



Single Market Scoreboard

The United Kingdom withdrew from the EU on 31 January, 2020. The 2020 edition of the Single Market Scoreboard refers to time periods preceding the withdrawal of the UK, and the UK is therefore listed as a Member State.

SOLVIT

Reporting period:
01/2019 – 12/2019

SOLVIT is a service provided by the **national administrations**. There is a SOLVIT centre in each EU Member State and in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. They work together via an online database.

SOLVIT helps people and businesses who encounter difficulties in another EU Member State when public authorities do not apply EU legislation correctly.

It is a faster, informal alternative to starting a court case, submitting a formal complaint to the Commission or launching forward a petition.

Find out [more about SOLVIT](#).

SOLVIT and the Single Market – why does it matter?

SOLVIT is an informal problem-solving network that can help EU citizen or businesses when their rights are breached by public authorities in another EU Member State.

SOLVIT centres also act as “agents for change”, helping national authorities comply better with Single Market rules. This in turn further increases SOLVIT’s positive effects; therefore, it can efficiently promote a culture of compliance and better enforcement of EU law in the Single Market together with the Member States.

Key messages

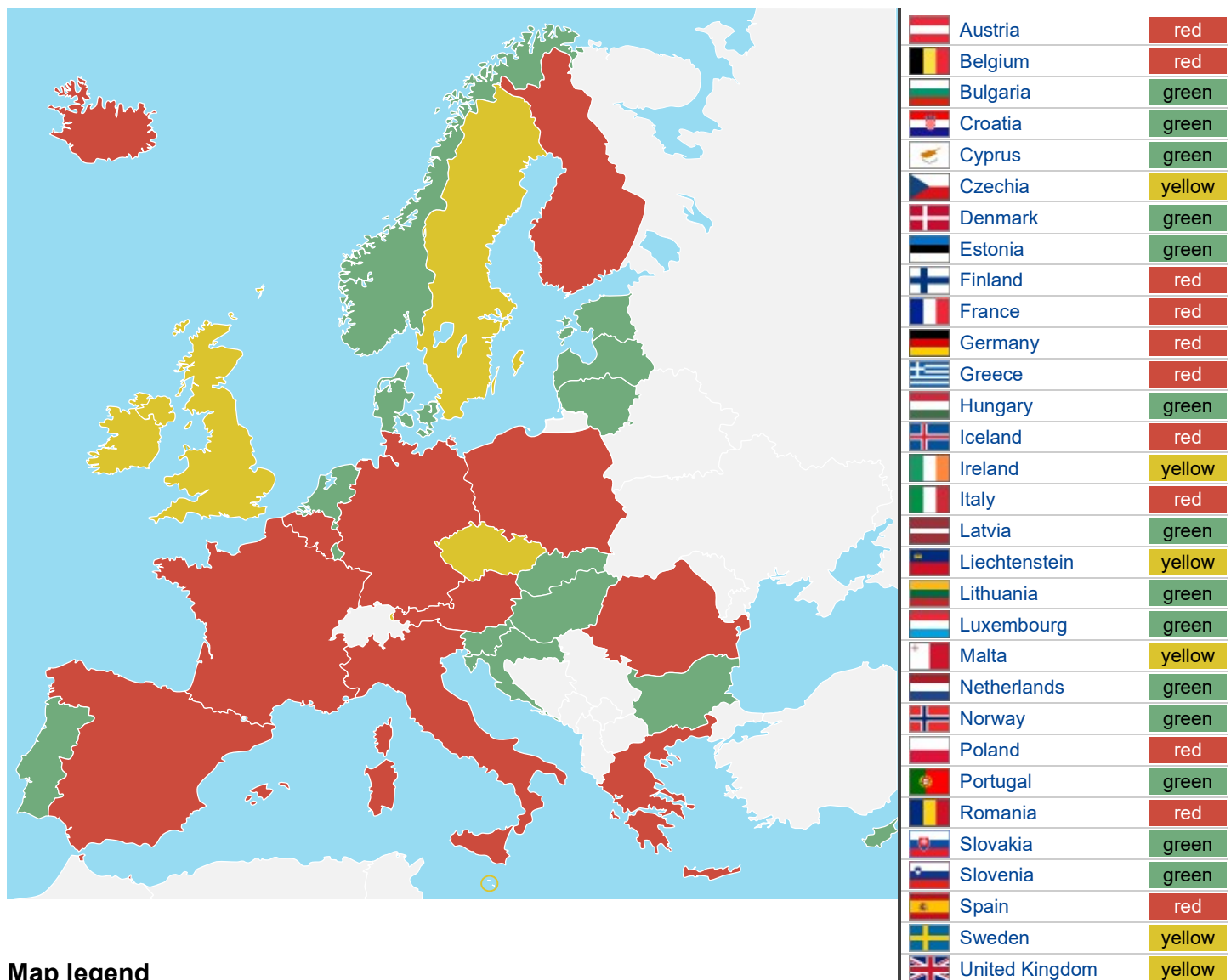
- SOLVIT resources are being increasingly stretched in SOLVIT centres, affecting the way cases are handled. This is reflected in the indicators and the complaints that the Commission receives about the lack of responsiveness from SOLVIT centres. We are at a turning point: the network can only satisfactorily respond to the demands from citizens and businesses and be in a position to play a more strategic role in the enforcement of EU law if Member States ensure adequate staffing of their SOLVIT centres.
- This is all the more important, as on 19 April 2020 the Regulation on the Mutual Recognition of goods will come into force. SOLVIT will then be the first port of call for businesses who need to

solve problems in this field.

- Besides, in line with [March 2020 Long-Term Action Plan for better Implementation and Enforcement of Single Market rules](#), adopted on 10 March 2020, the Commission will work together with the Member States to make SOLVIT the default tool for single market dispute resolution, *inter alia* by strengthening relationships between SOLVIT and different bodies and networks at national and EU level. SOLVIT centres need to be able to live up to this expectation and therefore Member States are expected to provide them with adequate and qualified staffing.

Overall performance

Overall Performance (all 6 indicators combined)



Map legend

A country's **overall performance** colour is assigned Values assigned to each indicator:

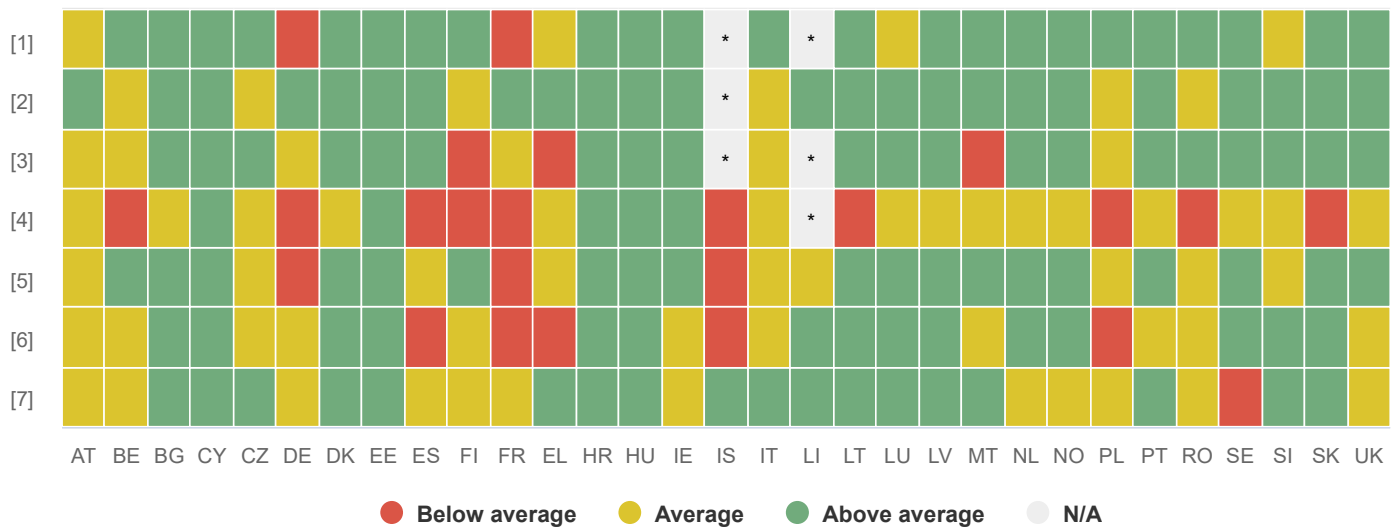
on the basis of the sum of its scores to each of the 6 performance indicators (see next section):

- **Red** = -3,
- **Yellow** = -1,
- **Green** = 1.

- **Green** : 3 or higher,
- **Yellow** : -1 to +2,
- **Red** : -2 or lower.

Iceland and Liechtenstein were not assessed as Liechtenstein had six cases and Iceland only one.

Performance indicators

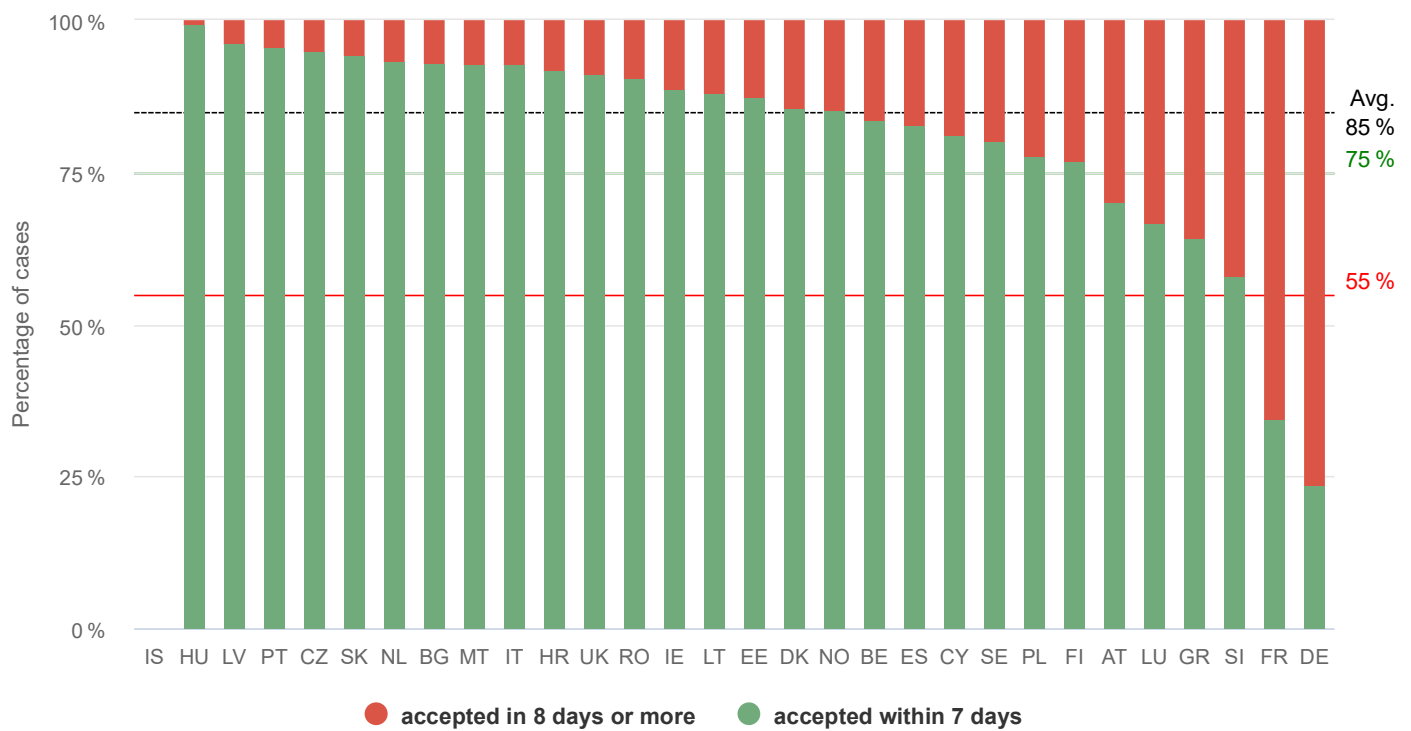


* Countries with under 10 cases.

Indicator	Target 1	Target 2	Target 3
[1] Home centre sending an initial reply within the 7-day target in:	≥ 75 % of cases	55 to 75 % of cases	< 55 % of cases
[2] Home centre submitting case to lead centre within 30-day target in:	≥ 75 % of cases	55 to 75 % of cases	< 55 % of cases
[3] Home centre accepting a proposed solution within 7-day target in:	≥ 75 % of cases	55 to 75 % of cases	< 55 % of cases
[4] Home centre not accepting a complaint within 30 day target in:	≥ 75 % of cases	55 to 75 % of cases	< 55 % of cases
[5] Lead centre accepting a case within 7-day target in:	≥ 75 % of cases	55 to 75 % of cases	< 55 % of cases
[6] Lead centre handling a case within 10-week target in:	≥ 75 % of cases	55 to 75 % of cases	< 55 % of cases
[7] Lead centre resolution rate:	≥ 90 %	70 to 90 %	< 70 %

Indicator [1]: Home centre – first response time

This indicator measures the time taken to **establish initial contact** with the applicant. The target deadline is **7 days** maximum.

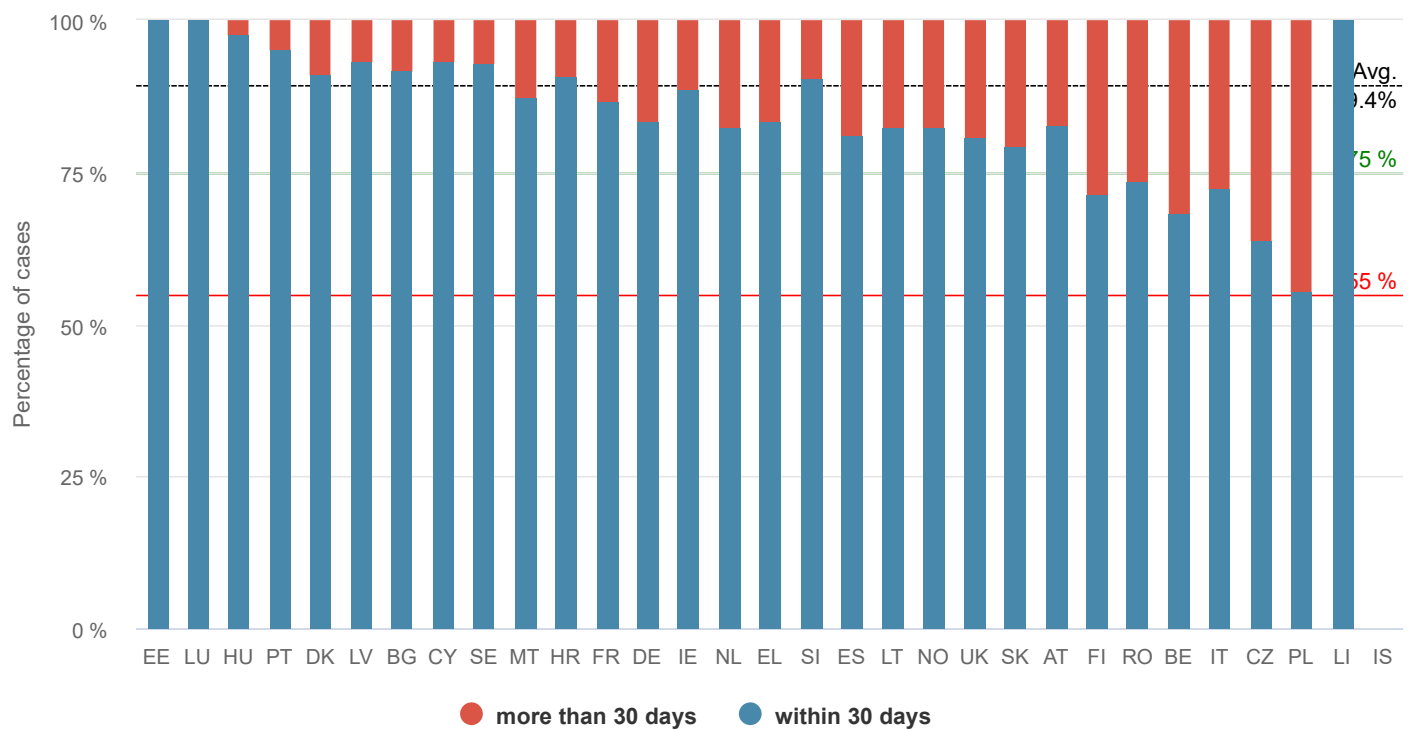


Main finding

- **Initial contact** with applicants is not being made **promptly**, even though this is an **important first step in handling cases**. This is partly due to **lack of resources**.

Indicator [2]: Home centre – preparation time

This indicator measures the time taken to prepare cases for transfer to the lead centre. The target deadline is **30 days** maximum.

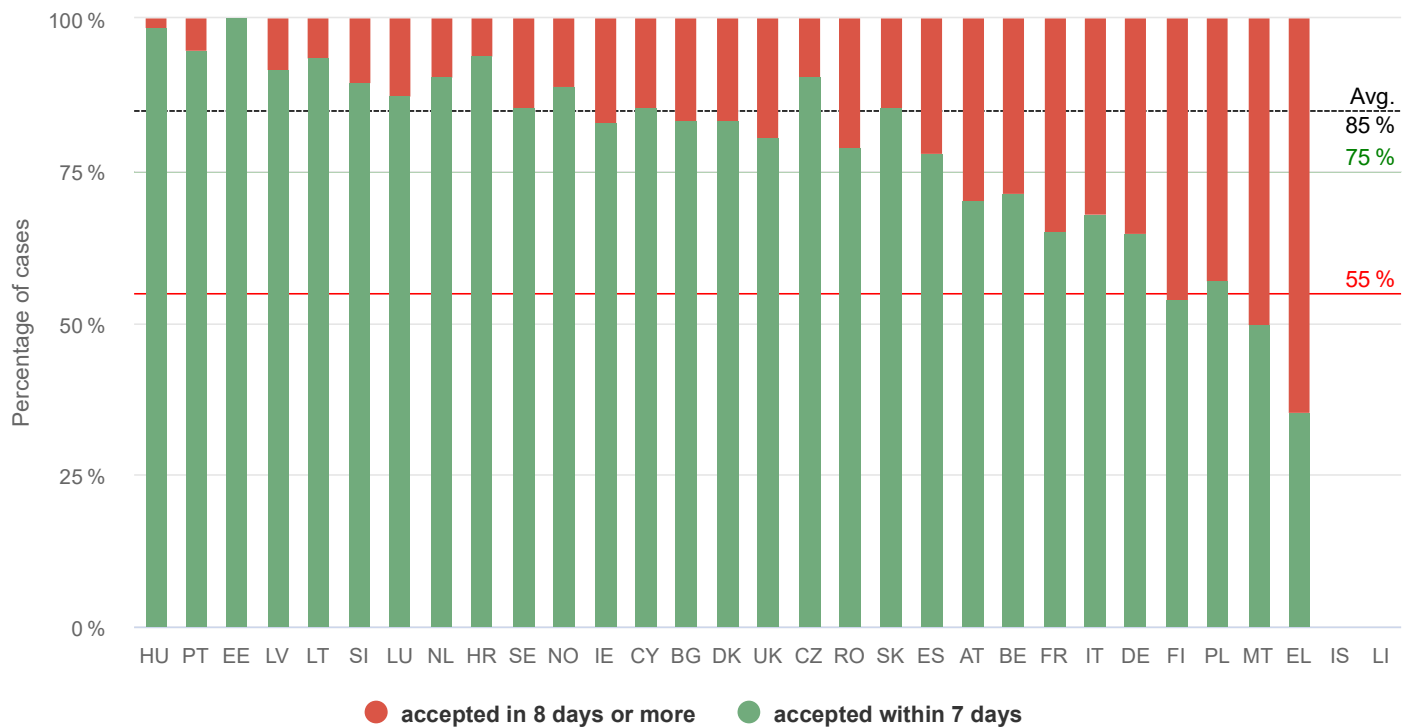


Main findings

- Preparation time is satisfactory in most centres, although the average time to prepare a case has been increasing over recent years.
- On average, SOLVIT centres took 19 days to prepare a case in 2019 compared to 15 days in 2018 and 13 days in 2017.

Indicator [3]: Home centre – time to accept a solution

This indicator measures the time taken for the home centre to accept a solution from the lead centre. The target deadline is **7 days** maximum.

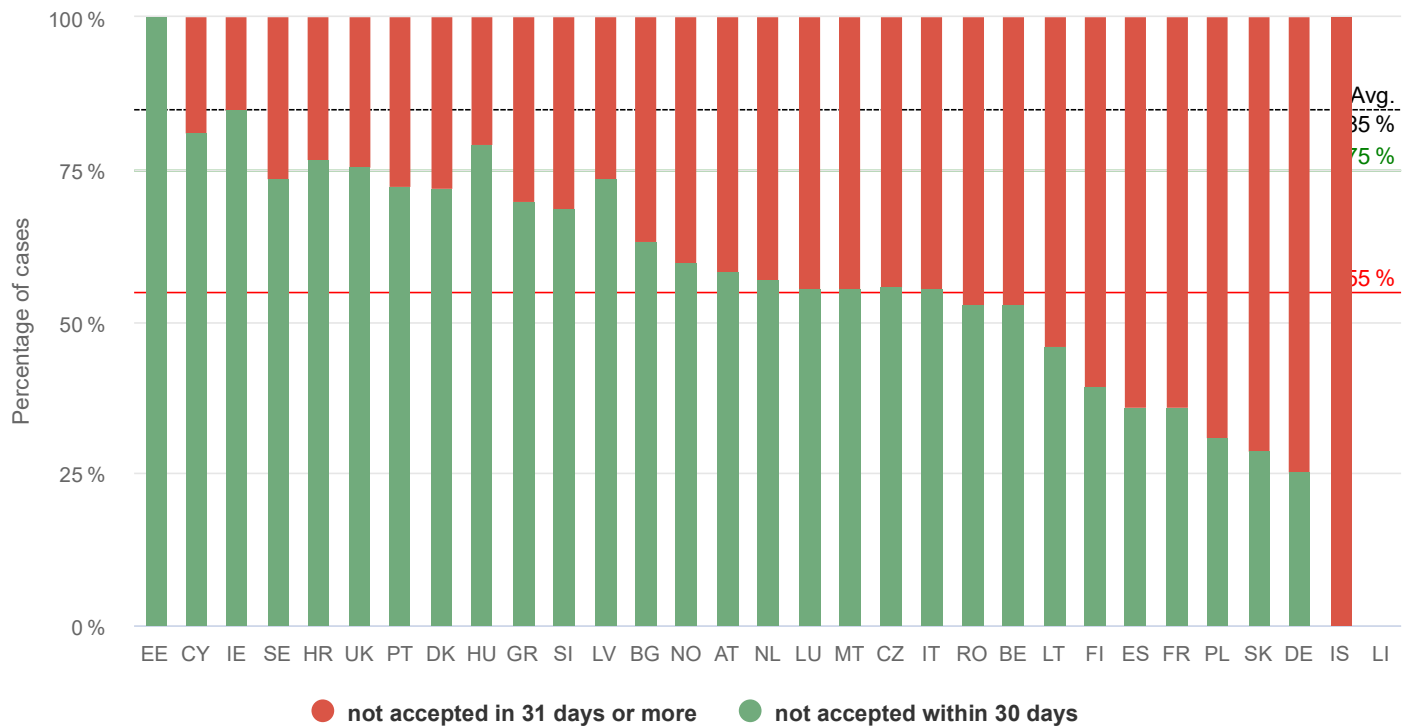


Main finding

- Overall, the situation is satisfactory but in some cases the time taken to accept a solution was exceptionally long. This was either due to disagreement on the solution or lack of attention given to the case due to inadequate continuity in case handling because staff are frequently rotated.

Indicator [4]: Home centre – time to not accept a complaint

This indicator measures the time taken for the home centre not to accept a complaint that does not fulfil the SOLVIT criteria. The target deadline is 30 days maximum. This indicator is being used for the first time this year. It will only form part of the composite indicator as of the next reporting year.

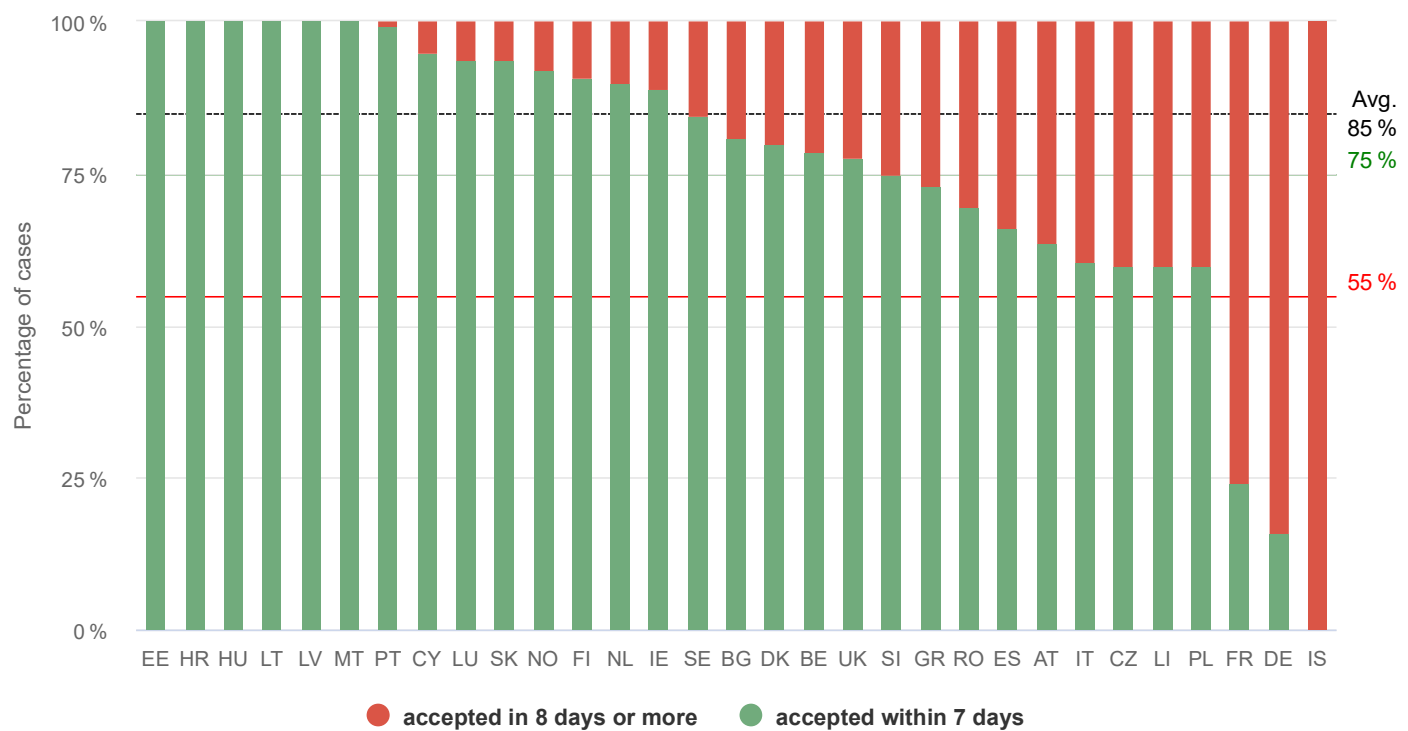


Main finding

- Almost all centres take too long to not accept a complaint. It is important for applicants to know as soon as possible that SOLVIT cannot help them.

Indicator [5]: Lead centre - time to accept a case

This indicator measures the time taken for the lead centre to accept a prepared case from the home centre for handling. The target deadline is **7 days** maximum.

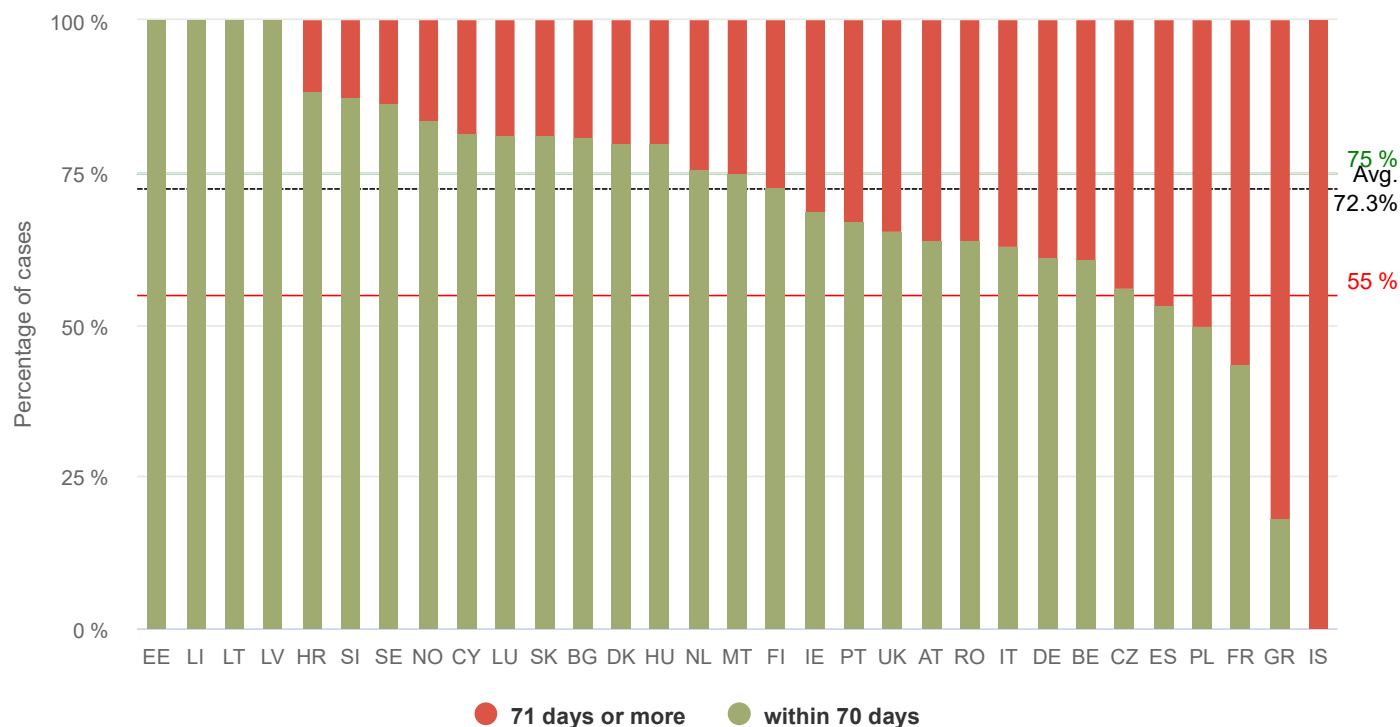


Main finding

- In many cases, the time taken by the lead centre to accept a case and start solving the problem in a concrete manner is too long. This is either due to lack of resources or continuity in case handling.

Indicator [6]: Lead centre – resolution time

This indicator measures the time a lead centre takes to handle a case. The target deadline is **10 weeks** maximum. Cases related to more general difficulties in the Single Market detected by SOLVIT (see separate chapter) are excluded from the calculation as they are handled in a different manner.



Main finding

- The time taken to handle cases is a concern in many centres. A major reason for longer handling times is the lack of sufficient and stable resources at a time when demands are increasing. The time taken on a case also depends on the willingness of national authorities to cooperate.

Detailed comments

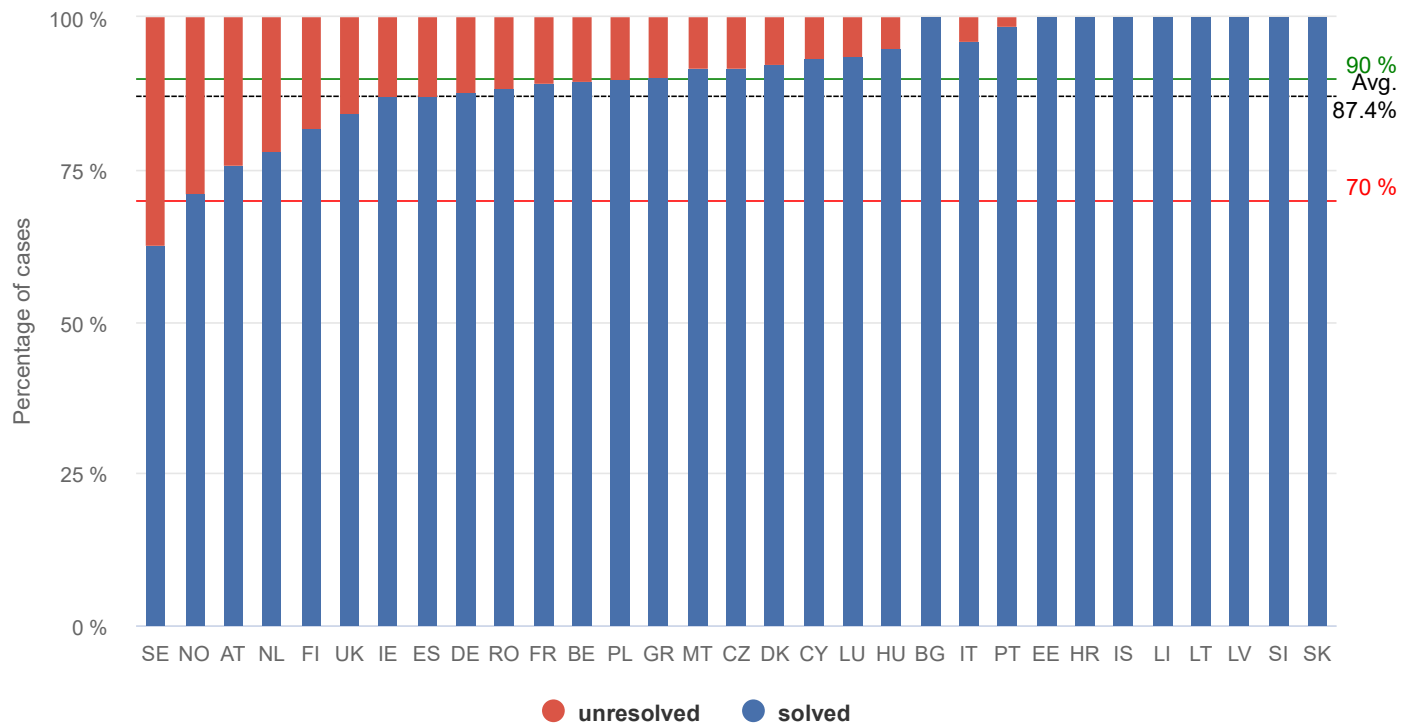
- **Average number of days taken:** 100 (82 in 2018).
- **Over 10 weeks:** 40 % of cases (37 % in 2018 and 29 % in 2017).
- **Over 20 weeks** (*twice the target time*): 22 % of cases (18 % in 2018 and 11 % in 2019).

Factors affecting resolution speed:

- cooperation with national administrations
- caseload
- case complexity
- number and continuity of staff (many centres are understaffed, have other tasks in addition to SOLVIT-related work or members rotate frequently).

Indicator [7]: Resolution rate by country

This indicator measures the percentage of cases solved. The aim is to solve all cases submitted. Cases related to more general difficulties in the Single Market, which were detected by SOLVIT (see below) are excluded from the calculation (see separate chapter).



Main findings

- In 2019, the resolution rate remained excellent at 89 % (90 % in 2018 and 87 % in 2017).
- **Countries below 70 %:** Sweden. The low-resolution rate is due to the large number of cases related to the difficulties EU citizens have in obtaining a personal identification number and the practical difficulties it causes to citizens and businesses. See section below on Problems with entry and residence rights.

Priorities

Governments should:

- ensure SOLVIT centres are **adequately staffed**, especially as the Mutual Recognition for Goods Regulation will be applied from April 2020 ;
- enable staff to spend sufficient time on **SOLVIT work**;
- ensure the **continuity** and expertise of staff;
- ensure that national authorities cooperate with SOLVIT;
- **follow up on more general difficulties in the Single Market** detected through SOLVIT

SOLVIT centres should:

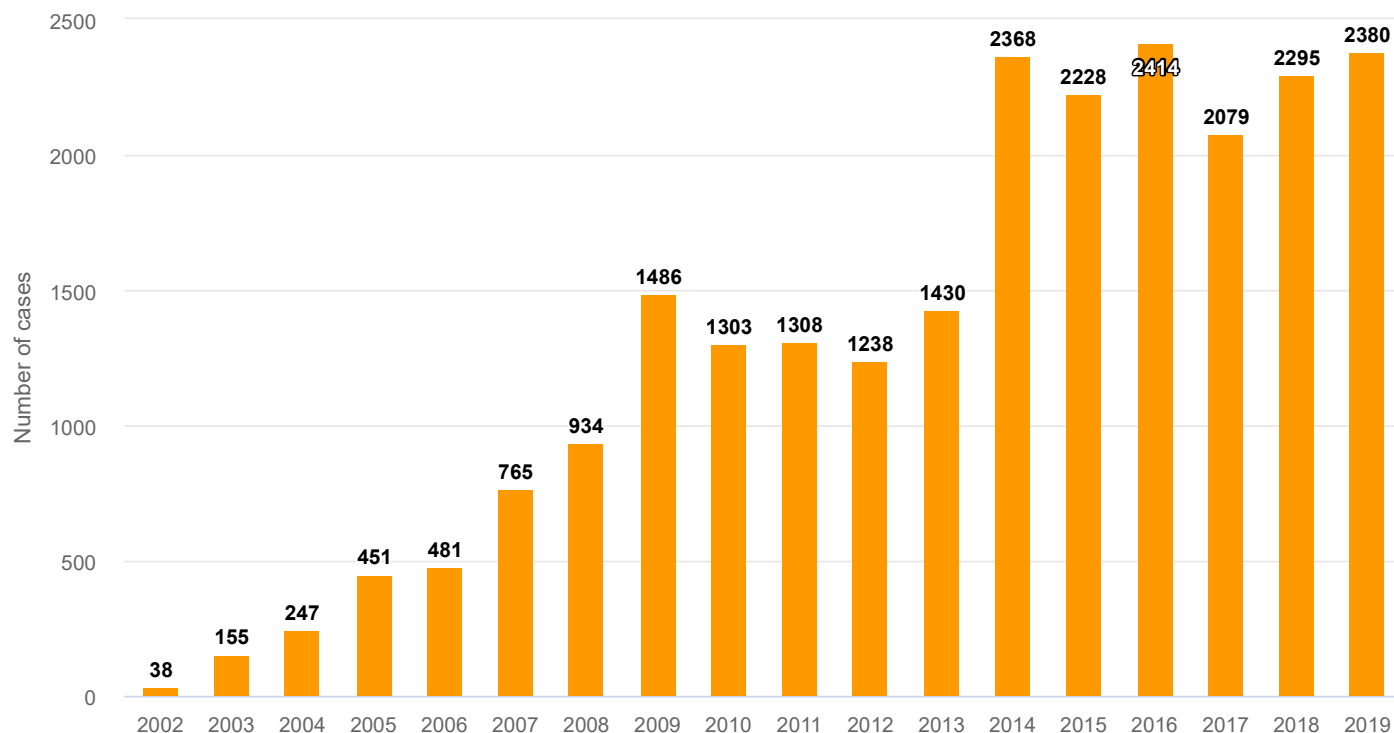
- focus on the **quality of case handling**;
- ensure a maximum number of cases reach SOLVIT, especially from businesses;
- liaise with counterparts in the Europe Enterprise Network;
- take action to diversify the caseload (as home and lead and in legal areas);
- ensure SOLVIT centres have access to legal expertise on problem areas for **business**;
- organise network meetings to help ensure national administrations support and recognise SOLVIT's role;
- ensure that issues linked to breaches of EU law detected through SOLVIT are channelled to the responsible services in the country concerned.

The Commission should:

- ensure the problem solving procedure provided for in the Mutual Recognition Regulation is effectively implemented;
- make sure SOLVIT centres use **the available data and evidence in a more structured and systematic way** to enforce and formulate new policy;
- ensure SOLVIT is the default tool for handling complaints in the EU Commission;
- develop further training, in businesses areas, arrange networking meetings for staff in SOLVIT centres including online, "green" options.

Facts and figures

Overall caseload



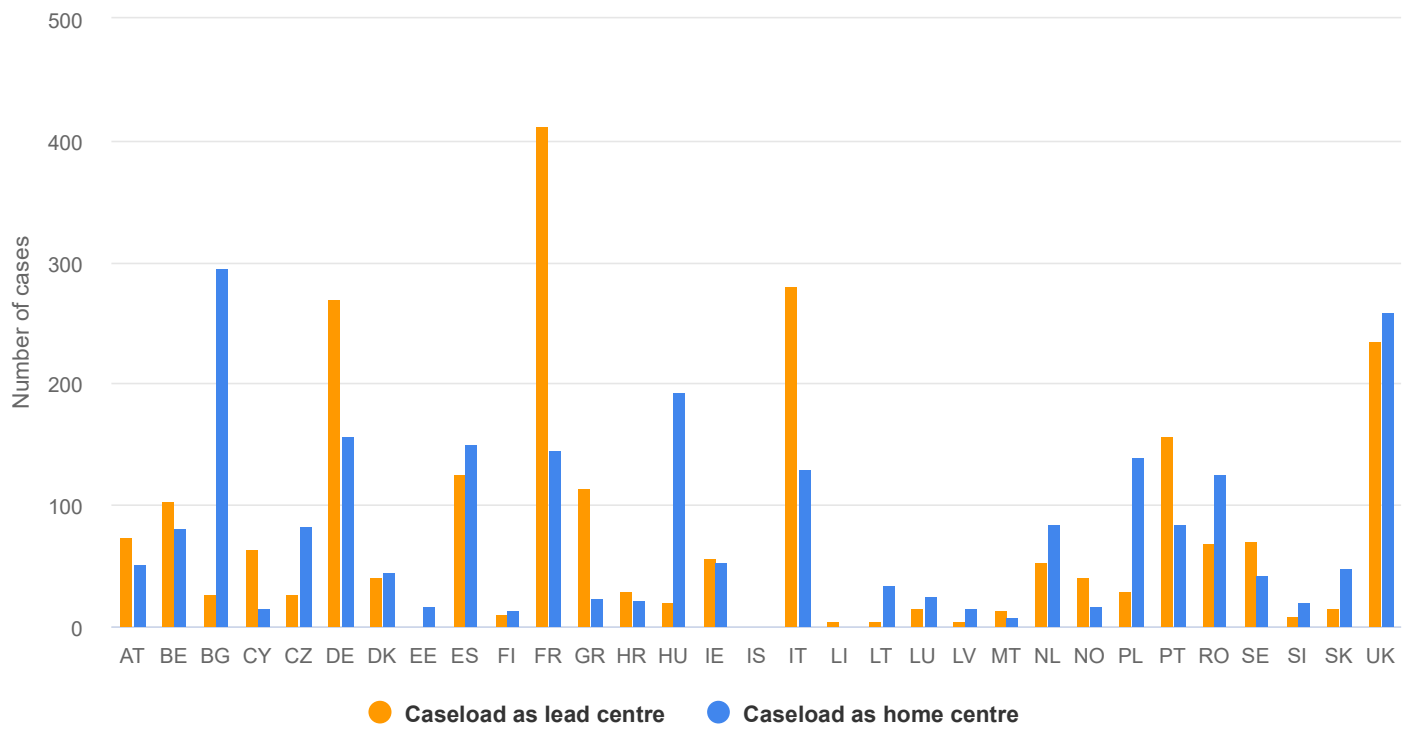
Main finding

- In 2019, SOLVIT handled a total of 2380 cases that fell within its remit. 60 % of all cases were submitted **online**, 9 % were **transferred by Your Europe Advice** and 4 % were transferred by the Europe Direct Contact Centre. The rest were submitted via other means (e-mail, phone, post, in person).



In 2019 SOLVIT also received an additional **2977 complaints** that were not within its remit (the figure for 2018 was 2600). The proportion of these cases out of SOLVIT's overall remit was 56 % in 2019 compared to 52 % in 2018 and 50 % in 2017. In these cases, SOLVIT helped complainants by explaining their EU rights to them in more detail or by finding another means of redress.

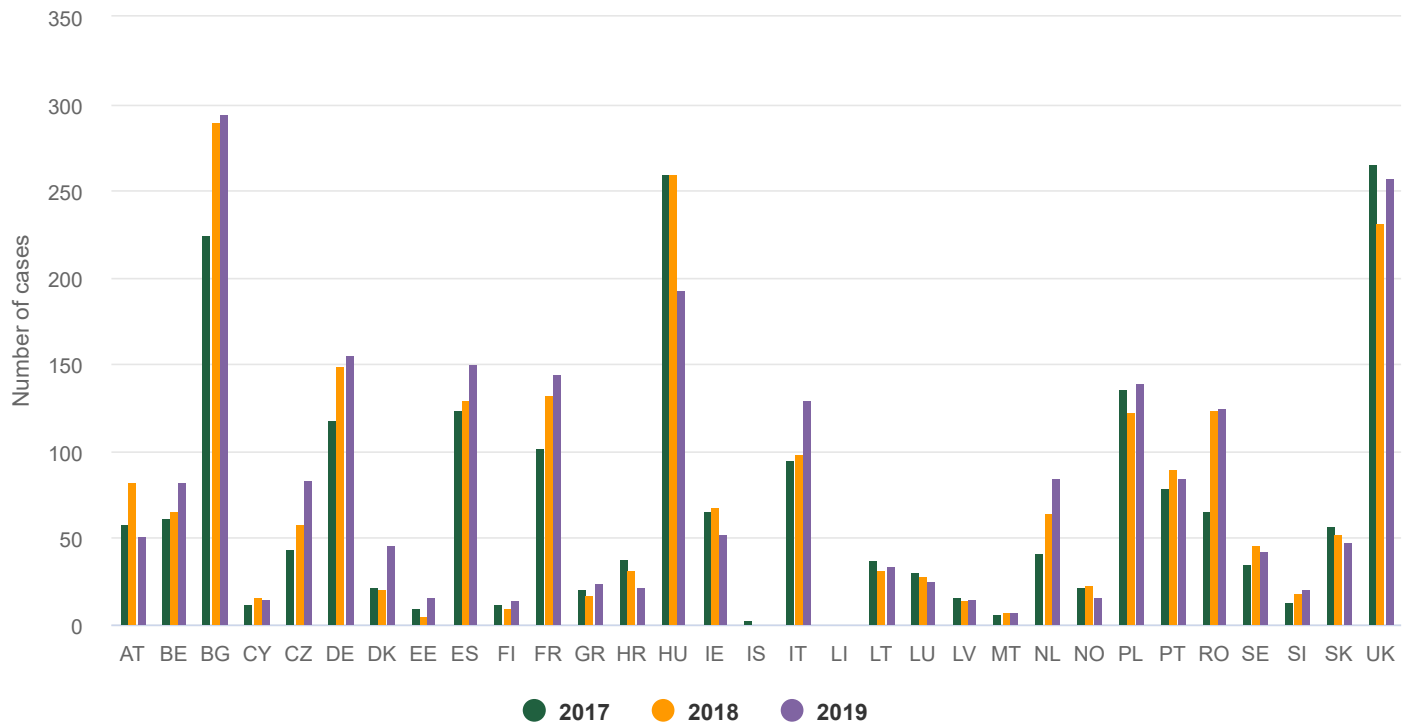
Distribution of cases: Home centres and lead centres



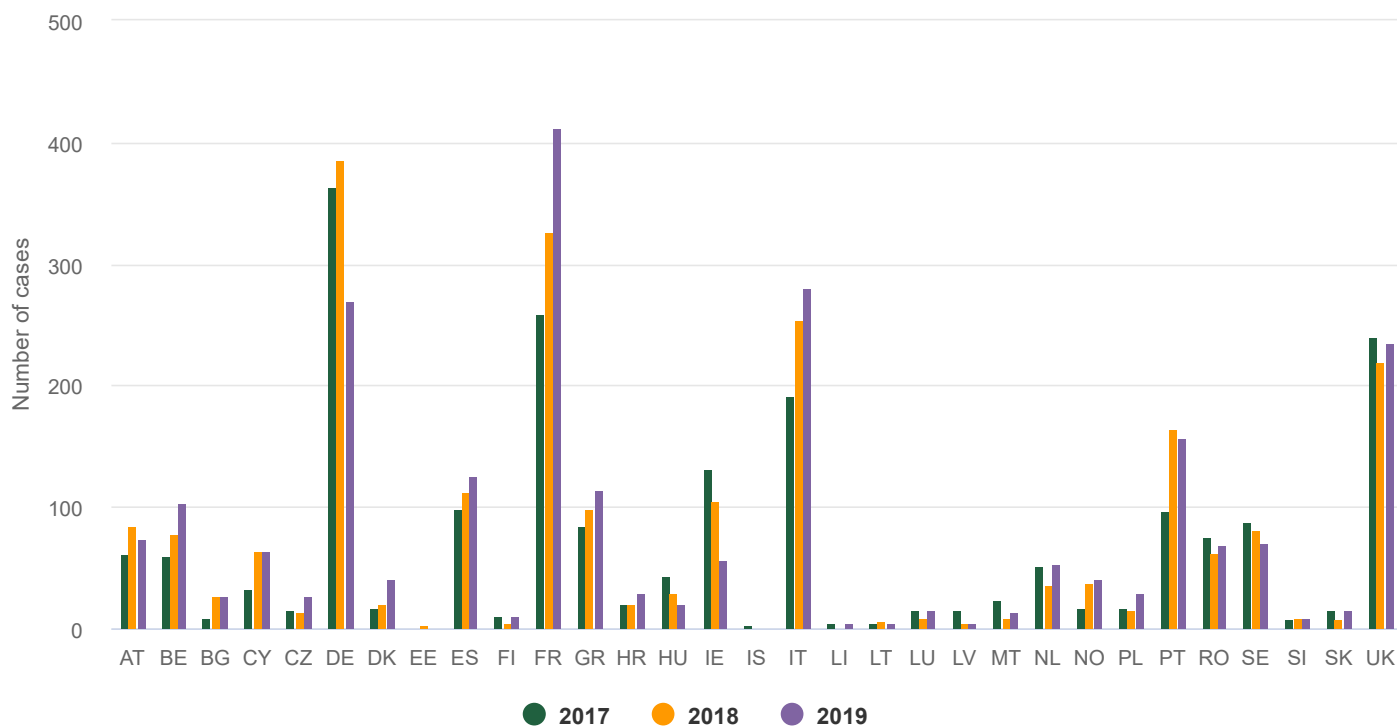
Main findings

- **Top 3 net recipients of cases:** France, Italy and Germany.
- **Top 3 net submitters of cases:** Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland.

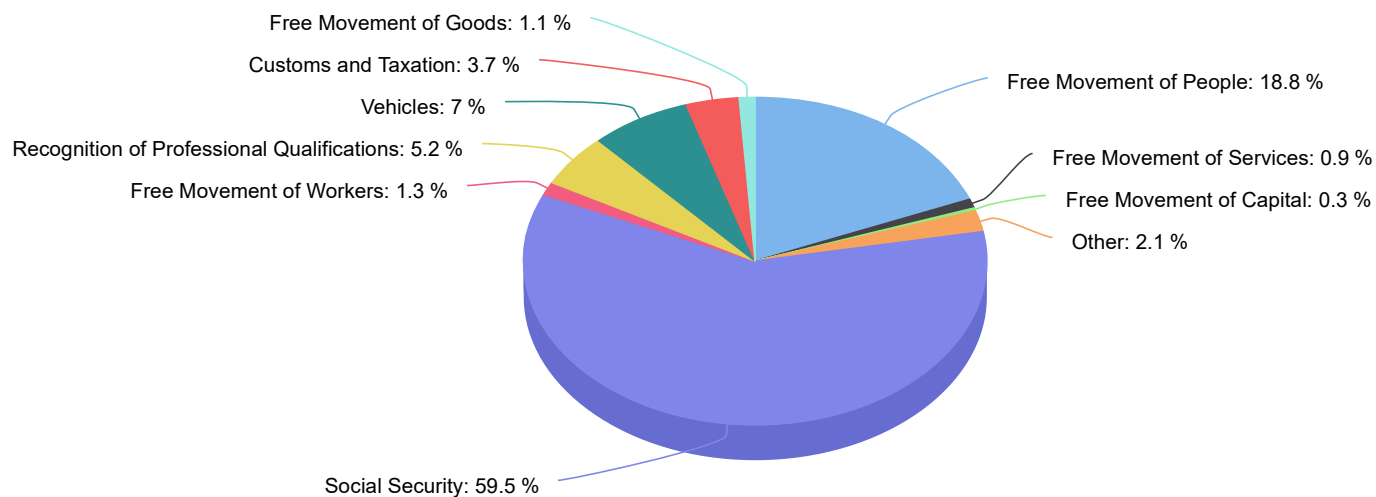
Cases submitted by country over the last 3 years



Cases received by country over the last 3 years



Problem areas



Main finding

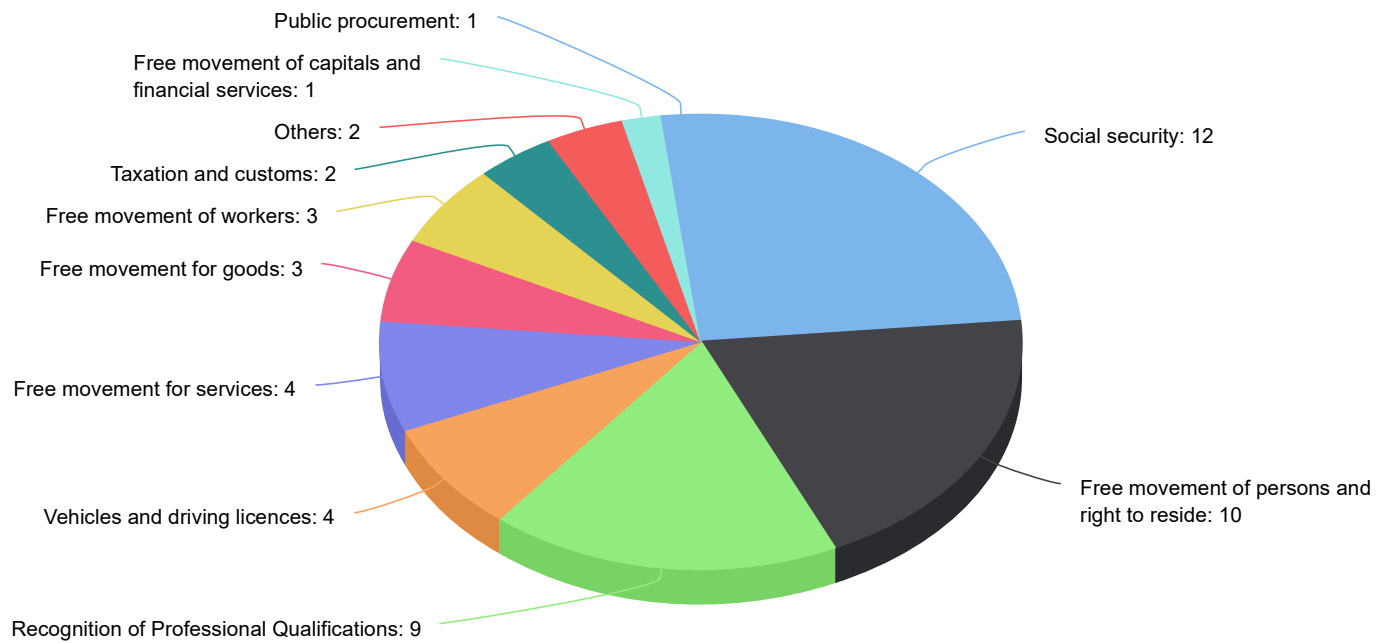
- **Social security-related cases made up 60 % of all cases in 2019 similar to previous years (59 % in 2018 and 54 % in 2017).**

Detailed Comments

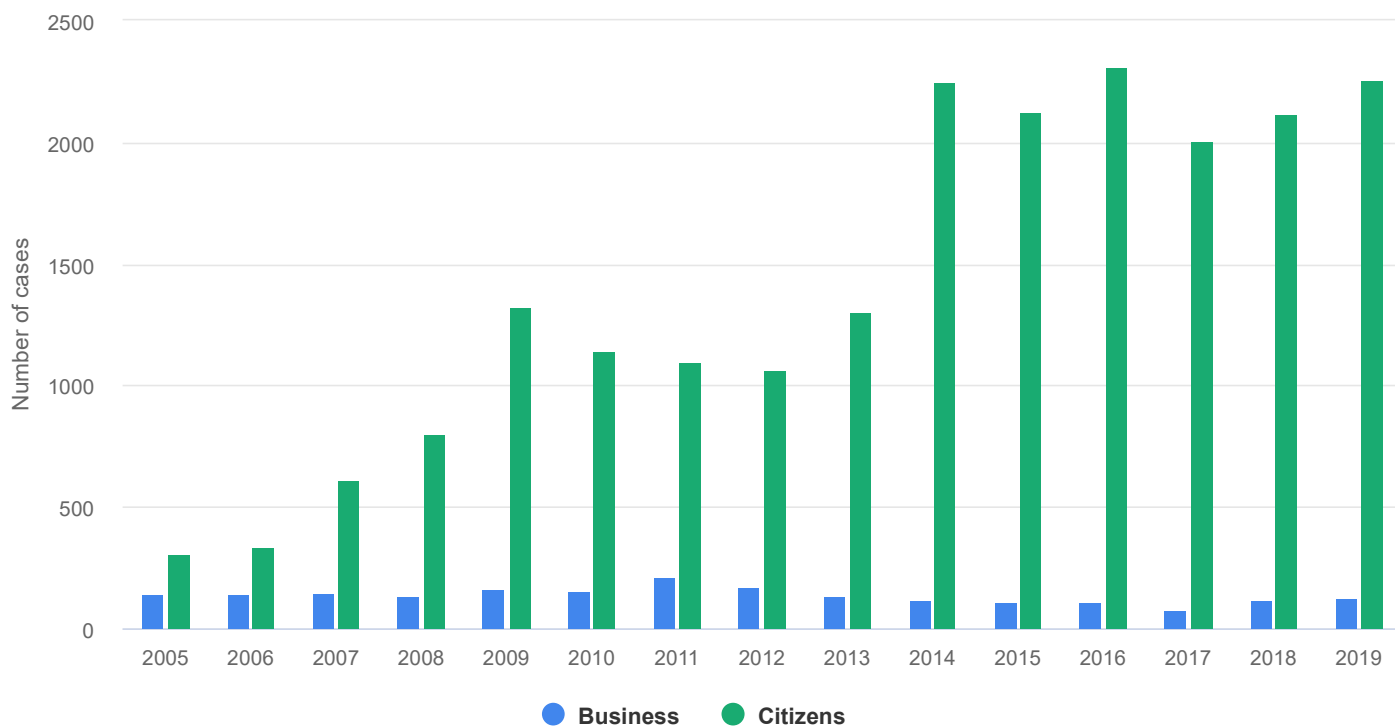
- Social security remains the biggest problem area dealt with by SOLVIT.
- No big rise or fall in numbers in the other legal areas.
- In 51 cases, SOLVIT centres requested legal support from Commission experts, who provided their advice within an average of 24 days.

Legal areas informal legal advice

The legal areas where informal legal advice was provided are similar to those of the SOLVIT caseload.



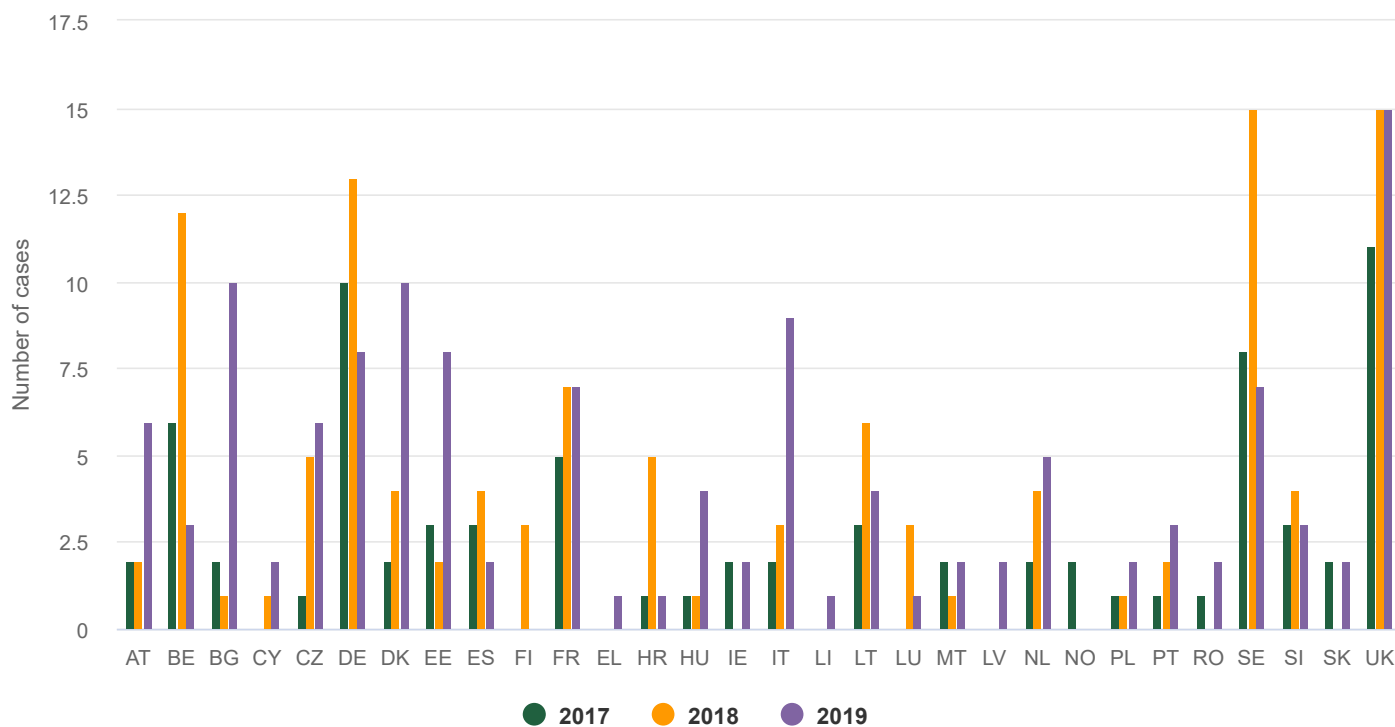
Business cases vs. citizens cases



Main finding

- The proportion of citizen to business cases in SOLVIT remains high. In 2019, SOLVIT received 128 business cases.

Business cases – by country



Main finding

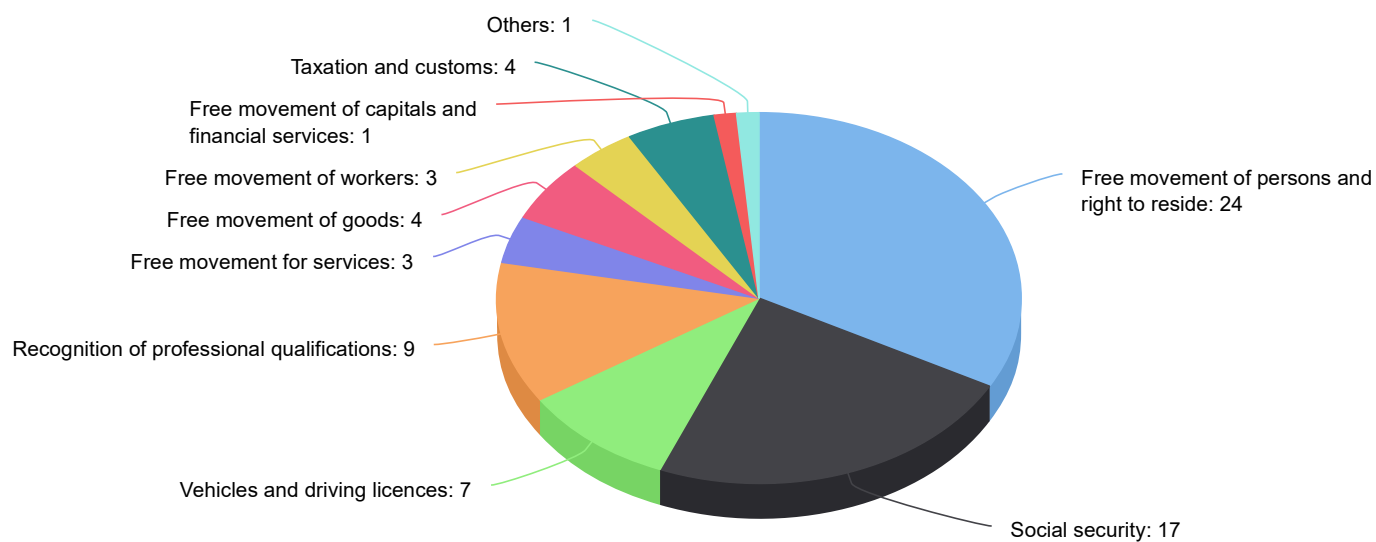
- **Top 3 contributors to business cases:** Denmark, the UK and Bulgaria.

Detailed Comments

- 81 % of the business cases were solved.
- SOLVIT has stepped up its efforts to attract business cases:
 - 2 advanced legal training courses for national SOLVIT centres on professional qualifications took place in cooperation with the VUB University, in Brussels, Belgium;
 - SOLVIT is part of a problem-solving mechanism included in the review of enforcement of the mutual recognition principle which applies from April 2020;
 - business intermediary organisations have registered and can now submit and follow their cases directly in SOLVIT;
 - cooperation with the Enterprise Europe Network has been intensified;
 - A joint SOLVIT-European Enterprise Network event was organised in Stockholm (Autumn 2019).
- The main problem areas for business continued to be:
 - taxation (36 %)
 - free movement of goods (18 %)
 - free movement of services (13 %)
 - vehicles/driving licences (13 %)
 - social security (10 %)
 - small businesses providing most of the cases.

Cases linked to more general difficulties in the Single Market* – by area of legislation





















* These are cases reported by the national SOLVIT centres, which have required additional assessment and contacts with national authorities. In general, they are linked to difficulties as perceived by citizens and businesses in the Single Market.



Main finding

- **Cases handled:** 73 cases (121 in 2018)

Cases linked to more general difficulties in the Single Market by problem area and Member State

																					Total		
Free movement of persons and right to reside	7				4	1							1	4					4		3	24	
Social security		1	3	1			1						5					3		2		1	17
Recognition of Professional Qualifications		2	1		1		1			2									2			9	
Vehicles and driving licences		1			1		1						1						1	1	1	7	
Taxation and customs							2						2									4	
Free movement for goods		2											1	1								4	
Free movement for services									2										1			3	
Free movement of workers						1		1											1			3	
Free movement of capitals and financial services																			1			1	
Others																		1				1	
Total	7	6	4	1	6	2	5	3	2	9	2	4	3	1	12	1	5	73					

Handling times:

- cases closed within 10 weeks: 57.5 %
- Longest handling time: 407 days

Examples of Difficulties in the Single Market (as reported in the SOLVIT database)

Issues for EU citizens trying to get their professional qualifications recognised in another country included:

- problems getting professional qualifications recognised in the Crafts sector in **Ireland** (also reported in 2018);
- difficulties for general dentists in receiving automatic recognition in **Belgium**;
- delays in processing applications for recognition of professional qualifications not in line with the EU's Professional Qualifications Directive in **Portugal**.

Cross-border goods and services providers encountered the following obstacles:

- ban of type approved car transporters in **Germany** (also reported in 2018);
- requirement to register in order to temporarily provide rafting services in **Croatia**;
- requirement to indicate the country of origin on a medical device label in **Italy**;

- extra charges in **Malta** for parcels with vitamins/health additives from online companies based in other EU Member States;
- requirement to install blocks on tachographs in **Slovenia**;
- preferential treatment in **Sweden** for hired vehicles registered in Denmark, Norway or Finland;
- an additional certification procedure for CE-type approved lifts in **Belgium**;
- requirement to register the parent company in **Belgium** to get professional parking permit.

Problems with taxation:

- **Italian** legislation granting substantial reductions in local real estate taxes only to Italian citizens;
- obligation for residents in **Italy** to register after 60 days their personal car registered in another EU Member State.

EU citizens encountered the following social security issues when moving cross border:

- refusal to take into account different elements to determine “habitual” residence in **Luxembourg**;
- requirement to pay social security contributions on rental income for non-residents in **France** (also reported in 2018);
- problems in the exchange of social security administrative forms between **Portugal** and **France** as well as **Greece** and **Bulgaria**;
- problems in the retroactive payment of family benefits due to the 3-month limit in backdating in **the UK**;
- difficulties for non-established employers to pay social security contributions directly in **Greece**;
- parental benefits are not granted in **Norway** if the citizen resides in another EEA country during the last 6 months of pregnancy;
- refusal by the relevant authority in **Germany** to investigate and retrieve documents in order to establish rights to family benefits.

Problems with entry and residence rights:

- **delays** in issuing residence cards to non-EU family members of EU citizens in **Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria** and **the Netherlands** (also reported in 2018);
- EU citizens have difficulties **registering in the population register and obtaining a personal identification number** which is necessary to gain access to certain essential public and private services in **Sweden** (also reported in 2018);
- **delays** in issuing entry visas to non-EU family members of EU citizens in **Ireland** (also reported in 2018);
- **unjustified conditions** and refusals for short-term visas for non-EU family members of EU citizens in **the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Ireland** and **the UK** (also reported in 2018);
- EU permanent residence cards are **valid for less than 10 years** in **Malta**;
- **refusal to accept** German health insurance for students in **Austria**;
- ID cards from other EU Member States are not accepted for certification purposes in **Sweden**;

- problems with transposing Articles 2 (2) b on registered partnerships and Article 3 (2) on extended family members of the EU Citizens' Rights Directive in **Germany**;
- delays in processing applications for permanent residency status in **France**.

Issues of discrimination:

- discrimination in access to online pension procedures in **Belgium**;
- severe delays in the exchange of foreign driver licences in **France**, with no issuance of a temporary driving licence;
- discrimination based on nationality in university admissions in **the UK**;
- discrimination in access to public health coverage for posted diplomats in **Norway**,
- discrimination in access to online renewal of driving licences in **the UK**.

Problems related to free movement of workers:

- requirement that a career break is no more than 6 months long in order for professional experience to be recognised in **Germany**,
- citizens on maternity leave who earn less than the primary earning threshold set by the tax authority not being recognised as workers in **the UK**.

Staffing level in SOLVIT centres

Staffing is a crucial part of the success of SOLVIT. However, this is currently at risk.

Despite their high quality and dedication, in some SOLVIT centres there are not enough staff, too many tasks to carry out and high turnover.

This has an impact on the quality of case handling and on interaction with applicants.

In 2020, Member States should focus on staffing SOLVIT centres with the right number of permanent and professional staff.

Assessment of Staffing in Relation to 2019 Case Load

Insufficient	Sufficient
Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, the United Kingdom.	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden.

Based on the qualitative assessment of the Commission SOLVIT team, taking into account continuity, permanent staff versus trainees, dealing with other tasks and overall caseload, the staffing of **9 SOLVIT centres is categorised as insufficient for the current caseload**. The caseload of those SOLVIT centres represents 83 % of the overall SOLVIT caseload thus affecting the whole network. National governments should adequately resource their SOLVIT centres.

Assessment of Staffing to Deliver On-Going Objectives*

* As identified in the [SOLVIT Action Plan](#)

Insufficient	Sufficient
Austria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain.	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden.

Based on the qualitative assessment of the Commission SOLVIT team, taking into account the need to deliver SOLVIT's full potential (promotion activities, follow-up within national administrations to SOLVIT cases involving structural breaches of EU law, capacity to handle ever more complex cases in particular business-related etc), **14 SOLVIT centres are insufficiently staffed for on-going objectives**. National governments should continue to adequately resource their SOLVIT centres.

Success stories – examples of problems solved in 2019

SOLVIT helped to remove the following barriers to the free movement of people, goods and services in the EU:

- excessive requirements and delays in recognising other EU countries' qualifications to provide services in the nautical sector in Portugal;
- unjustified fines related to Value Added Tax (VAT) in Luxembourg;
- no online registration possible for foreign real estate companies in Croatia;
- no transfer of child benefits to foreign bank accounts in Slovenia;
- refusal of certification for medical product in Czechia;
- no online identification to the national register possible for foreign lawyers in Slovakia;
- no recognition of the professional driver's qualification card in Ireland;
- lack of exchange of information for social security benefits in many countries;
- lack of final decisions from the relevant authority in France whose authorisation is necessary to market goods in the country.

More Information on SOLVIT

How does SOLVIT work?

People and businesses who encounter a problem exercising their rights can seek help from their **home**

centre (usually in their home country), via an online application procedure.

The home centre prepares the case and sends it to the SOLVIT centre in the country where the problem occurred (the **lead centre**), which deals with the authority in question.