20 YEARS of the European Single Market

Together for new growth
Main achievements

1992-2012
20 YEARS of the single market
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20 YEARS
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Main achievements
Foreword by Commissioner Michel Barnier

The European Single Market, which will shortly turn 20, has transformed the way Europeans live, work, travel, do business and study. It has opened up opportunities for businesses to expand successfully on the global market.

As President Barroso put it in a recent speech, most of us as young men or women could not have dreamt of what is now possible thanks to the Single Market.

This report takes stock of the main achievements of the past 20 years and show how the Single Market has changed the daily lives of 500 million European citizens and more than 21 million European businesses.

But this is no time for complacency. Twenty years after 1992, European citizens and companies are still suffering the consequences of an unprecedented series of crises. Unemployment is high, businesses face difficulties accessing funding and populism is on the rise across Europe.

The Single Market could be the first victim of the crisis and the protectionist reactions which have emerged as a result of it. However, let us not forget that the Single Market is our main asset to help get us out of the current crisis.

This is an opportunity to look forward, and take our Single Market to a new stage. A better functioning Single Market is a necessary precondition for the European growth initiative, which citizens and businesses are expecting.

That is the objective of the 50 concrete and operational proposals of the Single Market Act, adopted by the Commission in 2011 with a follow-up in 2012: European passports for venture-capital funds and funds investing in social entrepreneurship, better recognition of professional qualifications, the creation of an EU unitary patent and easier access to public procurement for SMEs, constitute a first step in the right direction.

But we must go further. The Single Market week, which will take place across Europe from 15 to 19 October 2012, is an opportunity to join forces and open a new chapter for the Single Market in 2012. I hope that reading this booklet will stimulate you to play an active part.

Michel Barnier,
Member of the European Commission in charge of Internal Market and Services
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Travelling to another EU country – or staying there

Air transport
Passenger rights
Pensions and social security
European Health Insurance Card
Travelling abroad for planned healthcare

Benefits for European companies

Free access to a substantial market
The principle of mutual recognition
Breaking down obstacles to the internal market before they arise
Standardisation
Sustainable and safe industry
An expanding retail sector as an engine for cross-border trade
Removing barriers to trade in services too
Protecting innovation: intellectual property rights
Bidding for public contracts in other EU Member States
Cutting red tape for business
Helping business reap the benefits of the Single Market
Enterprise Europe Network
Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Making the Single Market deliver

From a legal to a practical approach
Single Market legislation: implementation, cooperation and problem solving
Internal Market Scoreboard
Internal Market Information (IMI) system
SOLVIT
Complaint handling by the European Commission
Your Europe
Points of Single Contact
European Consumer Centres (ECCs)
Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network
Introduction

What is the Single Market?

The Single Market allows people and businesses to move and trade freely across borders within the EU. Initially open to 345 million people in 1992, it can now be accessed by over 500 million people in 27 EU Member States.

Over the years, a number of changes have made this possible:

- trade barriers and physical customs controls which made trade in goods costly and unpredictable have been abolished;

- national rules that prevented companies trading across borders have been harmonised, or are now recognised by other EU countries;

- public procurement rules that may favour certain players were changed so that companies, especially small and medium ones, can bid for contracts anywhere in the EU;

- moving, and even more residing and looking for work in another country in Europe used to be a bureaucratic nightmare – legislation was changed to allow Europeans to move to and work in other Member States;

- traditionally, the free circulation of services has been less developed than that of goods, whereas services is one of the most dynamic sectors of our economies – many barriers to trade in the services sector have been lifted, allowing companies to provide cross-border services on a temporary basis, for example, or to offer services in another EU country without prior authorisation or a particular licence.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/index_en.htm

Genesis of a Single Market

1986: The EU adopted the SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT, clearing the way for a number of decisions to create the Single Market.

1986-92: The EU adopted nearly 280 pieces of legislation. In many areas, 12 sets of national regulations from the then 12 Member States were replaced by one common European law, vastly reducing complications and costs for businesses wishing to market a product throughout the Union. In other areas, the Member States simply agreed to give each others’ laws and technical standards the same validity as their own (the ‘mutual recognition’ principle).

1993: The Single Market became a reality for 12 EU countries: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/top_layer/historical_overview/index_en.htm
An ever-growing Single Market

Growth in figures
The Single Market has grown:

- from 345 million consumers in 1992 to over 500 million in 27 countries today;
- from 12 million companies in 1999 to more than 21 million;
- for trade between EU countries, from €800 billion in 1992 to €2 800 billion in 2011 for the value of goods exchanged;
- for trade between the EU and the rest of the world, from €500 billion in 1992 to €1 500 billion in 2011 for the value of goods exchanged.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm

In 1995, 12 become 15: + Austria, Finland and Sweden

In 2004, 15 become 25: + Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

In 2007, 25 become 27: + Bulgaria and Romania

In 2013, 27 will become 28: + Croatia

The European Economic Area countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are also part of the Single Market.
Europe of free movement: the Schengen Area

Signed in 1985, the Schengen Agreement started the process of dismantling EU internal border control. The first abolition of controls took place in 1995 between Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Portugal. Over time the Schengen Area has expanded so that it now includes 26 countries.

The removal of internal borders is one of the most visible achievements of European integration. Although it is not directly part of the Single Market legislative framework, it is a key component of a Europe of free movement.

The Schengen Agreement has made passport-free travel possible for over 400 million Europeans. European citizens make over 1.25 billion journeys as tourists every year, and can visit friends and relatives all over Europe without bureaucratic obstacles at internal borders. And for the EU economy, free movement is central to the success of the Single Market.

More information:

Schengen Area as of end 2011

EU Schengen States
Non Schengen EU States
Non-EU Schengen States

AT: Austria  IT: Italy
BE: Belgium  LI: Liechtenstein
BG: Bulgaria  LT: Lithuania
CH: Switzerland  LU: Luxembourg
CY: Cyprus  LV: Latvia
CZ: Czech Republic  MT: Malta
DE: Germany  NL: Netherlands
DK: Denmark  NO: Norway
EE: Estonia  PL: Poland
EL: Greece  PT: Portugal
ES: Spain  RO: Romania
FI: Finland  SE: Sweden
FR: France  SI: Slovenia
HU: Hungary  SK: Slovakia
IE: Ireland  UK: United Kingdom
IS: Iceland 
A single currency to boost the Single Market

A market works better when everyone is using the same money. The first step towards a shared currency took place on 1 January 1999, with the creation of the euro. Exactly three years later, euro notes and coins came into circulation.

The euro is now used by consumers and businesses alike in 17 EU Member States, which together have come to be known as the ‘Eurozone’: Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland.

The euro is widely used in international payments and is one of the world’s major reserve currencies, along with the US dollar and the Japanese yen.
Profiting from the euro

- No more transaction costs for currency exchange
  The euro promotes price transparency and competition. Savings have been estimated at 0.3–0.4% of EU-12 GDP.\(^1\) For smaller Member States, the gains are larger – as much as 1% of GDP.

- No currency risk = more trade within the Eurozone
  The ease of trading with a larger and seamless market boosts trade with non-EU countries. A recent study\(^2\) suggests that trade within the Eurozone has grown by 15% thanks to the euro.

- The dynamism of the Single Market and the euro combined
  Low interest rates mean increased competitiveness for firms, and higher investment and consumption.

- Together, these levers created an estimated €330 billion in additional GDP in 2010 – 3.6% of Eurozone GDP that year.\(^3\)

More information:

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\(^1\) Ex ante estimation by the European Commission (1990).
\(^2\) McKinsey (January 2012): “The future of the euro”.
\(^3\) McKinsey (January 2012): “The future of the euro”.
MAIN MACROECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Growth and jobs in figures

- EU27 GDP in 2008 was 2.13% or €233 billion higher than it would have been if the Single Market had not been launched in 1992.

- In 2008 alone, this amounted to an average of €500 extra in income per person in the EU27. The gains come from the Single Market programme, liberalisation in network industries such as energy and telecommunications, and the enlargement of the EU to 27 member countries.

- Over the same period, the Single Market helped to create 2.77 million new jobs – a 1.3% increase in total EU employment.

- These benefits could be doubled with the removal of the remaining trade barriers, mainly in the services sector, and by boosting the digital Single Market.

Trade and investment flows

- Intra-EU trade in goods soared from €800 billion in 1992 to €2800 billion in 2011 thanks to the Single Market. It increased from 12% of EU GDP in 1992 to 22% in 2011.

- By creating a common trade policy, EU Member States have greater leverage; they are able to open markets, defend EU interests, and thereby boost trade, employment and growth.

- Today, 21 million jobs – or 1 job in 10 – are dependent on EU exports. A quarter of these jobs are located outside of the exporting country. This is because successful exporters draw on inputs and skills across Europe thanks to the Single Market.

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4 European Commission.
The Single Market makes EU firms stronger: EU exports to non-EU countries increased from €500 billion in 1992 to €1 500 billion in 2011, or from 8% of EU GDP in 1992 to 12% in 2011.

The Single Market has also made the EU a more attractive location for foreign investors. By simply investing in one EU economy, foreign investors can reach 500 million people.

The flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) between EU countries has increased dramatically – from €64 billion in 1992 to €260 billion in 2010 (and before the economic downturn, it had reached €730 billion).

The economic and financial crisis

The economic impact of the crisis

- The EU economy shrank between 2008 and 2009, with GDP falling by €700 billion. In 2010 it recovered slightly, growing by €500 billion in comparison to 2009.

- Almost 5 million people lost their jobs between 2008 and 2010.

- Government deficit grew from 0.9% of EU GDP in 2007 to 6.6% in 2010.

- Trade in goods between EU countries fell by €415 billion (or 15%) in 2009 compared to 2008.

- EU exports to third countries fell by €160 billion (or 12%) in 2009 compared to 2008.

- The flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) between EU countries fell from €730 billion in 2007 to €200 billion in 2009.

- Foreign direct investment flows outside the EU fell from €560 billion in 2007 to €140 billion in 2010.

Coming out of the crisis

The crisis has hit EU Member States differently and has exposed structural weaknesses in several countries. This has highlighted a need for more coordination between economic policies and better functioning of the Single Market.

The EU and its Member States have been taking a series of important decisions to stimulate recovery, install better oversight and coordination of national economic policies, and design new EU supervision and rules for the financial sector.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/
A win-win competition policy

Competition policy ensures that companies compete on a level playing field. It promotes innovation and gives consumers a better choice of products and services, lower prices and higher quality.

Every year, the Commission adopts decisions on antitrust and cartels, mergers and state aid that prevent firms and governments from re-establishing barriers to the free movement of goods and services. These decisions benefit consumers and the economy alike. For example, it is estimated that Commission decisions on horizontal mergers in 2011 led to benefits of at least €4 billion for customers.

In 2011, the Commission also issued 408 state aid decisions, many of which were part of the response to the economic and financial crisis. State aid policy has ensured a coordinated approach to the crisis for the sound restructuring of financial institutions (ensuring their long-term viability), and the maintenance of a level playing field in the Single Market.

Member States decreased illegal state aid from 0.28% of GDP in 1996-2000 to 0.08% in 2009.

Several estimates suggest that competition-friendly market reforms for goods have boosted GDP by several percentage points.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/competition/index_en.html
BENEFITS FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS

A Single Market for consumers

Consumer expenditure accounts for 56% of EU GDP. The more the 500 million EU consumers are able to make informed choices, the greater the impact they can have on strengthening the Single Market and on stimulating competition, innovation and growth.

Telecommunications

Compared with 20 years ago, the EU telecoms sector is more open, competitive and technologically advanced. Fixed and mobile Internet access, digital TV broadcasting, mobile communication services and voice telephony are used daily by hundreds of millions of Europeans from a wide variety of electronic platforms.

- the first call is made from a mobile phone
- the telephone moves from being an optional extra to a right. Having a telephone access is recognised as a universal service – everyone must have access to a public network, and be able to make a call at an affordable price
- it is possible to make unlimited calls as part of package offers, including abroad
- an international voice call costs close to three times less than in 1998 (€0.67 per minute in 2010 instead of €1.63 per minute in 1998)
- the cost of making and receiving a call when abroad in the EU is 73% cheaper than in 2005, and may even be free of charge via fixed or Internet networks
- the share of people communicating by mobile phone is 100% in all EU countries, having increased from 1 million in 1994 to 10 million in 1995 and more than 100 million in 1998
Internet in everyday life

Whether in the office, at school or university, dealing with an administrative file, visiting friends or on holiday, the Internet and electronic tools have become essential for interaction with the world.

A proactive and flexible EU policy towards the Internet has contributed to the development of networks and services that were unimaginable to many 20 years ago. The latest gadget or fashions may now be ordered from another European country and delivered to the front door. A company located at one end of the continent may form a partnership with one at the other end. In this new, online world, the consumer is also empowered. She or he is able to influence service through online interaction or publishing a review.

But the Internet is not all about work or the economy. Entertainment services and social networks have exploded in recent years and cultural products are now accessible through commercial or public services such as the Europeana portal. Access to artistic creations has become easier through sharing and online distribution, although new ways to compensate artists and creators are still needed.

Eurotariff maximum roaming charge per minute in Euros (without VAT):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eurotariff maximum price while abroad</th>
<th>Making a call</th>
<th>Receiving a call</th>
<th>Sending an SMS</th>
<th>Receiving an SMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2009</td>
<td>43 cents</td>
<td>19 cents</td>
<td>11 cents</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2010</td>
<td>39 cents</td>
<td>15 cents</td>
<td>11 cents</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2011</td>
<td>35 cents</td>
<td>11 cents</td>
<td>11 cents</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Internet access in figures:
- Today 73% of all EU households are connected to the Internet
- 67.5% of the population uses the Internet at least once a week
- 76% of the EU population used the Internet at least once in 2011
- At global level, the EU is the second largest region, behind Asia, by number of Internet users, with more than 380 million.
E-commerce

E-commerce, especially across borders, can bring benefits to both consumers and businesses and has the potential to make the European economy much more competitive and responsive to consumer demand.

E-commerce in figures

- More than 4 in 10 EU consumers (43%) have bought goods and services over the Internet in the past year. Only 9.6% of consumers ordered goods or services from sellers from other EU countries.

- Online prices are lower than offline prices for at least two thirds of products. And online shoppers have more choice: for a typical shopping trip, the choice on websites run in a consumer’s own country is 2.5 times greater than on the high street. If he or she shops around on websites run in other EU countries, the choice is even larger – 16 times greater than in a shop.

- By turning to e-commerce to buy goods, consumers could save around €11.7 billion – an amount equivalent to 0.12% of EU GDP. If all barriers to intra-EU e-commerce were eliminated, consumers could save even more because two-thirds of savings are due to increased online choice, which is considerably larger across borders.

- Although the e-commerce growth rate is high at national level, online transactions remain marginal at EU level, representing only 3.4% of retail trade.

More information:  
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/e-commerce/index_en.htm

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5 Sales and purchases made via internet sites or electronic systems, excluding the sending of orders which have been typed manually (Eurostat and OECD definition).
6 Euromonitor.
Energy

The energy sector at end of the 1990s:

- a monopolistic utility; no competition or cross-border entry by suppliers
- cooperation between energy companies from different EU countries limited to security of supply
- missing interconnectors meant a lack of cross-border trade
- hardly any cross border competition at the supply level
- industry dependent on one single source of gas supply, which entailed supply risks
- large price disparity within the EU
- economies of scale limited to national markets
- inefficiencies and little innovation

A new energy era

This situation has been gradually changing due to Single Market legislation introduced in 1996, 1998, 2003 and 2009, and thanks to competition enforcement.

An internal energy market has enhanced security of supply. It has started to interconnect fragmented markets and put an end to 'energy islands', making countries less dependent on a single source of supply. Competitive and efficient markets will help attract the investments to modernise infrastructure and boost renewable energy. Bigger markets also favour the take-up of new technologies.

Cross-border trade in the energy sector means protection from supply disruptions and power cuts for EU Member States. At least 14 European energy companies are now active in more than one Member State, contributing to increased competition among service providers.

Shopping around

Industrial customers and households are now free to choose their energy supplier – a move which is expected to act as a catalyst for retail competition. EU consumers could save up to €13 billion if they switched to the cheapest electricity tariff available. Mystery shoppers – researchers pretending to be ordinary shoppers – have been able to find a better deal in more than 6 cases out of 10.

However, consumers are still not able to make full use of the savings opportunities created by market liberalisation. With only one in three (32%) consumers comparing offers and almost half (47%) not knowing how much electricity they consume, awareness is low. Some 41% do not know whether they have the cheapest tariff.

The Citizens’ Energy Forum – set up by the Commission – seeks to implement competition in retail electricity and gas markets and to improve the way the market functions for consumers.

**Financial services**

The integration of financial markets began more than 20 years ago. One of the principal expectations was a reduction in the cost of capital for both individuals and companies. The introduction of the euro, together with the EU policy in the area of financial services, has facilitated integration.

Before the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2007, the integration of capital markets began to deliver the expected benefits for both investors and consumers:

- Bank loan interest rates fell and converged\(^7\);
- Government bond yields decreased and converged (the baseline interest rate used to determine the cost of debt);
- Firms began to show a preference for market-based financing, particularly through bonds, over borrowing from banks. Better market monitoring and a better flow of information supported this trend.

Between 2007 and 2011, the financial crisis slowed the integration of capital markets, and the costs of capital across countries began to diverge and increase.

In response to the financial crisis, the EU has taken measures to improve transparency in the financial sector. It put in place new rules and improved oversight. Competition rules and recapitalisation requirements were imposed on bank rescue and restructuring operations, and the European Central Bank gave massive assistance to the interbank market.

More information:

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Redress in consumer transactions

It is bad enough when a holiday is spoiled or a laptop breaks just two days after it is bought. It is even worse if the travel agent refuses to refund the cost, or a company rejects requests for repair or replacement – even though the laptop was under guarantee.

Such problems can be even more difficult for consumers to solve if the product or service was not bought in their home country, or was bought online.

Disputes of this kind can be settled quickly and effectively, without going to court, using alternative dispute resolution (ADR) entities.

New legislation will ensure that every consumer in the EU can take a dispute to an ADR in their own country, regardless of the sector in which the problem has arisen, or whether it relates to a domestic or a cross-border transaction.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/redress_cons/adr_en.htm

Product safety

All products available within the Single Market are required to be safe. Safety laws were introduced EU-wide in 1992 (and revised in 2001) and require that all products meet certain standards, technical specifications and consumer expectations.

This has helped tackle various health and safety risks and improved product safety. It has also strengthened the Single Market, by asking companies to respect a clear set of obligations, no matter what kind of products they sell or which country they come from.

The toy sector

Confident and well informed consumers are the drivers behind Europe’s toy industry.

Toys change, and so has the legislation. Introduced in 1992, EU toy safety legislation has been revised to take into account new scientific knowledge, as well as innovation within the sector. The new safety rules also apply to toys bought online, taking into account that more and more toys are sold on the Internet.

Companies may sell their toys across the EU thanks to consistent safety rules. This increases competitiveness and reduces costs, while making sure that toys bought in Europe are among the safest in the world.
Food safety

Providing safe, nutritious, high quality and affordable food to Europe’s consumers is the objective behind EU rules on food safety in the Single Market.

It is now easier to:
- trade food products between EU countries thanks to a reduced administrative burden for food business operators;
- place products on the market thanks to the removal of all certificates/internal border procedures for food products;
- give consumers access to a wide variety of safe food products.

The free movement of food is an essential aspect of the Single Market and contributes significantly to the health and well-being of citizens, as well as to social and economic interests.

A safer food market
- Harmonised high standards on hygiene and packaging materials not only helped trade but also increased food safety levels in general, for example by increasing control of salmonella.
  • Since information on salmonellosis cases in humans first became available, incidence rates have dropped by 50%.
- EU laws on the authorisation of pesticides were first introduced nearly 20 years ago and completed in 2009.
  • Approximately 75% of active pesticide substances have been removed from the EU market.
- With animal health being a prerequisite for safe and diverse food, the EU has introduced laws on trading live animals and animal products over the last 20 years.
  • Many serious diseases have been eradicated and a Single Market in animals and animal products functions efficiently and safely.

The food and beverage sector in figures
- The largest manufacturing sector in the EU in terms of turnover and employment
- Employs around 4.5 million people and generates around 2% of the total EU 27 GDP
- Trade in food products between EU Member States has increased threefold to approximately €450 billion over the past 20 years
- The EU is the biggest global exporter and importer of food and feed, with exports of food and beverage products amounting to €65.3 billion and imports to €55.5 billion in 2010 creating a positive trade balance of almost €10 billion

Source: Eurostat (SBS, COMEXT)

More information:
Protecting consumers when shopping

Over the past 20 years, a substantial set of laws protecting consumers has been developed. Known in EU terms as the consumer acquis, the laws introduced the following rights for consumers:

- When making a contract with a retailer, consumers now have protection against unfair terms, and have rights when purchased goods are faulty. Normally, faulty goods must be either repaired or replaced. If this is not possible, the consumer may ask for his or her money back.

- Advertising and other commercial practices directed towards consumers must not be misleading or aggressive. Certain commercial practices are banned outright – such as claiming that a product is free when the consumer actually has to pay something to get it.

- The right of withdrawal – already enjoyed by consumers in relation to doorstep sellers – was extended to contracts concluded at a distance, e.g. by telephone, mail order, or more recently via the Internet. Consumers have at least seven days to change their mind, and this period will be extended to 14 days before 2014.

- Consumers going on holiday are now protected by the Package Travel Directive and the Timeshare Directive. Consumers who go on a package tour must be provided with relevant information, and are protected should the tour operator go bankrupt while they are on holiday. Any purchaser of a timeshare has the right to receive detailed information about the property and may also withdraw from the contract within 14 days.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/consumer-marketing/index_en.htm

How mobile are EU citizens and workers?

Europeans now have the right to live, study, work, research and retire in any EU Member State. Most educational diplomas and professional qualifications gained in one EU country are recognised in others, and EU programmes such as Erasmus and Leonardo enable hundreds of thousands of Europeans to study or train abroad every year. In addition to the personal benefits these opportunities offer, they also boost the European economy.

For instance, the benefits of opening up the EU-15’s labour markets to people from the newer EU Member States are estimated at nearly €50 billion\(^8\) a year – and these annual gains could double by 2020.

The majority of Europeans (60%) think that moving within the EU is good for European integration, 50% think it is good for the labour market, and 47% think it is good for the economy\(^9\).

More information on living in another EU country:
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/index_en.htm

More information on working in another EU country:

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\(^9\) Special Eurobarometer 337 on geographical and labour mobility (2009).
Mobility in practice

Citizens living in another EU Member State
By the end of 2010, around 13 million EU citizens (close to 3% of total EU population) were living in an EU country other than their own for one year or more\textsuperscript{10}.

Since the EU expanded to include 10 more countries in 2004 and extra further 2 in 2007, the number of EU citizens from these newer Member States living in another EU country has increased – from just over 1.7 million at the end of 2003 to more than 5.5 million 7 years later\textsuperscript{11}. This means that the number of EU citizens from the newer Member States choosing to live abroad within the EU grew by more than half a million per year in the period 2003-2010.

Citizens working in another EU Member State
Enhanced mobility in the Single Market:
\begin{itemize}
  \item creates dynamic labour markets
  \item matches jobseekers to jobs
  \item matches employers to skills and helps overcome skills shortages
  \item increases workers’ skills and experiences, making them more employable
\end{itemize}

In 2011, around 6 million EU citizens (close to 3% of total EU working population) worked in an EU country other than their own\textsuperscript{12}.

AROUND 10% OF EUROPEANS SAY THEY HAVE LIVED AND WORKED IN ANOTHER COUNTRY IN THE PAST\textsuperscript{13}.

\textsuperscript{10} Long-term data presented on the graph from EU-Labour force survey underestimates the number of EU citizens living in another Member State. 2010 data in the text is from Eurostat migration statistics which is available for recent years only.
\textsuperscript{11} Eurostat migration statistics and EU-Labour force survey.
\textsuperscript{12} Eurostat migration statistics and EU-Labour force survey.
\textsuperscript{13} Special Eurobarometer 337 on geographical and labour mobility (2009).
Studying or working abroad – a plus for the present and the future

By studying abroad, young people develop personally and improve their future job opportunities. Spending a period of time in another EU country also facilitates the circulation of knowledge and helps consolidate the Single Market – Europeans who are mobile when studying are more likely to be mobile when working later in life.

The right to free movement means that EU citizens are entitled to go to another Member State to study or train. The right to equal treatment requires that they have access to education under the same conditions as local students, although some restrictions may apply for maintenance grants.

More information:

Studying across borders – Erasmus

The Erasmus programme has been supporting student and academic exchanges for 25 years.

More than 2.5 million students have participated in Erasmus since it started in 1987. A further 250 000 higher education teachers and other staff have taken part since 1997. Feedback confirms the positive impact of studying or training abroad.

Today, more than 4 000 higher education institutions in 33 countries – including the vast majority of European universities – participate in Erasmus.

More information:

![Number of Erasmus students between 1991 and 2010](chart.png)
Recognition of diplomas

Whether an EU country recognises an academic qualification awarded in another country remains a decision for each individual country. However, EU law ensures that this decision must be made without discriminating on grounds of nationality, and without hindering a citizen’s right to free movement.

The diversity of education systems in the EU means that some people still experience problems in having their academic qualifications officially recognised. But in the vast majority of cases, recognition is a smooth process: complaints represent only a tiny proportion of the very large number of students studying abroad.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/index_en.htm

Recognition of professional qualifications

By the mid-1980s, rules on automatic recognition were in place for seven professions: doctors, nurses of general care, midwives, dentists, pharmacists, veterinary surgeons and architects. Minimum training requirements are the basis for this recognition.

Further harmonisation of education and training was problematic at the time; the solution was to put in place mutual recognition for remaining professions. This started with holders of higher academic diplomas and gradually encompassed lower level qualifications.

Since 2005, the recognition of professional qualifications has become more consistent and quicker.

The most mobile workers in the EU are health professionals, teachers and social/cultural workers.

Recognition in figures

- the number of decisions on recognising professional qualifications increased almost six-fold between 1997 and 2010;
- almost 200 000 decisions were taken on professional qualifications between 1997 and 2010; the vast majority of these decisions was positive;
- on average, every Member State took around 300 decisions in 1997, and almost 1 000 in 2010.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/index_en.htm
Looking for a job

Since 1993, anyone looking for a job in another European country has been able to browse vacancies through the EURES web portal. It also provides practical information on moving to another country for work.

A network of EURES advisers provides information, guidance and placement advice to both jobseekers and employers. This network has grown considerably over the years and now counts almost 900 advisers, most of which work in public employment services around Europe.

The portal has more than 4 million visitors per month and hosts more than 1.3 million vacancies from around Europe.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/eures/
Travelling to another EU country – or staying there

**Air transport**

Before 1987, Europe’s aviation markets were protected and fragmented. Step by step, the EU liberalised the sector and created a Single Market for air transport.

This allowed new entrants to operate in the EU, such as low-cost carriers. These have introduced new business models and changed the travel habits of many Europeans.

**More destinations, lower prices**

Since 1993, the number of intra-EU routes has more than doubled and there has been a 150% increase in long-haul flights departing from EU airports. Passengers have a greater choice of destinations and the convenience of more direct flights. More cities and regions are now served by air transport.

**Passenger rights**

EU legislation now protects passenger interests and ensures that travellers reap the full advantage of the Single Market.

Passenger rights for all forms of transport are based on three principles:

- non-discrimination;
- accurate, timely and accessible information;
- immediate and proportionate assistance.

Concretely, this means:

- disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility are entitled to assistance at no additional cost;
- if a journey is disrupted, a passenger must be provided information about his rights notably with regard to assistance and/or compensation;
- if departure or a connection are significantly delayed or while waiting for re-routing after a cancellation or denied boarding, a passenger has the right to assistance.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air/index_en.htm

Competition within the EU has strongly increased. In 1992, only 93 European routes were covered by more than two airlines. By 2011, this had risen to 482. As a consequence, passengers have more choice and prices have fallen sharply.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/passenger-rights/
Pensions and social security

Retiring abroad
Retired EU citizens can move to any EU country and still receive their statutory pension there.

In the country they choose as home, pensioners are entitled to the same healthcare coverage as citizens of that country. All they need is a document from the country paying their pension, allowing them to register with the healthcare services of their host country.


A social safety net
Thanks to EU rules on social security, citizens moving within the EU should not lose their social security rights. The rules guarantee, for example, that contributions made in any EU country can be added together to meet national requirements for an old age pension or for unemployment benefits.

Jobseekers may also continue receiving unemployment benefits while looking for a job in another EU country for a period up to six months.

In close cooperation with the Member States, the Commission is currently building an electronic infrastructure (EESSI – Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information). As from 2014, EESSI will act as a bridge between national systems, allowing them to communicate directly in a secure environment.

European Health Insurance Card

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) grants its holders access to public healthcare when medically necessary during a temporary stay in any country of the Single Market.

Any person insured under a statutory healthcare scheme in one of these countries is entitled to apply for a card. Over 188 million Europeans now have an EHIC, this is over 37% of the total EU population. The cards are issued free of charge by national healthcare authorities.

Travelling abroad for planned healthcare

Two different legal instruments give citizens the rights to have costs covered for planned healthcare in another EU Member State for which they would have been entitled in their home Member State.

The level of reimbursement or coverage of costs depends on which instrument is used but will amount to at least the cost of that treatment within their own home health system, and perhaps more. Member States may require patients to seek prior authorisation before travelling for some treatments, but authorisation must be granted if patients face a medically unjustifiable wait for treatment under their home system.

**BENEFITS FOR EUROPEAN COMPANIES**

**Free access to a substantial market**

Every company in the EU has access to 27 national markets and 500 million potential customers. This allows larger businesses to benefit from economies of scale, while new markets have opened up to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Dynamic SMEs are particularly important to the European economy as they create 85% of all new jobs in the EU.

In addition to providing goods and services, businesses may also set up or transfer their operations to other EU countries with ease.

**An even wider market**

The Single Market is attractive to neighbouring countries, as often the EU is their main trading partner. Integration based on common rules and values is in the interest of both sides as it creates new market and business opportunities, promotes the internationalisation of SMEs within a wider European context, and permits new economies of scale and more efficient supply chains.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (launched in 2004), for example, seeks to deepen political and economic integration between the enlarged EU and its southern and eastern neighbours. In the context of this partnership, the free circulation of goods, achieved by progressively integrating these countries into the Single Market, is an important policy objective.

Candidate countries can also participate partially or fully in the Single Market.

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**Making life easier**

- principle of mutual recognition
- standardisation
- new rules for provision of services removing barriers for businesses
- reduction of administrative burden
- access to public procurement markets in other EU Member States
- increased protection of intellectual property rights
The principle of mutual recognition

The principle of mutual recognition makes sure that national technical rules do not constitute barriers to the free trade of goods within the EU.

Subsequently, a product lawfully produced or marketed in one Member State may be marketed in any other Member State. This is even the case when the product does not fully comply with the destination Member State’s technical rules. Thanks to mutual recognition, the EU and its Member States have not needed to put in place harmonisation rules for all sectors.

For some sectors, harmonisation may be applied to only ‘essential requirements’. This ensures specific national requirements are not lost, and favours innovation and research into new products. This approach fits with the EU’s commitment to subsidiarity – the principle that the EU does not take action unless this would be more effective than action at national, regional or local level.

Mutual recognition has seen results in a large number of industrial sectors. The European Commission estimates that products not subject to EU legislation – the so-called non-harmonised area – constitute approximately 25% of all goods traded within the EU. Examples include construction products which are not subject to a harmonised standard, food supplements, bicycles and furniture.

Breaking down obstacles to the internal market before they arise

A bicycle manufacturer currently exports to three other EU Member States. However, one of these countries wants to introduce more stringent national safety legislation, which could cost the bicycle manufacturer millions of euros.

This could be avoided through a system designed to avoid the building of new barriers to trade within the Single Market. This system ensures that whenever new, technical legislation is to be introduced by one EU country, all other member countries, the Commission and the public are informed and able to react if the text appears incompatible with EU law or if its quality could be improved.

Every year more than 600 national regulations are screened using this procedure.

More information:

More information:
Standardisation

Standards stipulate technical or quality criteria for products, services and production processes. If in the EU there were 27 different, national standards for every product, it would be impossible for EU companies to export. The solution is common European Standards – a key component of the Single Market as they facilitate trade and have high visibility among manufacturers inside and outside Europe.

Risk reduction and rapid reaction
Machinery, for instance, has about 600 standards currently guaranteeing safety. By going beyond pre-established safety requirements at national level, these standards have made machinery significantly safer.

The EU has also established mechanisms to ensure that unsafe products – once discovered – are taken off the market in every EU country. And an EU-wide information system known as RAPEX ensures that products not complying with EU standards are identified and barred from trade in the EU.

A world leader
The Single Market has enabled Europe to take the lead in setting rules and standards, facilitating European exports and ensuring that imports meet specific standards, thereby protecting European citizens and interests.

The EU's GSM standard for mobile telephony is one such example. Adopted early in the EU, the EU standard is used internationally and is one of the clearest examples of how exporting European regulatory approaches and standards benefits European industry.

Importantly, the Single Market is not just about the free circulation of products. Its safety and environmental requirements have brought huge safety benefits to European citizens.


A universal charger for mobile phones
Following a voluntary agreement by European mobile phone producers to harmonise chargers, European standards organisations created the relevant standards in 2010. Manufacturers may now place telephones compatible with the common charger on the EU market, and according to industry, around 90% already comply with the universal charger provisions. This is hugely convenient for citizens and avoids tens of thousands of tonnes of unnecessary electronic waste every year.
Sustainable and safe industry

Beyond the free circulation of products, Single Market directives have also set EU-wide safety and environmental requirements that products must fulfil. They have not only enabled products to circulate freely throughout the EU but they have also led to huge benefits for European citizens. Products have become much safer.

The Single Market makes a significant contribution to energy savings and environmental protection. Through the Ecodesign Directive, for example, the EU can set mandatory requirements for energy related products. In practice, this means that an energy related product such as a TV, an electric motor or a light bulb, once covered by an Ecodesign Regulation, has to reach a minimum level of performance to be sold on the EU market.

A household fridge, for example, may not consume more than a certain amount of energy per year. So far, 12 different product categories are covered by Ecodesign Regulations. It is estimated that, by 2020, this will introduce energy savings of almost 14% of the electricity consumed in 2009 in the EU. This is almost equal to the amount of electricity generated by 20 nuclear power plants.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/index_en.htm

An expanding retail sector as an engine for cross-border trade

Over the past decade, retailers have developed a new business model combining the expansion of large, integrated outlets across the EU and the internationalisation of their suppliers. These trends have helped businesses to sell their goods throughout the EU.

Trade between Member States has increased significantly over the last 10 years for consumer goods. This is particularly the case for entertainment goods (around 140% increase), electronic products (130%) and, to a lesser extent, food and beverage products (70%).

This growth has been particularly strong in the 12 newer EU Member States. Data show encouraging growth in intra-EU trade, especially within food, which has seen 500% growth over the last 10 years. Entertainment goods and other consumer goods have also grown at a 400%+ rate over the same period.

This growth has created an incentive for retailers in several countries to export their successful business models across the EU. Major EU retailers have also expanded further afield, to countries such as Argentina, Brazil, China, Russia and the US.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/retail/index_en.htm
Removing barriers to trade in services too

The Single Market’s potential for the services sector is clear – the market represents 70% of EU GDP and is dominated by SMEs.

For businesses, the adoption of the Services Directive in 2006 meant administrative simplification, progress in e-government and generally an easier operating environment, especially for those trading across borders. All in all, an ambitious implementation of the Services Directive could generate an additional 1.8% of EU GDP.

Removing barriers to services – concrete examples

- Across the EU, in sectors ranging from private education and tour guiding to market trading and sign language interpreting, burdensome authorisation requirements have been abolished and replaced with a much easier requirement – to simply declare service provision. This has made it easier for operators to offer services on a temporary basis or to set up in another Member State, thereby increasing their potential market and opportunities to expand their businesses.

- Requirements for shareholdings of certain professional services companies (e.g. lawyers, architects or engineers) to be concentrated in the hands of a regulated professional have already been removed or reduced in a few countries. This makes it much easier for such firms to expand their range of activities.

- Obligations for businesses – such as travel agencies in Italy and petrol stations in Spain – to be located a certain distance from one another have been abolished, thus increasing competition and allowing new entrants into the market. The need for economic needs tests has also been removed, particularly in the retail area, diversifying what is on offer for urban and rural communities.

- Considering some 30% of EU citizens live adjacent to a border with another EU country, it makes economic sense to allow
businesses to offer their services to people in these countries without having to be resident there. The Services Directive drove the removal of many such residence requirements.

■ Fixed tariffs have been abolished for the provision of services from professionals as diverse as tour guides in Italy, architects in Belgium, lawyers in Malta and vets in Romania. This has made it much easier for new entrants to compete based on market conditions.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/top_layer/services/index_en.htm
Protecting innovation: intellectual property rights

The removal or reduction of anti-competitive practices creates an environment that is favourable to innovation and investment. A further incentive is the protection of intellectual property through patents, trademarks and copyrights.

**Trademarks**
A trademark is typically a name, word, phrase or logo that is used to make clear that a product or service originates from a unique source. To make it easier and cheaper for businesses operating in the EU’s Single Market, the Community trademark was established in 1993. Fees were substantially reduced in 2005 and 2009, saving EU companies some €60 million a year.

In practice this means that businesses pay €1 050 to apply for and register a Community trademark, instead of €1 750. Those who file their applications via the Internet pay even less – €900.

**Patents**
Protecting new inventions, patents can cover how things work, what they do, what they are made of and how they are made. A patent gives the owner – for a limited period – the right to prevent others from making, using or selling the invention without permission, and provides an incentive for investing in innovation.

Currently, for a patent to be effective in an EU Member State, an inventor must request enforcement in each country where patent protection is sought. In total, obtaining patent protection in 27 Member States, including translation, administrative and procedural costs, could amount to €36 000 today. In comparison, obtaining a patent in the US costs a mere €1 850 on average.

The European Commission has prepared a legislative proposal that would allow any company or individual to protect their inventions through a single patent. This would reduce costs by up to 80%.

More information:
Bidding for public contracts in other EU member states

Each year, public authorities within the EU spend 18% of GDP on the purchase of various goods, services and works. Around 20% of this is covered by EU rules on public procurement, which state that EU companies may submit bids to provide goods and services in all EU Member States.

Public procurement in figures
- The value of the EU public procurement market (tenders advertised according to EU public procurement rules) has risen steadily, reaching an estimated €447 billion in 2010 – or some 3.7% of EU GDP. It has quadrupled since the Single Market was launched in 1992.

- Cross-border public procurement in the EU, including direct bids and indirect bids through foreign affiliates or subsidiaries, accounted for 13% of all procurement awards, or 17% of the total value of contracts published according to the EU public procurement rules, for 2007-2009.

- SMEs win around 60% of public procurement contracts by number and 34% by volume.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/index_en.htm

Cutting red tape for business

Single Market rules replace the complex and different national laws of 27 EU Member States. They reduce bureaucracy and compliance costs for businesses, which pass those savings on to consumers.

Since 2007, Single Market laws have cut the administrative burden for EU companies by 25%. It is estimated that this could increase EU GDP by 1.5%, or some €150 billion.

Savings from red tape removal
- For taxation, a wider use of electronic VAT billing would in the medium term save time and money for over 22 million taxable persons. This would mean savings of around €18.4 billion for businesses.

- In customs, replacing paper-based procedures – which are slow, cumbersome and expensive – with an electronic system could lead to savings of around €2.4 billion.

- In the field of accounting, the exemption of the smallest companies from financial reporting is expected to save up to €3.5bn per year for around 5.5 million European companies. Other proposed simplification measures are likely to mean around €1.7bn in annual savings for a further 1 million SMEs.

It has become easier to start a business: the average time and cost of starting up a private limited company in 2010 was 7 days and €399. In 2007, the figures were 12 days and €485, while in 2002 it would have taken 24 days and cost €813.

More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/admin_burden/index_en.htm
Helping business reap the benefits of the Single Market

*Enterprise Europe Network*

The Enterprise Europe Network helps companies, and in particular SMEs, internationalise their activities and exploit the potential and benefits of the Single Market.

The network provides comprehensive regional support to SMEs needing market and regulatory information, or those looking for business or technological partnerships.

More than 2 million SMEs use the service every year.

**The Enterprise Europe Network in figures**

- The highest demand is for advice and information – about 300 000 SMEs have been helped with queries and about 600 000 have participated in information events.

- Nearly 225 000 SMEs have received specialised advisory services, often on access to finance, but also on intellectual property rights and business/technology reviews, technology brokerage services and business partnerships.

- SMEs have provided over 10 000 contributions to consultations on forthcoming legislation or programmes.

- The network has over 600 partners in 52 countries, including the EU 27, countries participating in the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) and 18 third countries including China, Egypt, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, Switzerland, Tunisia and the US.

- The impact on turnover of business partnerships that the network helped form is around €220 000 per company. The total impact on sales growth is estimated at €450 million. Between 2008 and 2010, 2 400 jobs were created under partnership agreements.

More information:
**Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs**

Budding or new entrepreneurs can learn from experienced host entrepreneurs in other EU countries through the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme.

As the exchange takes place between entrepreneurs from two different countries, the programme supports the internationalisation of SMEs, and those taking part get to know the home market of their Erasmus partner.

Some 4,500 entrepreneurs have already registered, and almost 1,000 relationships have been established.

More information:

Lyubomira Alexieva’s company, producing high quality clothes and accessories, was one year old when she took part in the Erasmus programme. She spent two months with Nim Castle, whose company specialises in using reclaimed, recycled and organic fabrics. Lyubomira took part in all parts of the production process, including cutting, grading, sewing, buying fabrics and old clothes, taking photos for the website and updating social media. The two agreed to form a partnership at the end of the two months.
Over the past 20 years, two major developments have changed the way the Single Market governance cycle works. First, governance has moved from a predominantly legal approach towards a more practical one. Second, IT tools and the Internet have made a difference to the way information is provided, transactions are completed and feedback is collected.

From a legal to a practical approach

Twenty years ago, the main ways to solve problems were the adoption of new legislation or infringement procedures. Today’s approach is more ambitious: the Single Market should not only be a legal construct – it should work in practice for its customers.

For this to happen, the European Commission and the EU Member States need to work together at all stages of the governance cycle. The different elements within this cycle are each essential to the Single Market existing in reality as well as in law.

After new legislation is adopted, its implementation and application is monitored. Citizens and businesses need to be informed of the possibilities available to them and enabled to make use of them. For those opportunities to be transformed into reality, public authorities need to be connected with each other across borders so that they can work together. If problems occur, these need to be solved. Finally, feedback from all stages of the governance cycle needs to be collected and evaluated in order to decide whether new legislation is necessary or whether existing legislation needs to be adapted or repealed.
Single Market legislation: implementation, cooperation and problem solving

Internal Market Scoreboard

Created in 1997, the Internal Market Scoreboard is used to monitor implementation and enforcement of Single Market legislation by the EU Member States.

Average number of Internal Market Directives not transposed by Member States (as % of total) between 1992 and 2011

We have come a long way since 1992 when on average more than 1 in 5 directives (21.4%) had not been transposed by their deadline into Member States’ national law, and when for 3 out of every 10 directives, at least one Member State failed to take the necessary action. The current figures show that, on average, 1 in 100 directives is not transposed, while 6 out of 100 are still not fully effective throughout the Union.

While transposition records have improved significantly over time, the same cannot be said about the number of internal market infringement proceedings. But since alternative problem-solving mechanisms have been introduced to address problems in a more informal and result-oriented way (SOLVIT and EU-Pilot), the need for recourse to infringement proceedings has been considerably reduced: since November 2007, the number of infringements decreased by 37%.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/score/index_en.htm

Internal Market Information (IMI) system

To make the Single Market work, public authorities need to cooperate across borders. The Internal Market Information system (IMI) is a multilingual online tool linking around 7,000 national, regional and local authorities across the EU. It allows them to identify each other via a multilingual searchable database and to communicate with each other without the need for a common language.

IMI contains pre-translated questions and answers for every policy area in which it is used, and for every subject that authorities are likely to want to discuss with their counterparts in other EU countries. IMI has been in use since 2008.

Today, more than 300 information exchanges pass through IMI every month; there is scope for many more as IMI will be expanded to new policy areas. The system has not only made it easier for authorities to contact each other; it also provides answers very fast (nearly 60% within two weeks).

**SOLVIT**

Now 10 years old, the SOLVIT network has 30 centres, located within the national administrations of all EU countries.

The centres work together to help citizens and businesses directly to find fast and pragmatic solutions to problems caused by the misapplication of EU rules by public authorities. Some of the areas arising most frequently are recognition of professional qualifications, access to education, residence permits, social security, taxation and free movement of services and goods.

When SOLVIT started in 2002, it dealt with around 130 cases a year. Today, SOLVIT deals with more than 1300 cases a year within an average of 70 days, whereas formal infringement proceedings can take several years to complete.


**Complaint handling by the European Commission**

The Commission launched the so-called ‘EU Pilot’ project in 2008 to improve cooperation between Member States and the Commission at a stage where formal infringement proceedings can still be avoided.

The number of infringement cases relating to the Single Market has decreased by 31% since November 2007, which can largely be put down to a more practical approach to governance, and to the activity of both SOLVIT and EU-Pilot.

Your Europe

The Internet makes it possible to provide tailored information on EU rights to citizens and businesses and to update it quickly in all EU languages.

The Your Europe website presents information from the user’s perspective, whether that be someone who wants to travel, work or shop across borders, or a business looking to establish itself in another EU country. Today, Your Europe receives an increasing number of visitors every month.

The website also offers direct access to more personalised information and assistance services, such as Your Europe Advice, SOLVIT, EURES, the European Consumer Centres and more. Each of these services enables individuals to make use of their rights and seize the opportunities available to them in the Single Market.

In 2011, Your Europe Advice alone replied to more than 15,000 questions from citizens and businesses seeking legal advice on their EU rights. This service is provided free of charge, within a week, and in any official EU language.

More information: http://europa.eu/youreurope
http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/front_end/index_en.htm

Points of Single Contact

The Services Directive, which Member States had to implement by the end of 2009, also makes use of the Internet. Responding to one of the Directive’s core obligations, Member States have established Points of Single Contact (PSCs) – single entry points that businesses can access electronically, whether in their home country or in another EU country. The PSCs provide information on the procedures and requirements for operating in that territory.

The development of PSCs has had clear benefits for businesses. The process of setting up or expanding services is now more transparent and easier. It has also encouraged Member State authorities to further develop their eGovernment services. Many have gone beyond the Directive’s requirements, enabling service providers to complete all administrative formalities via an electronic one-stop-shop.

But progress is uneven and work will need to continue if the Member States are to deliver electronic PSCs that really meet the needs of tomorrow’s entrepreneurs.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/eu-go/index_en.htm
European Consumer Centres (ECCs)

If Europeans shopping for goods and services in other EU countries, Norway or Iceland need advice, they may turn to the European Consumer Centres (ECCs). Free of charge, they provide practical consumer tips that can save consumers money and help avoid problems.

The ECCs also provide expert help in settling consumer complaints in an amicable manner. Where an amicable solution cannot be reached with the trader, the ECCs give advice to consumers on alternative ways to deal with the complaint.

In 2011 the network of the ECCs handled more than 70,000 cases (about 32% of complaints related to transport and 20% to recreation and culture). More than 60% of the complaints handled concerned e-commerce.


Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network

The Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Network helps ensure that Europe’s 500 million consumers get a fair deal in the Single Market.

The network links the national authorities of all Member States to form a powerful pan-European enforcement network. This allows authorities to assist each other (for instance by exchanging relevant information) so as to stop commercial practices in cross-border situations that do not comply with EU consumer rules.

Since it started operating in December 2006, the network has dealt with over 1,200 mutual assistance requests and over 200 alerts.

The network also engages in coordinated market monitoring and enforcement activities, such as ‘sweeps’. During a sweep, participating authorities simultaneously check a number of websites in a given sector for compliance with consumer rules. Where appropriate, authorities then follow up on detected irregularities to ensure that websites are amended.

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