



2010 Annual Report on the Functioning and Development of the Your Europe Advice service



ADVICE

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**Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union**

Freephone number (*):
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) Certain mobile telephone operators do not allow access to 00 800 numbers or these calls may be billed.

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
(<http://europa.eu> and <http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights>)

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Dear readers,

In 2010, new steps have been taken to make the single market a more tangible reality for people and businesses across the European Union. In this context, the former «Citizens' Signpost Service», which offers quick replies to questions on EU rights in any official language, has been renamed «Your Europe Advice» and has been modernised.

The new name, Your Europe Advice, reflects a closer link between the advice service and the Your Europe website (www.youreurope.eu), which has been completely revamped. It now offers clear and practical information for people who want to move, travel or shop within the European Union. Your Europe features sample stories, warnings and tips: it has been designed to be interactive and easy to navigate and it guides users to assistance services such as Your Europe Advice for any further, specific questions they may have. In this manner, the new Your Europe website is designed to offer “one-stop-shop access” to information and help citizens and businesses to exercise their rights in the single market.

Whilst Your Europe offers general, practical information on EU rights and how to exercise them, people needing further, personalised advice can turn to Your Europe Advice. In that case, a national expert stands ready to assist them, offering a reply within one week.

In 2010, Your Europe Advice has seen a significant increase in the number of enquiries it handles. More than 12,000 replies were provided by around 50 experts across the Member States. This means 12,000 explanations and pieces of advice given to citizens who are now a step closer to taking full advantage of their rights in the Internal Market.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in Your Europe Advice for their hard work and commitment. Rest assured that your work is very much appreciated by the European Commission and, more to the point, by the Europeans who have received your help and advice.

Jonathan Faull





How does Your Europe Advice function?

Your Europe Advice is based on a **network of experienced multilingual lawyers** from all EU Member States. They provide answers to legal questions, within one week and in any official EU language. They are specialised in EU law, but also have an excellent knowledge of national and local rules and regulations. Any individual can ask questions about his/her EU rights. Most often, questions relate to cross-border situations. Enquiries can be submitted either online or by telephone, and replies are provided either by e-mail or by phone. The network of experts is recruited and managed by a **central management team** of the Commission's external contractor, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)¹.

Quite a lot of changes have taken place during 2010 with regard to the Your Europe Advice service.² This is linked to pursuing the Action Plan on Single Market Assistance Services³. The Action Plan aims to facilitate citizens' access to information and assistance with their EU rights, and to create synergies and better cooperation between these services and networks.

The new developments target several issues: creating a one-stop-shop for citizens, liaising with other networks, drafting a set of frequently asked questions, improving the performance of the technical environment (in particular the database), and lastly using Your Europe Advice as a feedback mechanism to help in shaping policies.

2.1 The one-stop-shop for citizens – Your Europe Advice as a member of the Your Europe “family”

Europeans who are mobile are often faced with difficulties in cross-border situations. Until now, the answers have not always been easy to find. Although there is an abundance of information on EU policies and legislation, the sources of information are dispersed and the language is not always user-friendly. This makes it hard for the public to understand their EU rights, and how those rights translate into practice. Therefore, the **Your Europe website** <http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/> (accessible through the Europa website <http://europa.eu>), has been completely revamped in 2010, enabling citizens and businesses to find out about their rights and opportunities in the EU market. With the click of a mouse, the website – which will soon be available in all EU languages – will also take



them to services that can help them defend their rights quickly and effectively.

The Your Europe website is designed as the **one-stop-shop for citizens and businesses** that need information on their EU rights in a specific situation. With its eight subject areas in the citizens' section – travel, work, vehicles, residence, education and youth, health, family and shopping – the website is intended to make Europe easier for citizens. They should be able to find a huge amount of information to answer their questions.

Your Europe aims to provide information from the perspective of the user. Information is presented around the main themes of daily life or the main stages of a company's life cycle, cutting across policy areas. Specifically, the part of the website addressed to citizens has been completely revised. The information now contains many tips and warnings on each issue, and is illustrated by a wealth of real-life stories and frequently asked questions. Extreme care has been taken to make the language clear and jargon-free. In this manner, users can access information which is tailored to their specific needs.

1 www.ecas-citizens.eu

2 For the 2009 annual report see http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/front_end/docs/css_2009_report_en.pdf and for the 2008 annual report see http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/front_end/docs/annual_report_2008_en.pdf

3 SEC(2008)1882

The screenshot shows the 'Your Europe' website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'European Commission', 'Your Europe', and 'Citizens'. The main heading is 'Europe made easy' with the subtitle 'Help and advice on your life, work and travel in the EU'. Below this are eight colored boxes representing different service categories: Travel (blue), Work (dark blue), Vehicles (red), Residence (orange), Education & Youth (dark blue), Health (green), Family (dark blue), and Shopping (red). Each box contains a list of specific services. To the right, there's a 'Citizens' section with a 'Send' button and a 'Highlight' section for user feedback.

The website also acts as the **single entry point to access relevant specialised assistance services** if the visitor still needs help after reading the information provided. In particular, visitors wishing to obtain personalised advice on their EU rights in their particular situation are directed to the Your Europe Advice service via the **“Still need help?” button**.

Other services that are accessible via the website include SOLVIT⁴, the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net)⁵, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)⁶ and the European Employment Services (EURES)⁷.

2.2 Advice to citizens and networks

2.2.1 Advice to citizens

Your Europe Advice provides personalised advice on the exercise of EU rights, and particularly on how to overcome a practical difficulty. Where appropriate, it signposts users to national and European bodies for further help. Your Europe Advice responds to questions

- within one week
- free of charge
- in the language chosen by the citizen from amongst the 27 official EU languages

- in clear, simple language, with legal references where appropriate
- either by e-mail (the overwhelming majority of replies) or by phone.

Full details of the operation of Your Europe Advice are given in chapter 3.

In 2009, Your Europe Advice took over a scheme under which direct advice, including **face-to-face advice**, was provided to citizens. The scheme, known under the name of Eurojus, had been in operation in a number of European capitals for several years. In close collaboration with the European Commission’s Directorate General for Communication and the Commission Representations in the Member States, the scheme has been maintained as a pilot project in Berlin, Dublin, Lisbon and Madrid.

Citizens can make appointments with Your Europe Direct Advisors in these Commission Representations and submit documentation for assessment. Direct Advisors also often handle queries by phone or e-mail. Direct Advisors also participate in the communication activities of the Commission Representations and are regularly called upon to give presentations at conferences on the subject of EU rights and their enforcement.

4 <http://ec.europa.eu/solvit>

5 <http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/ecc/>

6 http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

7 <http://ec.europa.eu/eures>

2.2.2 Advice to networks – Your Europe Advice to SOLVIT Centres

There are several networks providing help and assistance to citizens and businesses at European level. Your Europe Advice works particularly closely with SOLVIT. Experts from Your Europe Advice also regularly signpost citizens to other networks, such as EURES, ECC-Net or Fin-Net.⁸

SOLVIT is an on-line problem solving network in which EU Member States work together to solve, without legal proceedings, problems caused by the misapplication of Internal Market law by public authorities. There is a SOLVIT Centre in every EU Member State (as well as in Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein). SOLVIT Centres can help with handling complaints from both citizens and businesses. They are part of the national administrations and are committed to providing real solutions to problems within ten weeks. There is no charge for using SOLVIT.

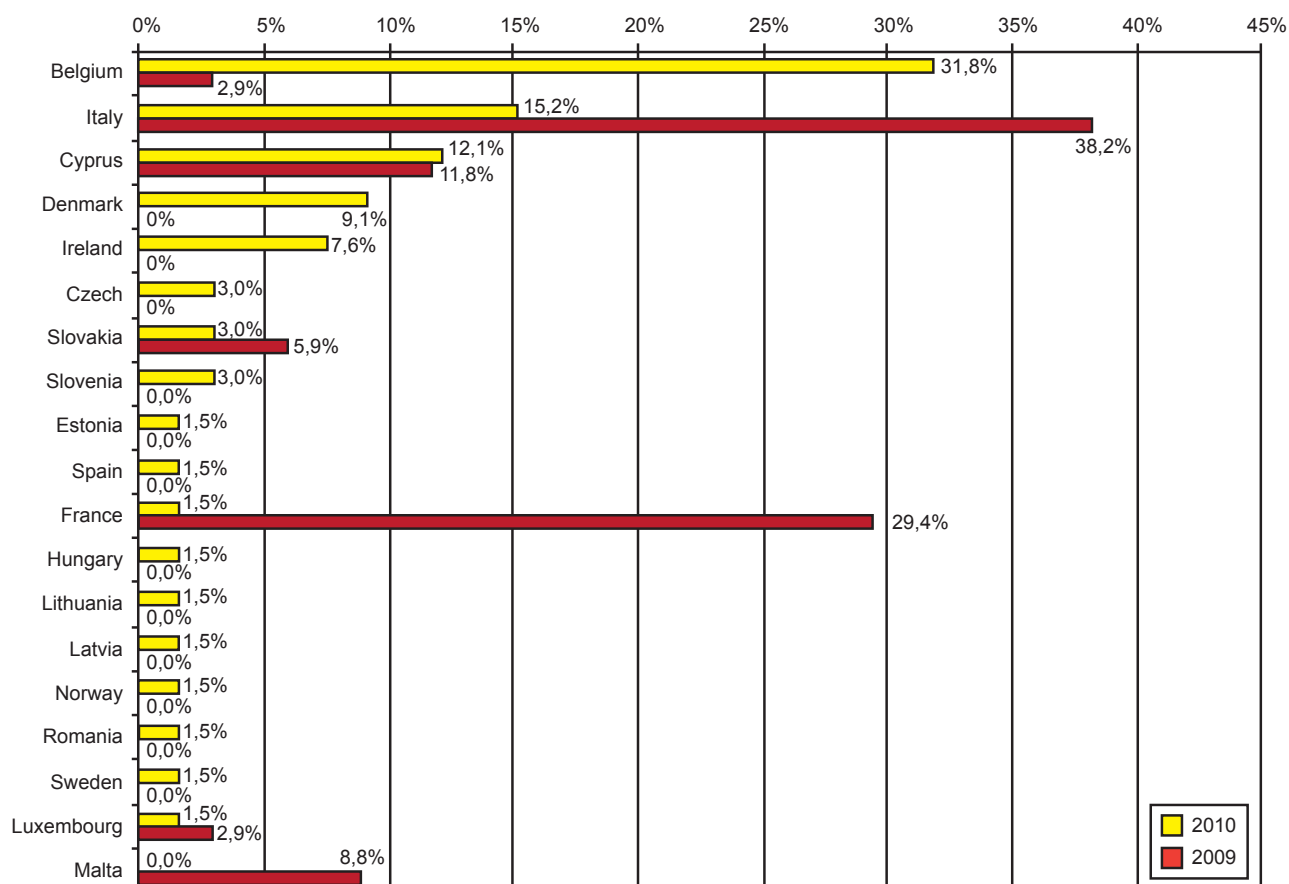


The European Commission coordinates the network, which is operated by the Member States. It also provides the database facilities and, when necessary, helps to resolve problems more quickly. The Commission also passes on any formal complaints it receives to SOLVIT if the problem is likely to be solved without legal action.

SOLVIT Centres are entitled to submit enquiries to Your Europe Advice, following the same eligibility criteria that apply to all enquiries. The **replies provided by the Your Europe Advice experts to SOLVIT Centres** enable them to gain a more complete picture of the legal situation in respect of a specific SOLVIT case. They focus on establishing whether EU law is being correctly implemented or interpreted and on providing legal references to EU law. In short, Your Europe Advice helps SOLVIT Centres prepare the legal ground for their discussions with the national authorities.

In 2010, SOLVIT Centres made use of this service in 73⁹ cases. Some 20 SOLVIT Centres have asked for such advice since the scheme began in 2009. The Belgian SOLVIT Centre makes the most use of this service, followed by the SOLVIT Centres in Italy, Cyprus and France.

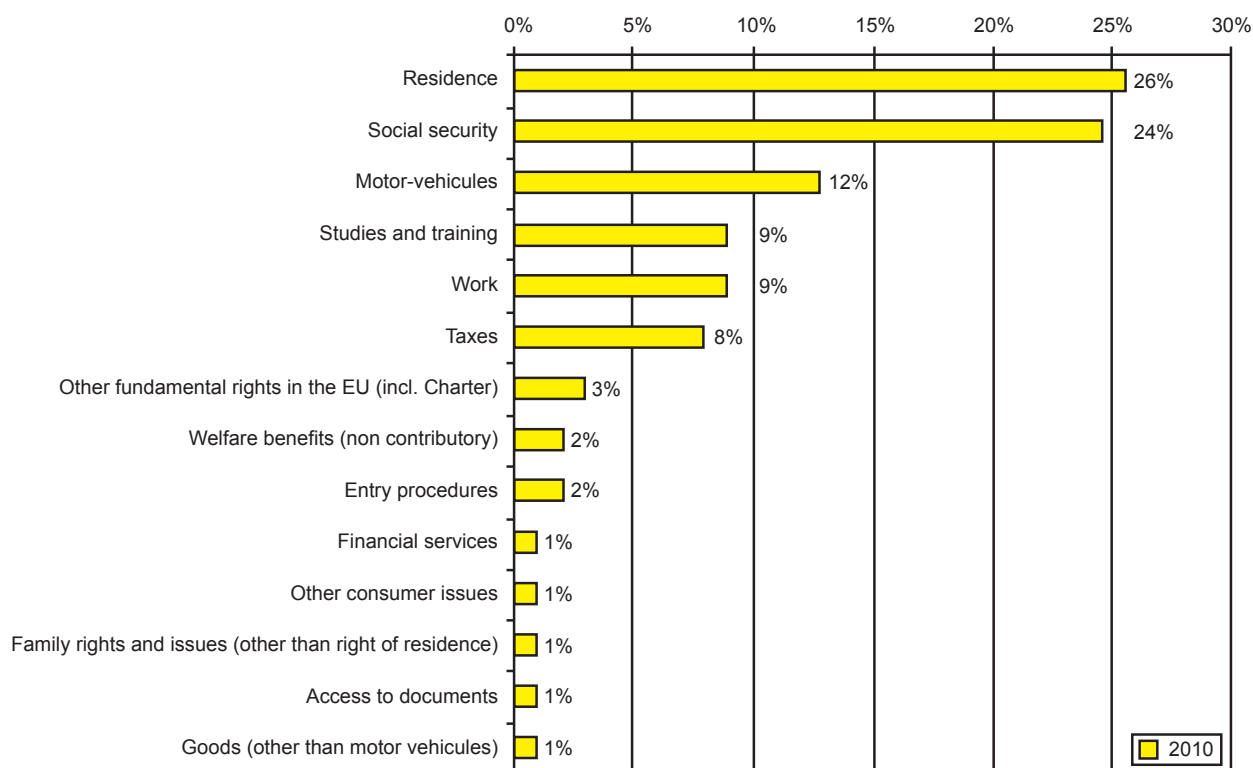
Your Europe Advice support to SOLVIT per SOLVIT Centre



8 http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/finances-retail/finnet/index_en.htm

9 All statistics in this annual report relate to the period from 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010; statistics for previous years relate to the respective periods

Your Europe Advice support to SOLVIT by main subject



The possibility of creating similar close links between Your Europe Advice and other networks is being explored.

2.3 Frequently asked questions

As mentioned, the Your Europe website illustrates and deepens the information provided via frequently asked questions. These FAQs very often reflect real-life cases handled by assistance services, in particular Your Europe Advice.

Building further on this basis, Your Europe Advice has provided an extra 300 **FAQs**, covering the main subject areas in which enquiries have been made, with a view to helping citizens find the answers even more quickly. These FAQs will be double-checked and then published online in the course of 2011.

2.4 A modern database

Enquiries and replies are handled through a **sophisticated database** which is hosted, maintained and developed by the European Commission and was significantly upgraded in 2010. New features were introduced mainly to facilitate its use and to improve the swift management of Your Europe Advice even more. Particular emphasis was put on the security of the database and the protection of enquirers' personal data.

2.5 Your Europe Advice as a feedback mechanism

In 2010 the European Commission adopted the Single Market Act¹⁰, which contains a series of measures to boost the European economy and create jobs. Since 1992, the Single Market has brought tremendous benefits and created new opportunities. However, free movement of goods, services, capital and people does not always run smoothly. In some areas, the necessary legal framework is still not in place. In other areas, administrative obstacles and a lack of enforcement leave the full potential of the Single Market unexploited.

Question:

I keep a car in Greece, where I have my summer house, but I live in the UK. Can the Greek authorities oblige me to register the car in Greece?

Answer:

No, they cannot, because you are not permanently resident in Greece. However, they can forbid you to rent your car or even to lend it to a Greek resident. Your car may only be driven by a Greek resident if you are on board, or otherwise by yourself or visiting relatives or friends. You may find it difficult to insure the car in Greece under UK registration plates, but you should explain the special circumstances.

¹⁰ Commission Communication of 11 November 2010 «Towards a Single Market Act. For a highly competitive social market economy. 50 proposals for improving our work, business and exchanges with one another» (COM(2010) 608 final/2), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0608:REV1:EN:PDF#page=2>

In 2010, the European Commission asked an external contractor to perform an evaluation of the functioning of the Single Market, as seen through cases from five EU assistance services. Your Europe Advice provided the most cases, which meant that the Commission **was able to take into account the experience of thousands of EU citizens**. The enquiries submitted to Your Europe Advice reflect the practical situations in which citizens have difficulties in enforcing their EU rights and thus highlight the areas where the Single Market is still not functioning satisfactorily. Your Europe Advice also published a sector-specific feedback report in February 2010, analysing cases handled in the area of recognition of professional qualifications¹¹. This report was

the result of an in-depth evaluation of the 673 relevant questions sent to Your Europe Advice during 2009 from citizens of all 27 EU Member States.

In addition to the two reports mentioned above, Your Europe Advice experts report on typical questions they receive, highlighting particular problems of national legislation or, even more often, problems involving the application of EU law by administrative authorities. These typical questions feed, in turn, the frequently asked questions presented through the Your Europe website.

Question:

I was stopped by the police in the Netherlands, where I currently live, and on that occasion I was told that I had to exchange my Danish driving licence for a local one. Is that legal?

Answer:

In principle you are not obliged to exchange your driving license issued by another EU country, although you may choose to do so. However, you have no choice if your license has expired under the rules of your country of residence; in that case you are obliged to exchange your license for the local model. Even before expiry, you may be obliged to register your license with the local authorities for administrative purposes. Penalties for driving offences committed in the country of residence may also make it obligatory for you to exchange your driving license.

Question:

I am British and I have moved to Malta to retire. I have brought my car with me and, if I want to register it in Malta, I am required to pay excessively high import taxes. I thought import duties had been abolished in the European single market?

Answer:

Your confusion is understandable. While import duties have indeed been abolished within the EU, there is no EU law on vehicle registration and road taxes, which are a different kind of tax applying to cars registered in the country, regardless of their provenance. You will be required to comply with the local rules, as long as they do not discriminate against imported cars. For instance, the tax to be charged should not be higher than the amount of the residual tax incorporated in the value of a similar car already registered in Malta.

3. Trends and statistics

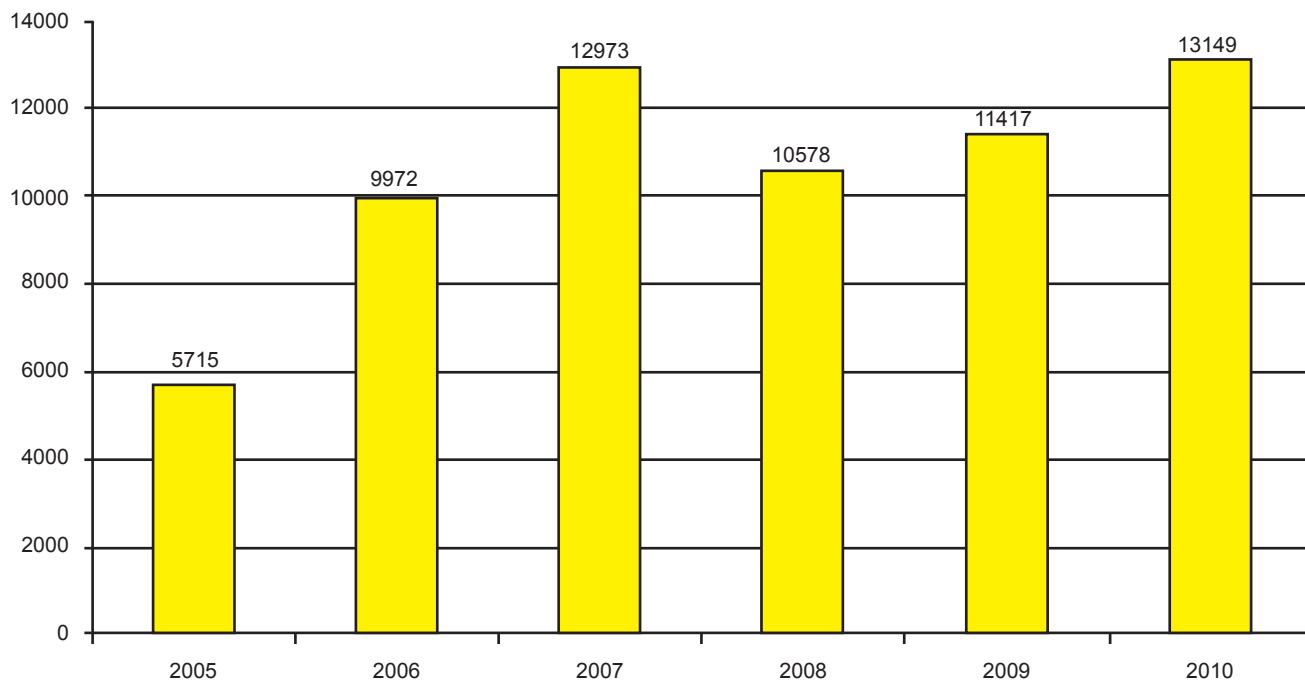


3.1 Trend in the number of enquiries

Appreciation of Your Europe Advice has been increasing constantly over the past years, as reflected in the trend in the number of enquiries.

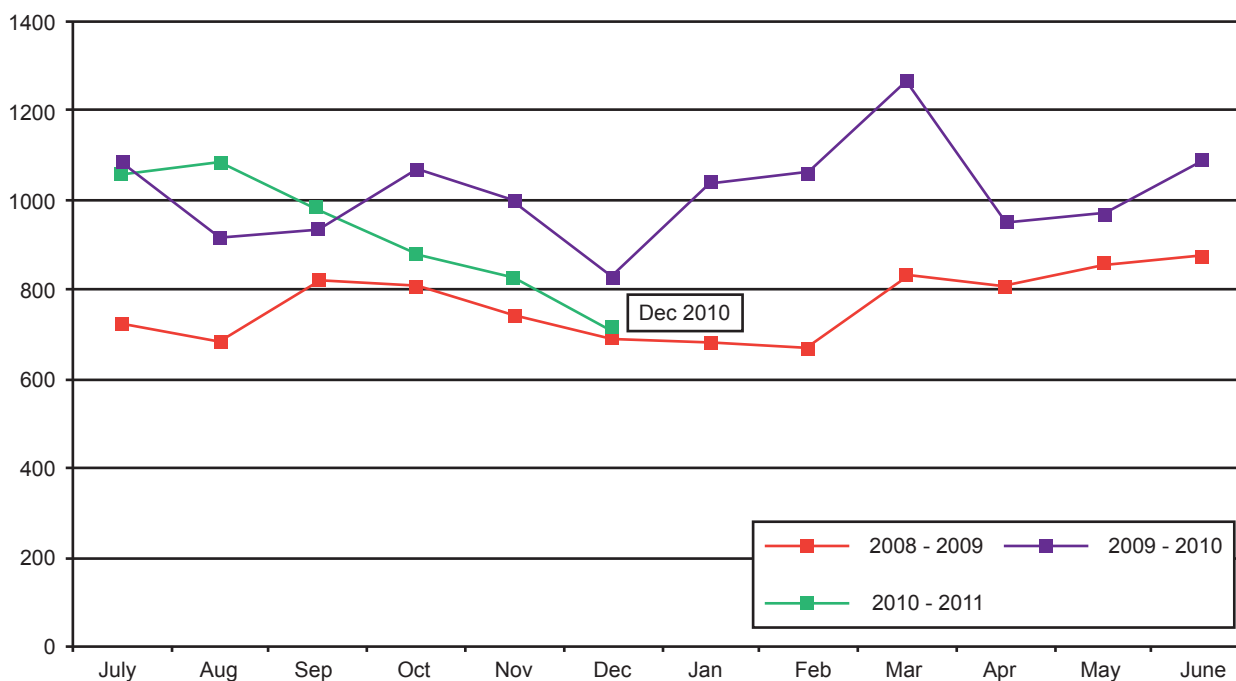
The **total number of enquiries** rose by 15 % from 2009 to 2010 and **reached an all-time high in 2010** with 13.149 enquiries, of which 12.029 were eligible.

Overall evolution over the years



The following chart shows this trend in more detail:

Eligible Enquiries by month



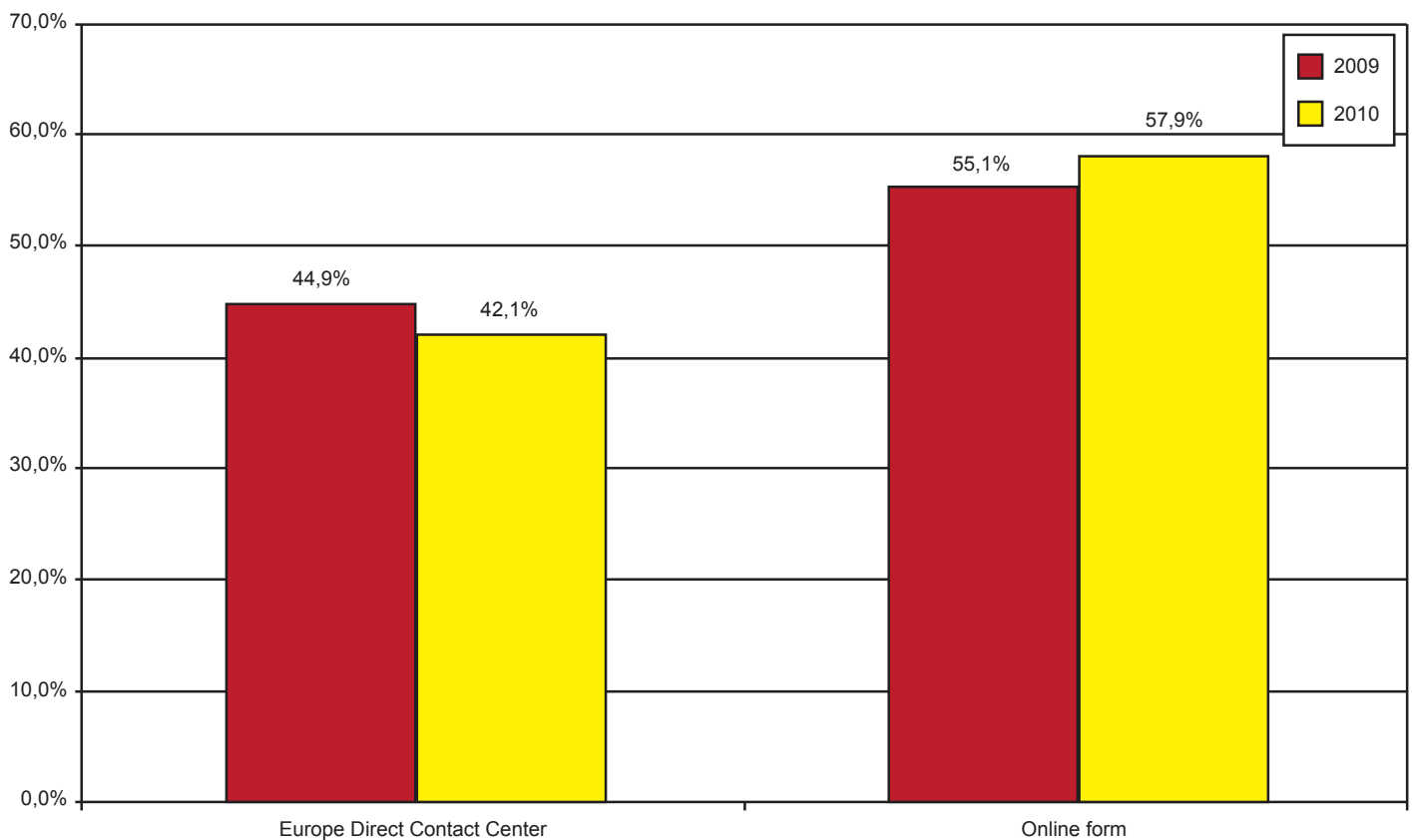
About 58 % of all enquiries arrive through the **online enquiry form** which citizens either find directly on the web¹² or are guided to via the «Still need help?» button on the Your Europe website. The number of online queries is increasing, as can be seen below.

About 42 % of all enquiries received by Your Europe Advice arrive from the Europe Direct service. **Europe Direct** offers, amongst other services, a central information service reachable by phone (free phone number 00 800 67 89 10 11) or internet¹³. All questions on EU rights which cannot easily be answered by the Europe

Direct team are immediately forwarded to Your Europe Advice, which then takes care of finding the relevant information. However, the number of questions has been decreasing since September 2010 due to improvements in the Your Europe website, which allow Europe Direct to answer more and more questions by reference to the Your Europe website.

In line with this, it is possible to identify an emerging trend as regards the type of enquiries: the number of relatively simple questions has been decreasing significantly, whereas the standard questions have become more complex.

Origins of enquiries



Question:

To register my trailer in Spain I am required to go through a type-approval procedure, even though the trailer is covered by an EC certificate of conformity. Why is that?

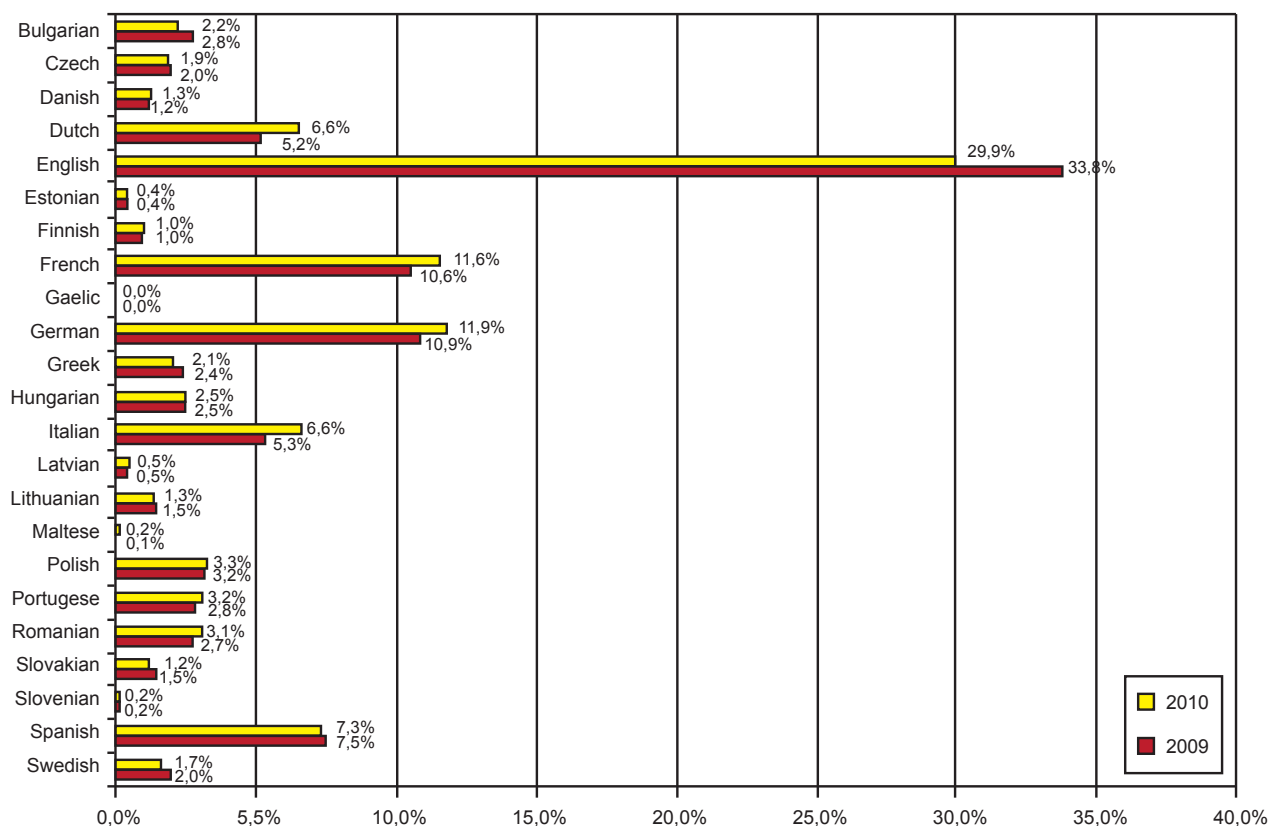
Answer:

The purpose of the type-approval procedure is to check that the technical characteristics of your trailer meet the safety and environmental standards. If your car has a valid EC certificate, the Spanish authorities should not request any additional technical documentation. However, they will probably want to check that the trailer has not undergone any technical modifications after leaving the factory.

12 http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/help/index_en.htm

13 http://europa.eu/europedirect/write_to_us/mailbox/index_en.htm

Languages used



3.2 Languages used

In order to best serve all citizens, it is important that the service is working in all official EU languages. This not only avoids practical obstacles, but also demonstrates that Your Europe Advice operates “close to the citizen”. With this language regime and experts in the Member States who are specialised in both EU and national, regional and local law, Your Europe Advice follows the maxim «think European, but act locally».

However, English is still by far the **language most often used**, followed by German and French. Half of all enquirers ask for a reply in one of these three languages. In 2010, the number of questions asked in English fell slightly compared to 2009, with larger numbers of questions being asked in French, German, Italian and Dutch.

3.3 Eligibility of enquiries

Your Europe Advice replies to 92 % of the questions received; only 8 % of the enquiries fall outside its scope of eligibility, are incomplete or duplicate previous questions. The eligibility rate has remained unchanged since 2009, but it has improved compared to 2008 when 88 % of enquiries were eligible. This improvement is linked to the improved online enquiry form, which was put in place in 2009.

The eligibility criteria are the following:

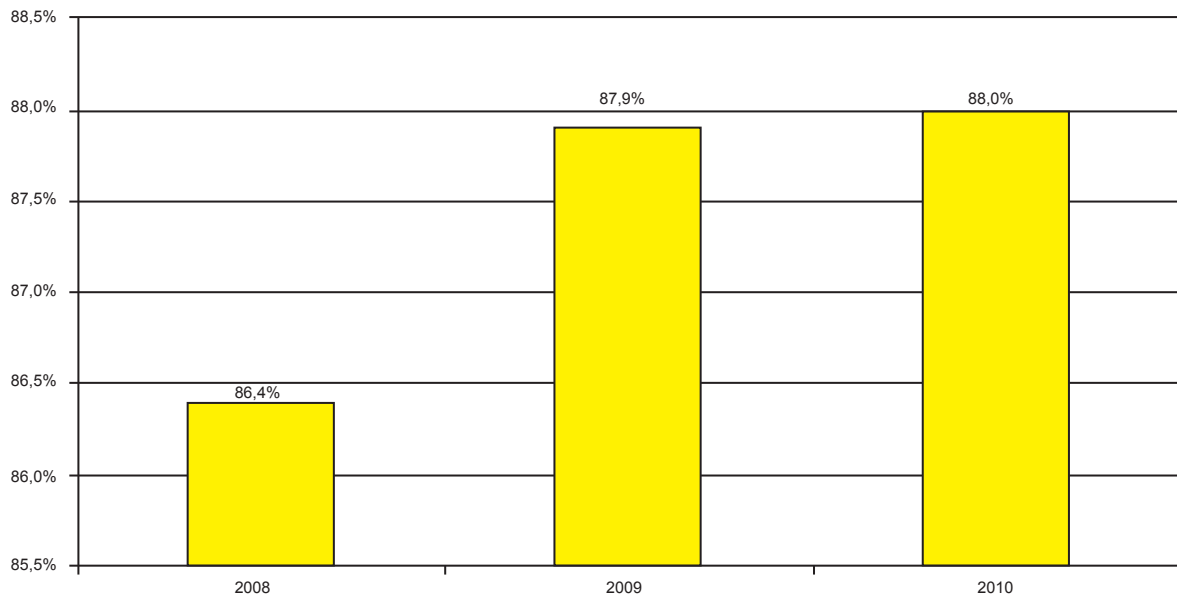
- Enquiries must come from EU nationals or citizens of Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein, non-EU family members, from information and advice services on behalf of individuals, or from commercial bodies if the enquiry concerns the rights of one or more employees.
- The enquiry must relate to the exercise of EU rights under a specific set of actual – i.e. not hypothetical – circumstances. The information asked for should not be easily accessible simply by reference to the Your Europe website.
- The enquiry must be in one of the 27 official EU languages.

3.4 Quality and speed of the replies

Quality and speed of reply are particularly important for Your Europe Advice. **Continuous monitoring of the quality** of replies by the contractor and the European Commission covers between 170 and 200 randomly-selected cases each month, on which feedback is given to the relevant experts. Both the management team of the external contractor and the responsible manager in the Commission apply in-depth quality

control measures; the results are presented in monthly reports and are regularly discussed between the contractor and the Commission. Overall quality improved during 2010. During the past year it has been observed that the average enquiry has become more complex, with users apparently better informed of their rights at the time when they seek advice from Your Europe Advice. In these circumstances, maintaining a constant level of quality may be regarded as a particularly satisfactory result.

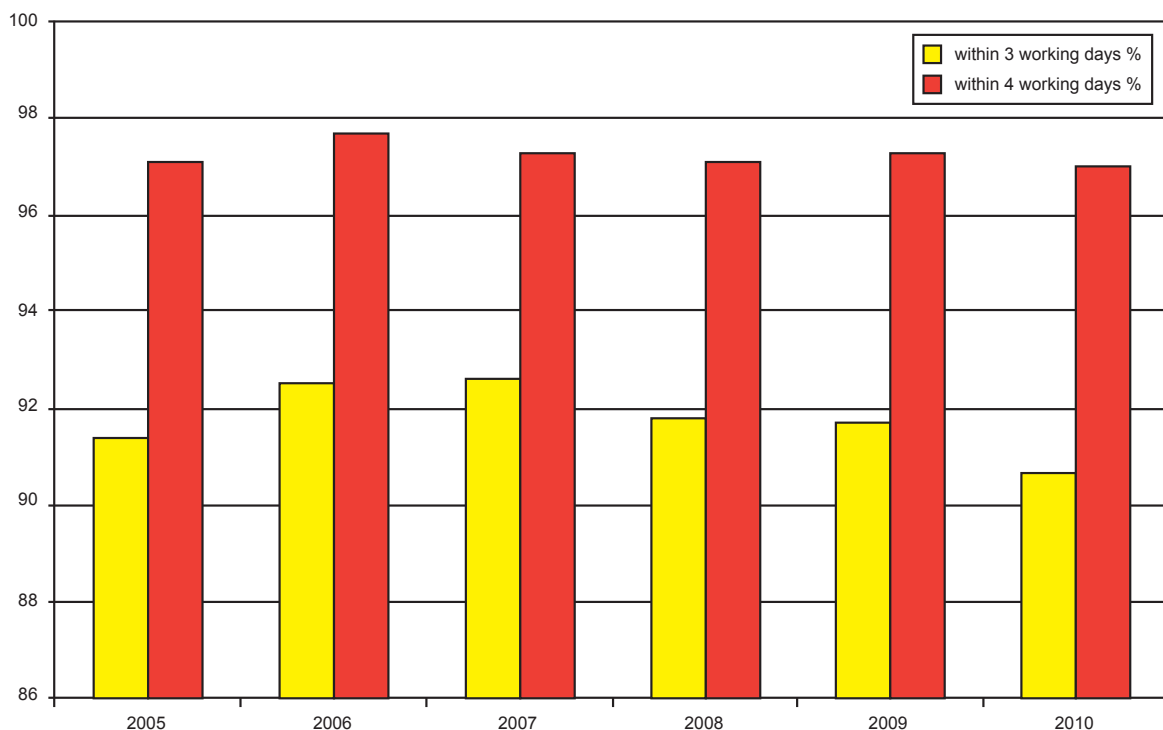
Good quality replies



The other important merit of Your Europe Advice is **speed**. The aim of the service is to answer enquiries within three working days. This is the internal target, whereas citizens are guaranteed to receive a reply within one week. In 2010, 91 %

of the replies met this three days target, and 97% were answered within four working days. The very slight dip in performance in this period is due both to the increase in the number of enquiries and to their increasing complexity.

Success in meeting deadlines



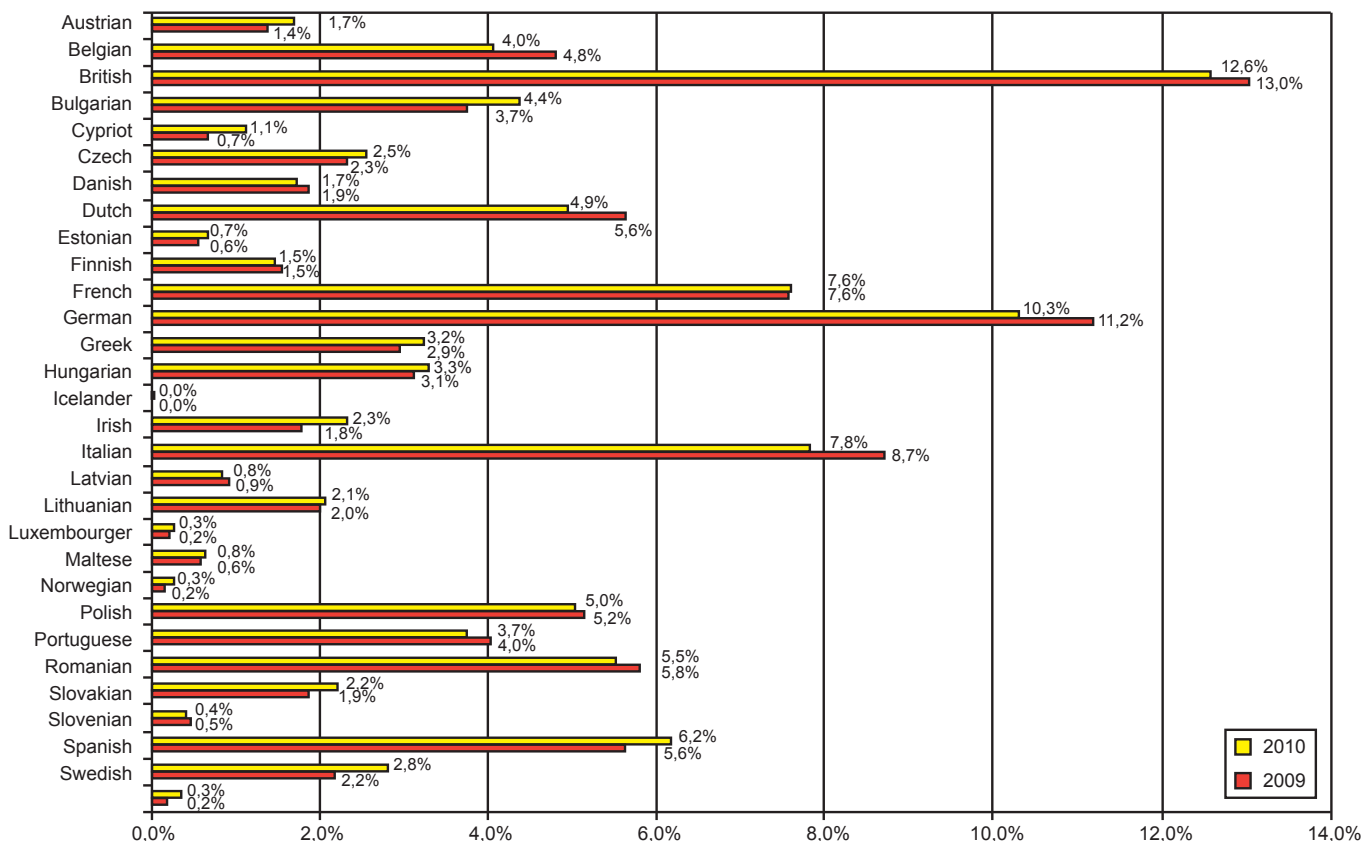
Continuous training of experts is essential in order to ensure a high quality of replies. This includes regular newsletters to the experts containing legal updates of forthcoming legislation, infringement procedures and judgments of the European Court of Justice, an annual training seminar which is run in conjunction with the European Commission, and regular feedback to experts about the quality of their replies. In 2010, for the first time, the Your Europe annual

seminar was organised together with the SOLVIT workshop, which allowed increased networking and led to better mutual understanding.

3.5 Profile of enquirers

In absolute terms, British, German, Italian and French citizens submitted the most enquiries.

Enquiries by nationality



However, relative to the number of inhabitants, most enquiries come from Malta, Cyprus, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Luxembourg. This shows

that people in smaller countries tend to have more questions about cross-border situations.

Question:

I am British and I worked in Ireland before becoming permanently incapable of working due to an industrial accident. I am on a very low income. Can the Irish authorities question my right of residence on the basis of insufficient resources?

Answer:

Not if you stayed in the country continuously for at least 2 years before your accident. In that case, you will have acquired the right of permanent residence immediately, as a result of your accident. The same would apply in the case of occupational disease.

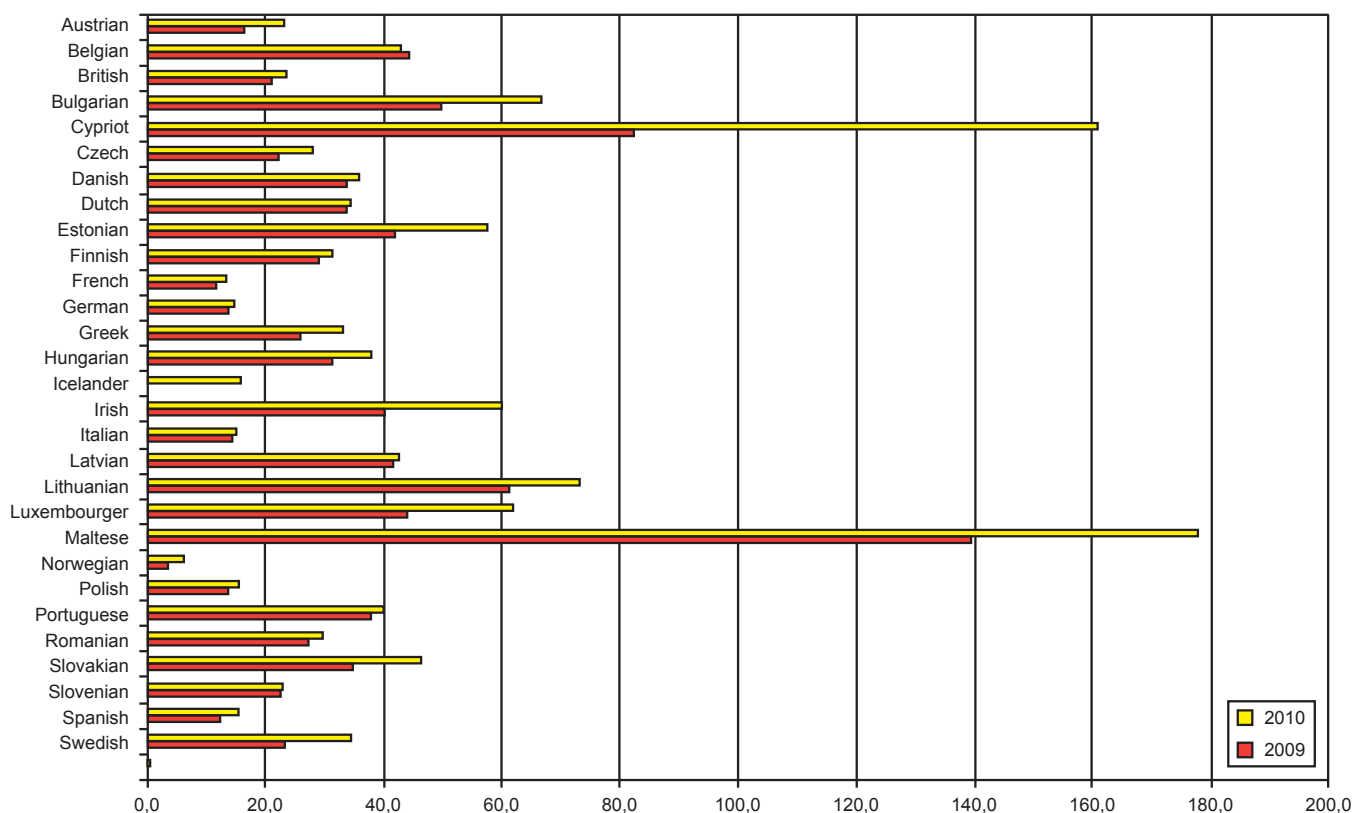
Question:

I am Czech and I would like to move to Austria to look for a job there. How long can I stay there before I find a job?

Answer:

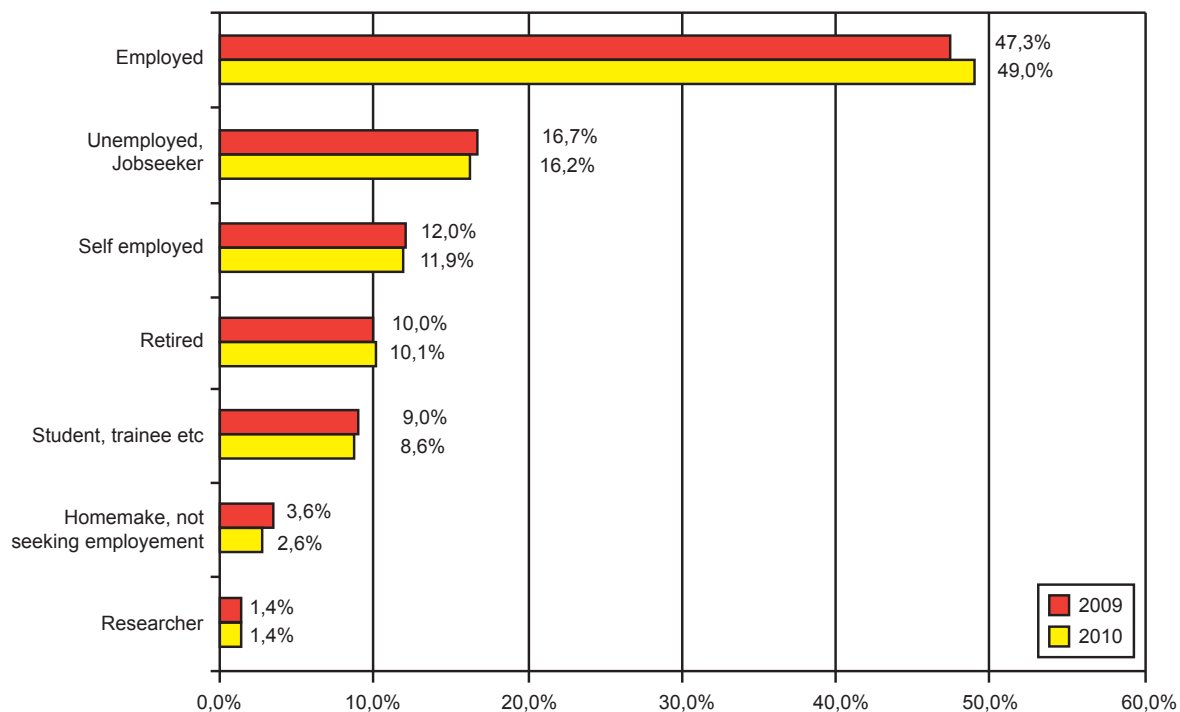
As an unemployed job-seeker, you are allowed to stay in Austria for at least 6 months, and even longer, even if you do not have any income or unemployment benefits from your country of provenance, as long as you can show that you are actually looking for a job and have a genuine chance of finding one. You can prove this, for instance, by providing copies of job applications, invitations to interviews or positive reactions to your applications.

Enquiries per million inhabitants



About half of all enquirers are **employed persons**. A further 16 % of enquirers are **jobseekers** interested in seeking job opportunities abroad.

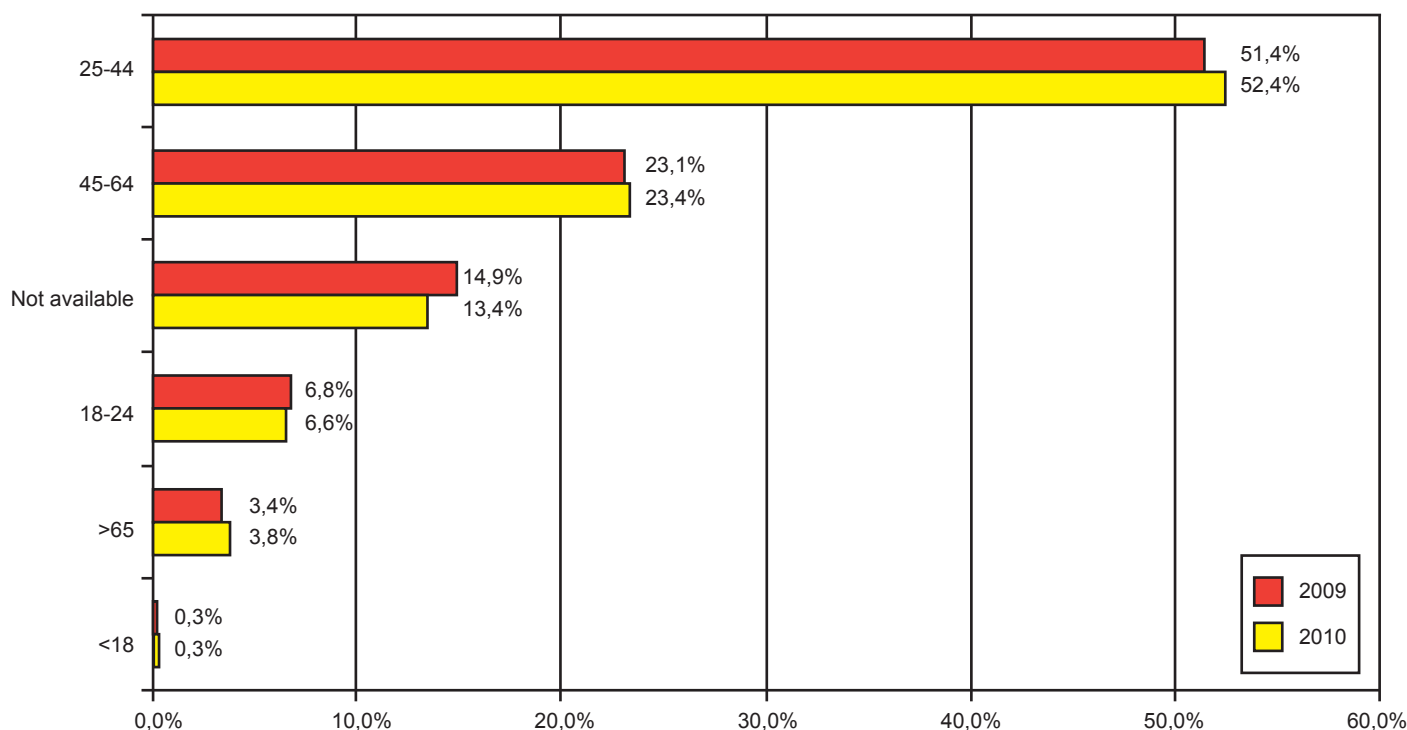
Socio-economic category of enquiries



The age pyramid of enquirers has not changed compared to the previous year: more than half of the questions come from persons aged between 25 and 44. This corresponds to the three main

subject areas of questions, namely social security, residence and work, as well as to the socio-economic profile of enquirers, of whom 65% are employed or looking for a job.

Age of enquirers



3.6 Main topics of the enquiries

The subject areas of the enquiries received have remained fairly stable over the past years. The three areas most frequently concerned – social security, residence rights and work related issues – account for about 60 % of all questions. The top five issues – including entry procedures and motor vehicles – account for more than 80 %.

About a quarter of the questions concern **social security** issues, such as health insurance, pensions, unemployment benefits, forms required etc. Typical questions in this area are:

- My retired mother is coming from another EU country to stay with me for some months. She needs an operation. What formalities must we complete so that she can have the operation in the country where I live?
- Am I covered by the statutory health insurance in my home country when studying abroad during an Erasmus year?
- My employer has sent me on a posting abroad to another EU country for two months. My wife is dependent on my health insurance, but she is staying in our home country. Is she still covered?
- What happens if I have an accident while looking for a job abroad? Will my health insurance cover me?

Residence rights account for more than 21% of the questions, which concern in particular residence cards, registration, conditions for the right of residence, special rules for non-EU family members etc. Typical questions are:

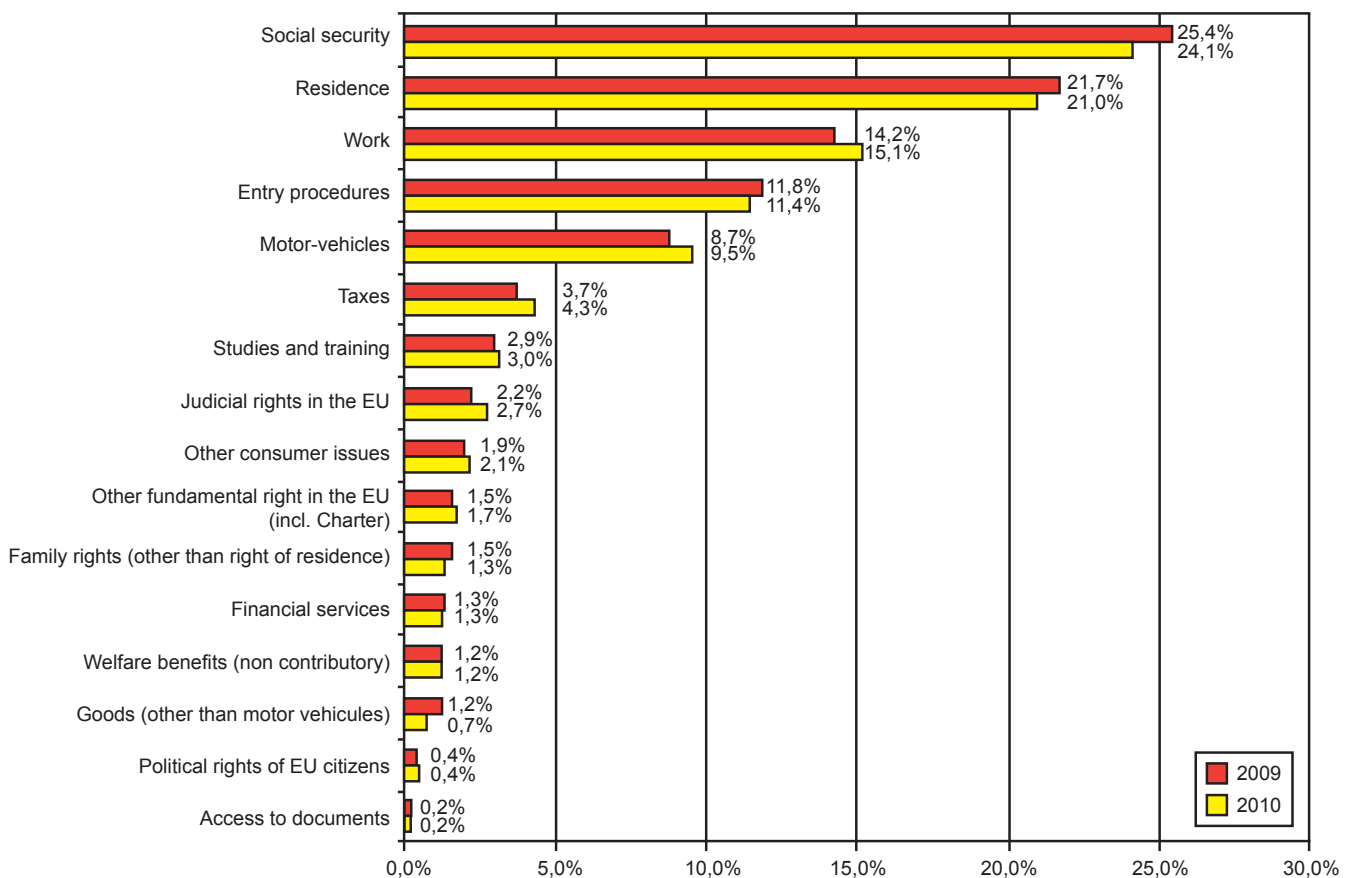
- I have independent resources and am planning to move to another EU country. Do I need to prove to the authorities there that I have sufficient means to support myself?
- I am a Finnish pensioner planning to move to Italy. I am able to support myself with my pension and have full health insurance linked to my pension, which covers me in Italy. If I can prove this, am I entitled to become a permanent resident?
- I am German and intend to work as a doctor in the Netherlands. My registered partner, who is Mexican, will be coming with me. Will she be treated as my spouse for the purpose of residence formalities?
- I am Estonian and I am studying for a PhD in the UK. My Estonian parents are dependent on me and would like to join me in London for the duration of my studies. As family members of an EU national, are they automatically entitled to a residence card?

Work related questions constitute the third largest segment. They concern a wide range of subjects, such as the recognition of professional qualifications, rights for posted workers or cross-border migrant workers, the need for a work permit etc. Typical questions are:

- How long am I allowed to stay in another country to look for a job there?
- Can I work in the public sector in another EU country if I am not a national of that country?
- In my home country, my profession is not regulated. Can I work in that profession in a country where it is regulated?
- Where should I apply to have my professional qualifications recognised in another EU country?

Other important subject areas include procedures for entry into other countries, motor vehicles, taxation, studying abroad, judicial rights, consumer rights etc.

Enquiries by topic



Question:

I have moved to Austria in order to work there, but my wife and children have stayed behind in Slovakia. Where should I pay health insurance contributions for my dependents?

Answer:

There are two possibilities: if your wife works in Slovakia, she must pay health insurance contributions for your children there; if she does not work, you must pay health insurance contributions for your dependents (i.e. your wife and your children) in Austria. You should request an S1 form (former E 109 form) from the Austrian health insurance authority, and then submit it to the Slovak health insurance institution.

4.

If you need further information on Your Europe Advice



Your Europe website: www.youreurope.eu

Your Europe Advice (general information):
<http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights/>

Your Europe Advice **enquiry form:**
www.ec.europa.eu/youreurope/help

The **European Commission's contractor** for the day-to-day running of the Your Europe Advice service is:
European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)
www.ecas-citizens.eu

Your Europe Advice manager:

Moritz Röttinger
European Commission
Directorate General for Internal Market and Services
youreuropeadvice@ec.europa.eu

Question:

I am Romanian and I want to start a free-lance activity in France. The French authorities say I have to apply for a work permit. Is that correct?

Answer:

No. The transitional restrictions to which nationals of so-called "enlargement countries" are subject in some of the EU countries are justified by the need to avoid aggravating the situation of national job markets in areas where they are already saturated; the restrictions concern employed work only. You should not be required to apply for a work permit if you are going to work in France as a self-employed worker.

Question:

I work in Finland, but my family has stayed behind in Estonia, our home country. Where should I claim child benefits?

Answer:

You are generally entitled to family benefits in the country where you work (or from which you receive unemployment benefits or a pension) — in your case Finland. You must submit a claim to the competent institution there, where necessary through your employer. That institution will contact the Estonian institutions in order to obtain information about the composition of the family (number of family members, their age, address etc.). If your spouse works in Estonia or if she could earn family benefits simply by virtue of residence there, Estonia is liable for your family benefits because that is where the children live. Entitlement to family benefits in Finland is suspended up to the amount of benefits provided by Estonia. If the amount of family benefits paid in Estonia is lower than in Finland, the difference will be made up by a supplement paid by Finland.

European Commission

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A hand in a white shirt sleeve holds a red and white lifebuoy over a computer desk. The desk has a monitor, keyboard, and mouse. The background is a solid red color.

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questions?**

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EU rights.**

A man in a dark suit and tie is shown from the chest up, looking upwards with a distressed expression. His right hand is raised, palm facing forward, and his left hand is near his face. He is surrounded by a chaotic sea of white, hand-drawn documents and papers.

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