



Reinforced consular protection for European citizens outside the EU

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EU solidarity for consular protection

Every year, European citizens make **over 90 million trips outside the EU**, and more than 30 million European citizens live permanently outside the EU. However, there are only four countries - the United States, China, India and Russia - where all 28 EU Member States are represented by embassies or consulates.

EU citizens can find themselves in the situation where they need advice or assistance abroad with no consulate or embassy from their own country to help them. This is the risk for the almost 7 million EU citizens who travel or live outside the EU in a place where their Member State does not have an embassy or consulate – and this number is expected to increase to **10 million** by 2020.

7 million EU citizens

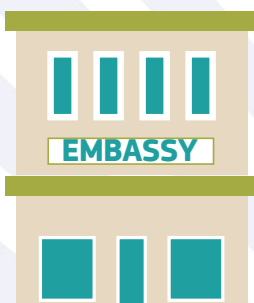


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A right to consular protection from other EU countries

• If their Member State is not represented, **EU citizens have the right to receive the protection of diplomatic and consular authorities of any EU Member State under the same conditions as the nationals of that country.** This is a right guaranteed by the EU Treaties.

- In 2009, there was an **estimated total of 1 200 cases** where unrepresented citizens benefited from help of the embassy or consulate of another EU country than their own.
- Despite many citizens benefitting from this right, there was previously no clear consensus on when and how EU citizens could benefit from this right, how EU countries should coordinate their assistance, or who was responsible for the cost of providing assistance.



What will change with the new rules?

On 20 April, after three years of negotiations, **Member States agreed on new rules that will give European citizens a clearer view of what their right to consular protection from other EU countries means in practice.** They lay down clear and simple rules about who should assist whom, and who pays.

Citizens will know more easily where to seek help when their home country does not have a consulate or embassy to help them, and to what extent these services can help their non-EU family members.

It clarifies that if the assistance provided implies certain costs or fees, the unrepresented EU citizens will never be charged more for the consular services than the citizens of the EU country assisting them.



How will this help citizens?

Before any assistance is provided - unless it is a case of extreme urgency - the citizen's home country must be consulted. The home country can contact the citizen's family or friends, at the citizen's request, and can provide advice and support through telephone or online consular services. **The citizen's home country can also decide to take care of the citizen's case fully.**



Under the new rules, it is clear that the **citizen can be redirected from an embassy to another one which is better placed to assist**, for example if another can offer the service in the citizen's native language. The new rules acknowledge that EU countries can agree on who should take care of whom to ensure efficient protection for EU citizens. **Information about such arrangements will have to be made public.**

Citizens can get more information on the assistance they are entitled to, and any agreements in place between consulates, by contacting the [EU Delegation](#) within the country.

Crisis situations

There are also now specific rules to guarantee that **unrepresented citizens are duly taken into account and fully assisted in crisis situations**, where a clear division of responsibilities and coordination are of paramount importance to avoid that EU citizens are neglected.