interested in the respondent's experiences in the country they have returned from – both when they moved there and when they left.*

#### 1) Introduction (5 minutes)

*The primary aims of this section of the discussion are for the moderator to introduce the study, to get to know the respondent and to begin to build a rapport with them. This section will also provide us with the initial factual information about the respondent's situation and circumstances and some history of any previous cross-border experiences.*

Moderator

- Introduce self
- TNS Qual+ / local institute
- Independent
- Impartial

Process

- Confidentiality
- Open discussion
- No right of wrong answers
- Audio-recording

Subject

- Experiences of moving to another EU country

Respondent

- Personal situation (married/single, children etc.)
- Occupation
- Hobbies and interests
- Nationality (country of origin)

Cross-border history

- Before coming to <COUNTRY> had you lived in other countries than your home country
- If yes:
  - Which countries
  - When
  - For how long

## 2) Current (recent) move (10 minutes)

*In this section we will explore the details of the respondent's current (recent) move, looking at all the factors involved in the decision to move, the number of people involved and any other relevant logistical issues. The purpose of this section is to provide a detailed context for the main body of the interview and to identify any factors which may have had an influence on respondent experiences. Although some of the information here will already be known from the recruitment stage we review it here to provide a check and as an integral part of the discussion. This section will address Q1 and Q2 from DG JLS's guidelines.*

When did you move to <COUNTRY>

- How long had you been planning the move
- Who else, if anyone, moved with you

What was the main reason for your move

- To what extent was it your choice
- To what extent did other people influence your decision
- Who else had an influence
- How important was their influence
- Ultimately, who made the final choice

How long do you expect to be in <COUNTRY>

- Did you know this when you moved
- When did it become clear

ASK IF NOT PERMANENT MOVE

When your time here is complete, where do you expect to go

- Why

ASK THOSE WHO HAVE LIVED IN ANOTHER EU MEMBER STATE BEFORE

When you lived in <COUNTRY> in the past, what were the reasons

- How different / similar was this to your current situation
- How helpful did you find this previous experience in your current move

### **3) Planning the move (15 minutes)**

*In this section we will explore the process of preparing for the move. In particular we will focus on sources of advice and information used; how useful they were; how respondents heard about them; whether there were other sources they would have liked to be able to access. This section will address Q7, Q8, Q9 and begin to address Q12 from DG JLS's guidelines.*

How much time did you have to plan your move

What were the main stages of the process of planning the administrative aspects of the move

- What did you do first
- How far in advance of the move did this happen
- What was the next stage

PROBE TO GAIN A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE STAGES OF THE PROCESS AS THE RESPONDENT SEES THEM. PLEASE FOCUS ON THE CITIZENSHIP / ADMINISTRATIVE / 'LEGAL' ASPECTS – DO NOT SPEND TIME ON OTHER ASPECTS OF THE MOVE (E.G. ACCOMMODATION, SCHOOLING, PHYSICAL MOVE ETC.)

What kinds of information did you seek to obtain when planning the administrative aspects of your move

- Which were the most important
- Why those
- Were there some things that other people suggested
- What things
- Who made the suggestion

IF NOT MENTIONED SPONTANEOUSLY PROBE TO SEE IF INFORMATION WAS SOUGHT AROUND

- Administrative requirements and procedures (e.g. visas, residence or work permits, recognition of qualifications, civil status etc.)
- Family related matters (e.g. getting married, divorced, child custody etc.)
- Rights to vote and stand as a candidate in elections
- Requirements and procedures to acquire <COUNTRY> nationality
- Car-related issues

INTERVIEWER: SEE FULL LIST OF POSSIBLE INFORMATION AREAS (REFERENCE 1 - NOT TO BE SHOWN TO RESPONDENT)

IF ANY ISSUES FROM REFERENCE 1 ARE MENTIONED BY RESPONDENTS, ASK THE FOLLOWING SECTION

Where did you go for the information you needed

- Which sources did you use
- Why those sources
- How good were they
- Did you find what you wanted

Were there any areas about which you could not find the information you required

- What would you have expected to find that was not available
- Where would you have expected to find it

PROBE FOR:

- Public authorities (national / regional / local)
- EU institutions (web portals, info and assistance services)
- Chambers of commerce
- Private / expatriate organisations

ASK ALL

In planning your move and looking for information, did you use any European Union services

- Which ones / what for

And did you use any of the European Union's websites

- Which ones / what for

GIVE RESPONDENTS SHOWCARD 1

Are you familiar with any of these

- Have you ever used any of them
- When / what for
- What did you think of them
- Did they provide what you needed

#### **4) Arriving and living in <COUNTRY> (10 minutes)**

*This section will focus on the initial experiences of citizens in a new country and identify any difficulties they experienced in relation to their rights as citizens. This section will cover Q10, Q11 and further elements of Q12 from DG JLS's guidelines.*

When you arrived in <COUNTRY> and as you settled in, did you encounter any difficulties

- If so, were any of these related to the types of administrative issues we have been discussing

INTERVIEWER: SEE LIST OF POSSIBLE AREAS OF DIFFICULTY (REFERENCE 2 - NOT TO BE SHOWN TO RESPONDENT)

- What form did these difficulties take
- How much of a problem were these issues
- How did you address / overcome them
- How long did they take to resolve

What do you think could have been done to reduce or eliminate the difficulties that you encountered

- What impact would this have made
- Why would this have been better than what happened
- Do you think this is a credible solution

## 5) Citizenship (10 minutes)

*This section will focus specifically on respondents' knowledge and awareness about their status and rights as EU citizens in a cross-border context. We have saved this discussion for relatively late in the interview so that we can gather spontaneous views on all the other issues, before specifically referring to rights. If respondents introduce the idea of rights earlier in the discussion we will follow up the points made. Similarly, where the citizenship issues discussed in this section refer back to points raised earlier, we will make sure that these issues are picked up. The section will cover Q3, Q4, Q5 and Q6 from DG JLS's guidelines.*

What do you understand by the term 'citizen of the European Union'

- To whom do you think it applies
- Why
- Do you think of yourself in this way
- Why (not)

GIVE RESPONDENT SHOWCARD 2

Looking at these three statements, which ones do you think are correct

- Why

CONFIRM WITH RESPONDENT THAT ALL CITIZENS OF EU MEMBER STATES ARE ALSO, BY DEFAULT, CITIZENS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

What do you know about your rights as a citizen of the European Union

- Do you know what they are
- How do you know
- Do you feel well informed in this area
- Why (not)

GIVE RESPONDENT SHOWCARD 3

Looking at this list, which of these do you think are rights of 'citizens of the European Union'

- How do you feel about these rights
- Would knowing them have made any difference to your recent move
- Why (not)

## 6) Voting (5 minutes)

*The section looks specifically at voting rights, if the respondent has exercised them in their country of residence and how easy that was. It includes the issues raised in Q13, Q14 and Q15 of DG JLS's guidelines.*

Have you ever stood as a candidate in a European election or a local election in <COUNTRY>

IF YES, PLEASE ADJUST THE FOLLOWING SECTION ACCORDINGLY

While living in <COUNTRY>, have you voted / did you vote in elections for the European Parliament or in any local municipal elections?

- Was that in your home country or in <COUNTRY>

IF VOTED IN <COUNTRY> ASK

How easy did you find it to exercise your right to vote in <COUNTRY>

- Why do you say that
- Did you encounter any problems in particular
- What were they
- Why do you think they occurred
- What could have been done to overcome them

IF NOT VOTED IN <COUNTRY> ASK

Why have you not voted / did you not vote in <COUNTRY>

- Would you consider voting in <COUNTRY>
- Why (not)

ASK ALL

Did you vote in the last European election

- Why (not)
- What might make you more likely to vote in the next European election

Do you think you would be more likely to vote if:

- The polling date were switched from June to May
- You had access to more information about the European Parliament elections and the programmes and objectives of candidates and parties

## 7) Suggestions and closing remarks (10 minutes)

*This final section will allow us to test the suggested mechanisms for reducing difficulties for citizens moving to other EU Member States. It will also provide an opportunity for any final comments from the respondent. We should already have spontaneous suggestions for improvements from sections 3 and 4 so, in this section, we will move straight to introducing the list from Q12.*

### GIVE RESPONDENT SHOWCARD 3

Thinking about your move to <COUNTRY> which we discussed earlier, can you please have a look at this list of suggested actions that the EU could undertake to try and reduce or eliminate the difficulties people encounter when moving to other Member States

- What do you think of these ideas
- Which of them do you like
- Why
- Which seem less good
- Why

If the EU were to adopt only two items from the list, which two should they be

- Why

Is there anything else you would like to add

- Anything relevant that we haven't discussed

Thank respondent and close interview

## **REFERENCE 1 - LIST OF POSSIBLE INFORMATION AREAS (SECTION 3)**

a. Administrative requirements and procedures (for yourself and/or family members) on

- visas
- residence permits
- work permits
- studying abroad
- registering as self-employed
- finding a job
- recognition of academic diplomas
- recognition of professional qualifications
- moving as a retiree
- social security and welfare

b. Family related matters

- recognition of your civil status documents (for instance with a view to getting married there)
- child custody rights
- divorce
- registered partners
- same sex partnerships

c. Rights to vote and stand as a candidate in

- municipal elections
- elections for the European parliament

d. About the types of documents you might need to produce, for example relating to your civil status

e. Requirements and procedures to acquire the nationality

f. Car-related issues

**REFERENCE 2 - LIST OF POSSIBLE INFORMATION AREAS  
(SECTION 3)**

- Staff at the local administration were not aware of my EU rights
- You were not sufficiently informed / aware of your rights
- Lengthy administrative procedures
- Unclear administrative requirements
- Progressive requests for documents
- Requirements to have documents translated or legalised
- Complexity of the legislation

## SHOWCARD 1

### **EUROPEAN UNION SERVICES AND WEB-SITES**

- European Commission representation in your home country
- EUROPA (the European Commission website)
- The 'Your Europe' portal
- 'Europe Direct'
- The web-site of the Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission
- Citizens Signpost service
- Enterprise Europe Network
- EURES
- The European Commission's guide on the right of EU citizens to free movement and residence
- The European Commission's eYouGuide

**SHOWCARD 2**

**EUROPEAN UNION CITIZENSHIP**

A) You have to ask to become a citizen of the European Union

B) You are both a citizen of the European Union and your home country at the same time

c) If you wish, you can choose not to be a citizen of the European Union

SHOWCARD 3

## **EUROPEAN UNION – CITIZENS RIGHTS**

- A. A citizen of the EU has the right to reside in any Member State of the European Union.
  
- B. A citizen of the EU has the right to acquire the nationality of any Member State in which he or she has lived for at least 5 years.
  
- C. A citizen of the EU has the right to make a complaint to the European Commission, European Parliament or European Ombudsman.
  
- D. Citizens of the EU, staying in a country outside the EU where their country has no embassy, have the right to ask for help at embassies of other EU Member States.
  
- E. A citizen of the EU, residing in another Member State, has in principle the right to be treated in the same way as a national of that State.
  
- F. A citizen of the EU has the right to launch or participate in a Citizens' initiative, namely a request signed by at least 1 million EU citizens from a significant number of Member States for the European Commission to propose new policy measures.

SHOWCARD 4

## **POSSIBLE MEASURES EU COULD TAKE TO FACILITATE MOVING TO ANOTHER EU COUNTRY**

- Provide trusted, well-known sources of information on the rights of EU citizens that could be relied upon by everyone.
- A user-friendly Guide produced by each Member State on the rights of other Member States' nationals who move and reside there
- A user-friendly Guide produced by the EU on all the rights of Member States' nationals as EU citizens
- The Representation of the European Commission in every Member State should have a dedicated service which could provide advice and information to EU citizens
- National administrations should be able to communicate with their counterparts in other countries to obtain the information they need in order to find an appropriate solution for the citizens' problems without asking the citizen to obtain the information
- National administrations should be well trained about the rights of EU citizens and should know who to turn to in case of doubts.
- Civil status certificates (such as marriage or birth certificates) and other official documents from a Member State should be generally accepted in all other Member States without any additional formalities
- Consumer legislation should be harmonised so that, when citizens buy goods in another Member State, either when travelling or at a distance (for instance online), they can benefit from the same rights as if they were buying these goods in their own Member State.