



# Obstacles citizens face in the Internal Market

Aggregate report

September 2011

## Eurobarometer Qualitative Studies

### **Obstacles citizens face in the Internal Market**

Conducted by TNS Qual+ at the request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication, “Research and Speechwriting” Unit

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## Country Abbreviations<sup>1</sup>

1. Austria	AT
2. Belgium	BE
3. Bulgaria	BG
4. Cyprus	CY
5. Czech Republic	CZ
6. Denmark	DK
7. Estonia	EE
8. Finland	FI
9. France	FR
10. Germany	DE
11. Greece	EL
12. Hungary	HU
13. Ireland	IE
14. Italy	IT
15. Latvia	LV
16. Lithuania	LT
17. Luxembourg	LU
18. Malta	MT
19. The Netherlands	NL
20. Poland	PL
21. Portugal	PT
22. Romania	RO
23. Slovakia	SK
24. Slovenia	SI
25. Spain	ES
26. Sweden	SE
27. The United Kingdom	UK

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<sup>1</sup> In the body text of the report the listing of Member States in parentheses indicates that the relevant issue was primarily raised by individuals from that particular country.

# 1 Executive Summary

This research is intended to feed into the ongoing evaluation of the 'Information and Assistance Networks'. The latter assists citizens and businesses in exercising their rights in the EU's internal market (Europe Direct, Your Europe Advice – former Citizens Signpost Service, European Consumer Centres, Enterprise Europe Network and SOLVIT). As such, the objective of this research is to provide helpful information on the effectiveness of the Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services policies in as far as they address citizen's concerns and priorities.

Based on the feedback from these mechanisms, a preliminary list of 14 most common obstacles for citizens in the Internal Market has been prepared. The aim of this study was to:

- Check to what extent these obstacles are expected or experienced by the citizens, i.e. to test the gap between people's expectations about the single market and the problems and frustrations they experience on a daily basis;
- Check if there are other obstacles than those identified by the Commission;
- Help to better understand the root causes of the specific problems, e.g. a lack of understanding / application of EU rules by local authorities; and
- If possible identify, for each area/obstacle discussed, how serious the problems are (where and how often they occur and what the effects are).

The method used for this study was **focus group discussions with the general public across all 27 Member States**. One focus group discussion took place in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Two focus group discussions took place in each of the remaining 21 Member States. A total of **48 group discussions** were held.

## ***1.1 General perception of the EU and Internal Market***

- Respondents' associations with the European Union can be grouped as positive, neutral and negative. Respondents from the majority of countries had both positive and negative associations with the EU. **Positive associations related mostly to freedom of people / freedom of movement, unity, the Euro as a common currency, and culture and diversity.** Negative associations related predominantly to bureaucracy.
- Respondents from just over a third of the Member States **spontaneously associated the EU with bureaucracy.** These

associations related to perceptions of too many public servants, too many rules and regulations, and slow decision-making processes. The **majority of these perceptions were based on media reports**, although a minority of respondents related that they had had **personal experiences** of EU bureaucracy.

- Respondents were asked how they would **sum up the EU in one phrase**. Various suggestions were offered that centred around two broad ideas - **unity/scope of the EU** and the **dichotomy of the EU**.
- Some **differences between groups of respondents** were noted in five Member States where the younger group of respondents were more positive towards the EU than the older group that had more reservations or were more sceptical.
- In the **majority of countries**, respondents **were familiar with the term Internal Market**, but in eleven Member States (just over a third), respondents **showed very little awareness** of the term.
- **Positive associations with the Internal Market** related to the ease with which goods can be ordered over the internet and that customs duty does not need to be paid, increased competition which gives access to goods and services of higher quality, the regulation or lowering of prices and increased choice.
- Nearly all respondents felt that the Internal Market affected them directly as they are all consumers and in addition it affects their standard of living.

## ***1.2 Internal Market – information and redress***

- Respondents expressed that they tend not to find out about their rights proactively but **only seek information once a problem occurs**.
- When respondents looked for information the **main sources were official authorities, the internet and family, friends and colleagues** who might have some information that would help respondents.
- Consumer and legal advice were more likely to be sought on a **national** level and awareness of similar sources on an EU level was lower. Respondents thought that they would have to experience a very serious problem to ask consumer advice centres on national or EU level for help.

- **Social networks** were a much **less popular** source of information as the information they contain was not regarded as reliable enough.
- If their rights were violated when buying something over the internet, respondents from a quarter of the Member States said that they would not seek help if the value of the item that they had bought was low. When looking for help, the most prominent sources were – the **internet, the national consumer protection agency, and friends and family** if they had knowledge that could help.
- If respondents experienced **problems with an employer** while working in another Member State the generally preferred source of assistance was their embassy in the Member State they were working in.

### ***1.3 Purchasing goods and services***

- The majority of respondents had purchased goods from another EU country, either directly or over the internet. The most prominent reason why respondents did not buy goods from other countries (not considering the barriers discussed below) is because they felt **no need to** buy goods from abroad as they can find what they need locally.
- Although a range of different **barriers** to purchasing online or from another EU country was listed, the most common were concerns about the **safety of online shopping / security concerns and language barriers** such as not being able to communicate in case of a dispute and not being able to assess if an internet site is trustworthy.
- Despite security concerns being listed as a major barrier, the **majority of respondents had not had experience of payment fraud**. Respondents also pointed out that in order to try and prevent this it is important to buy from recognised sites and use secure methods of payment. Examples from respondents who **did have experience of payment fraud** related to non-delivery of goods; payment to a seller that didn't exist; a buyer wanting to settle an electronic transaction with a cheque; and being charged twice for the same product. In nearly all instances respondents were able to get their money back.
- The majority of respondents did not report any notable problems buying goods from other EU countries and if they did, they were **generally successfully resolved with the seller or hosting website**. When respondents had experienced problems the **most prominent was related to receiving faulty products, or products different to what had been bought, or not receiving them at all**.



- The **most prominent restriction to access** mentioned by respondents concerned their **place of residence**. Respondents from more than half of the Member States had some experience of internet sites that would not deliver to their country.
- The actual **problems experienced by respondents when buying goods from another EU country were similar to the barriers to internet purchases**. The most prominent difficulty concerned issues with delivery - high delivery charges, long delivery times, and non-delivery.
- The most widely regarded differences between countries related to **perceptions of trustworthiness** of certain countries particularly Eastern European countries and southern European countries. It should be noted that these views are largely based on perceptions and stereotypes than actual experience.

## **1.4 Travel**

- **Nearly all respondents had some experience with travelling to another EU country**. The **predominant difficulty that respondents experienced when travelling** included language difficulties, such as not being able to speak the language of the country they are travelling to, not being able to understand road signage, and not being understood in emergency situations. The second most common difficulty listed was concerns about safety and security.
- **None of the respondents felt there were any barriers to travelling that would prevent them from travel to another Member State**.
- Problems experienced relating to **travel rights** included lost, delayed or damaged luggage and delayed or cancelled flights by the airlines. Respondent **awareness of their air travel rights varied** with many feeling that they are not fully aware of their rights. When a problem occurred, respondents' first point of call tended to be the airline itself. In many cases the problems were resolved or compensation was received, but there was some confusion amongst respondent about their entitlements.
- **A minority of respondents had experienced any problems relating to car rental**. There were some examples of unfair contractual conditions and unfair practices, such as being charged for damages for which respondents were not responsible, but these did not seem to be widespread amongst respondents. Respondents stressed the importance of using reputable car rental companies. They did not feel that they knew their rights as far as car rental was concerned and had difficulty exercising them due to language constraints.

- **All respondents acknowledged the differences in road traffic regulations across Member States.** Although these can create problems **they do not seem to be a particular obstacle travelling across Europe.** It was only in a minority of cases where respondents considered national differences in road traffic regulations and driving behaviour as a barrier that made them reluctant to drive in another EU country. In terms of **knowing their rights**, some respondents looked for information about their rights before travelling, but that did not mean that they knew of all the rules before they travelled. As with car rental rights, language barriers remained a substantial challenge.
- In terms of other difficulties experienced when travelling, language barriers were again mentioned, as were difficulties with card payments.
- The most prominent differences by country again included countries where English is not spoken widely although the country which seemed to present the greatest obstacle to driving was England, due to driving on the left hand side of the road. France was also regarded as a country that is difficult to drive in because of road signage.

### ***1.5 Studying and working abroad***

- Experience of working or studying abroad varied amongst respondents. **Only about one quarter of respondents had experience with studying and working abroad.** In Germany and UK none of the respondents had had experience with working or studying abroad. Respondents mentioned a **range of different barriers to going to live in another EU country.** The most prominent were **language, family and finding employment.**
- There was a mixed level of awareness about the issue of the recognition of professional and academic qualifications. Although the majority of respondents were aware that such an issue existed, many were not. The majority of respondents regard it as important that **there should be some way of recognising qualifications obtained in different countries.** Personal experience of this issue was limited but there was a sense in some countries that the situation has improved.
- **Only about one-eighth of respondents had experienced working in another country.** Respondents felt that the easiest way of finding work in another country is when one is transferred by a company one works for already. Respondents who thought that finding **work might be difficult** cited the following **obstacles** that people could experience – language barriers and the non-recognition of diplomas and qualifications. Nearly all those who expressed a view on when they would look for a job – before or

after moving – said that they would look for work before leaving their country.

- The focus groups indicate that **residency issues was not something that respondents had difficulty with** and there was an overwhelming **expectation amongst respondents that movement within the EU is supposed to be easy**. There was no experience amongst respondents of the issuing of visas and residence cards to non-EU nationals who are family members of an EU citizen, but it was imagined that this process might be more challenging.
- The **level of awareness** of health insurance and social security issues **differed substantially across countries**. Respondents regarded these issues as difficult to understand and there was a call for more information. A widely held **expectation amongst respondents was that there would not be any difficulties regarding health cover** in other EU Member States and that the refunding of costs would be straightforward. There was uncertainty amongst respondents about whether all costs would be covered by the European Health Insurance Card, and whether it was necessary to take out additional insurance. There was also uncertainty about the uniformity and differences between social systems across the EU.
- Respondents from just over a third of the Member States did not know much about reclaiming VAT reimbursements, while others had found the issue quite confusing and troublesome. There was also the **perception that VAT is not refundable to EU citizens**. Respondents from **over a third of the Member States did not think that there was any risk of double taxation**. Interestingly **respondents from approximately two-thirds of Member States did not regard opening a bank account in another Member State as complicated** and problematic at all. This should be seen in the broader context of only about a quarter of respondents having lived in another Member State and it was not always clear if this view was based on personal experience or perception. Respondents from **roughly a third of the Member States felt that opening a bank account can be a problem** and what often complicated the process were requests for utility bills, or the need to have a residential address.
- The majority of respondents had no experience of switching utilities in another EU Member State. Their expectations were generally that there would not be significant differences between switching utilities in another EU country and switching utilities in their home country
- There were no other obstacles experienced while working or studying in another Member State that were significant and examples included accommodation and learning to deal with everyday practicalities.

- The **various barriers and obstacles discussed in the focus groups did not greatly alter the way in which respondents thought about the idea of leaving** to study or work in another EU country. The **benefits that respondents saw as outweighing** the obstacles included: experiencing new things that will result in personal enrichment, higher wages, and improving academic qualifications.
- Respondents were asked if there were any countries which presented greater barriers to working and studying there. It is regarded as harder moving to a country where a different language is spoken and easier when a common language is shared. Western European countries were preferred destinations and Eastern European countries the least preferable.

## 2 Objectives and methodology

This chapter sets out the rationale for the study and the background that informed its design. It explains who the respondents were, why they were selected for inclusion, and what topics were covered in the focus groups.

### 2.1 Background and objectives

This research will feed into the ongoing evaluation of the 'Information and Assistance Networks'. The latter assists citizens and businesses in exercising their rights in the EU's internal market (Europe Direct, Your Europe Advice – former Citizens Signpost Service, European Consumer Centres, Enterprise Europe Network and SOLVIT). As such, the results of this research will provide helpful information on the effectiveness of DG MARKT policies in as far as they address citizen's concerns and priorities.

Based on the feedback from these mechanisms, a preliminary list of 14 most common obstacles for citizens in the Internal Market has been prepared. The aim of this study was to:

- Check to what extent these obstacles are expected / experienced by the citizens, i.e. to test the gap between people's expectations about the single market and the problems / frustrations they experience on a daily basis;
- Check if there are other obstacles than these identified by the Commission;
- Help to better understand the root causes of the specific problems, e.g. a lack of understanding / application of EU rules by local authorities; and
- If possible identify, per area/obstacle discussed, how serious the problems are (where and how often they occur and what the effects are).

### 2.2 Methodology and sampling

#### 2.2.1 Design

The method used for this study was **focus group discussions with the general public**, each approximately two hours in length, consisting of 8-10 participants per group.

One focus group discussion took place in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Two focus group discussions took place in each of the remaining 21 Member States. A total of **48 group discussions** were held.

Participants were EU citizens, and in countries where there were two focus group discussions, the **groups were stratified by age** (18-35, 36-54)

and in the younger groups, students were deliberately included. There were no specific recruitment criteria, i.e. it was not, for example, necessary that participants had any personal experience of the Internal Market. It was envisaged though that the groups would contain a mixture of men and women and differentiation across social status.

This report is based on the combined responses from all the groups and provides an overview of the key issues identified in the study.

The breakdown of the focus groups per country is provided below.

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>AGE RANGE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
<b>Austria</b>	18 – 35	9	Vienna
<b>Austria</b>	36 – 54	10	Vienna
<b>Belgium</b>	18 – 35	8	Brussels
<b>Belgium</b>	36 – 54	8	Brussels
<b>Bulgaria</b>	18 – 35	8	Sophia
<b>Bulgaria</b>	36 – 54	8	Sophia
<b>Cyprus</b>	18 – 54	8	Nicosia
<b>Czech Republic</b>	18 – 35	8	Prague
<b>Czech Republic</b>	36 - 54	8	Prague
<b>Denmark</b>	18 – 35	9	Copenhagen
<b>Denmark</b>	36 – 54	10	Copenhagen
<b>Estonia</b>	18 – 54	8	Tallinn
<b>Finland</b>	18 – 35	8	Espoo
<b>Finland</b>	36 – 54	9	Espoo
<b>France</b>	18 – 35	8	Paris
<b>France</b>	36 – 54	9	Tours
<b>Germany</b>	18 – 35	5	Munich
<b>Germany</b>	36 – 54	8	Munich
<b>Greece</b>	18 – 35	9	Athens
<b>Greece</b>	36 – 54	9	Athens
<b>Hungary</b>	18 – 35	9	Budapest
<b>Hungary</b>	36 – 54	10	Budapest
<b>Ireland</b>	18 – 35	9	Dublin
<b>Ireland</b>	36 – 54	9	Dublin
<b>Italy</b>	18 – 35	7	Milan
<b>Italy</b>	35 – 54	8	Milan
<b>Latvia</b>	18 – 54	9	Riga
<b>Lithuania</b>	18 – 54	8	Vilnius
<b>Luxembourg</b>	18 – 54	9	Luxembourg
<b>Malta</b>	18-54	8	Mriehel
<b>The Netherlands</b>	18 – 35	8	Amsterdam
<b>The Netherlands</b>	36 – 54	8	Amsterdam
<b>Poland</b>	18 – 35	8	Warsaw
<b>Poland</b>	36 – 54	8	Warsaw
<b>Portugal</b>	18 – 35	8	Lisbon
<b>Portugal</b>	36 – 54	8	Lisbon
<b>Romania</b>	18 – 35	9	Bucharest
<b>Romania</b>	36 – 54	8	Bucharest
<b>Slovakia</b>	18 – 35	8	Bratislava
<b>Slovakia</b>	36 – 54	8	Bratislava

<b>Slovenia</b>	18 – 35	9	Ljubljana
<b>Slovenia</b>	36 – 54	8	Maribor
<b>Spain</b>	18 – 35	10	Madrid
<b>Spain</b>	36 – 54	10	Madrid
<b>Sweden</b>	18 – 35	11	Gothenburg
<b>Sweden</b>	36 – 54	10	Gothenburg
<b>The United Kingdom</b>	18 – 35	9	Croydon
<b>The United Kingdom</b>	36 – 54	9	Croydon

## 2.2.2 Discussion content

In addition to obtaining the respondents' general views on the EU and the Internal Market, and assessing where they get information from about their rights and possibilities for redress; the discussion content was built around the preliminary list of the 14 most common obstacles for citizens in the Internal Market. The following broad themes were covered: purchasing goods and services, travelling abroad, studying and working abroad, and differences between countries.

## 2.2.3 Timings

The overall start and end dates of the study in the respective countries ranged from the start of fieldwork on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March to the submission of national reports on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2011.

## 2.3 Contextual considerations

There are some factors which might provide context to how respondents understood and answered questions in this study. The local research team in each Member State provided input to the following section and the factors identified below are based on this input.

None of the research teams reported any significant concerns related to recruitment and had generally found this to have been easy. It was only in three instances where minor concerns were raised about respondents' knowledge of certain areas, for example working and studying abroad. This was because respondents did not have a lot of first-hand experience which meant that their answers were based on anecdotal evidence or their own expectations (IE, UK, SI). In Luxembourg it was reported that respondents had difficulty answering several questions. Due to the country's geographic position it has always tried to establish relations with other countries. Therefore, crossing borders and buying goods and services from another country is already part of the respondents' everyday lives. This might make their perspective on the topic different from respondents for whom this is not an everyday occurrence.

It was only in a minority of cases where the research teams reported on more general factors that might have affected fieldwork. These related

mostly to respondents' perceptions of politics and politicians in general and the current economic climate:

- The relationship between national government and the EU:
  - In Hungary this is seen as somewhat strained at the moment due to national policies and laws that appear to be in conflict with what is required at EU level.
- Increased mobility over the last couple of years has influenced people's perceptions positively about the idea of working and living abroad. (BE)
- Economic difficulties in the country (EL, IE, ES, EL, PT, SI)
  - In the Irish report it was mentioned how resentment towards politicians and government officials was reflected in the focus group discussions. This was as a result of the EU-IMF loan that Ireland had been granted and that is regarded by some as difficult to pay back, combined with tax increases and public expenditure cuts.
  - The general political and economic stability in the country and the resignation of the Prime Minister and current debates about asking for external financial assistance. (PT)
  - A generally low level of confidence in politics and state institutions. (SI)
  - Discovery of the recent corrupt behaviour of the Slovenian member of the European Parliament. (SI)
- Other topics in the news at the time of the focus groups: (IE)
  - On the day that the Irish groups took place Ryanair announced that they were going to add a €2 'compensation tax' to ticket bookings. This brought into focus the issue of air travel rights and also the expense respondents and airlines incurred for travel and for adherence to the EU passenger rights directives.



### 3 General perception of the EU and Internal Market

Before exploring attitudes to specific obstacles, respondents were asked about their general perceptions of the EU and the Internal Market.

#### 3.1 Key findings

- Respondents' associations with the European Union can be grouped as positive, neutral and negative. Respondents from the majority of countries had both **positive and negative associations with the EU. Positive associations related mostly to freedom of people / freedom of movement, unity, the Euro as a common currency, and culture and diversity.** Negative associations related predominantly to bureaucracy.
- Respondents from just more than a third of the Member States **spontaneously associated the EU with bureaucracy.** These associations related to perceptions of too many public servants, too many norms and regulations, and slow decision making processes. The **majority of these perceptions were based on media reports,** although a minority of respondents related that they had had **personal experiences** of EU bureaucracy.
- Respondents were asked if they had to **sum up the EU in one phrase,** what it would be. Various suggestions were offered that relate to two broad ideas - **unity/scope of the EU** and the **dichotomy of the EU.**
- Some **differences between groups of respondents** were noted in five Member States where the younger group of respondents were more positive towards the EU than the older group that had more reservations or were more sceptical.
- In the **majority of countries** respondents **were familiar with the term Internal Market,** but in eleven Member States (**just more than a third**), respondents **showed very little awareness** of the term.
- **Positive associations with Internal Market** related to the ease with which goods can be ordered over the internet and that customs duty does not need to be paid, increased competition which gives access to goods and services of higher quality, the regulation or lowering of prices and increased choice.
- Nearly all respondents were of the view that the Internal Market affected them directly as they are all consumers and in addition it affects their standard of living.

### 3.2 European Union

Respondents were asked what they associated with the words 'European Union'. The table below summarises whether associations with the EU in a particular national report were largely positive, neutral or negative.

According to respondents from the majority of countries the EU had both positive and negative aspects.

Respondents in a small minority of countries (BG, HU, LU, PT) associated the EU with mostly positive aspects and had hardly any negative associations.

It was only in Denmark where respondents were largely neutral towards the EU.

In three countries (EL, LV, UK) respondents associated the EU largely with negative images and aspects. In Greece this can be attributed to the current national economic crisis and the recovery plan. In Latvia there did not appear to be one specific reason for the predominantly negative associations, such as high taxes and prices, inequality between the Member States, bureaucracy, etc. In the UK the respondents' attitudes ranged from indifference to active disapproval of Britain's membership, but respondents also stated that they felt they had a lack of knowledge of what membership of the EU really meant, especially in relation to their own lives.

<b>Both positive and negative</b>	<b>Mostly positive (no or limited negatives)</b>	<b>Mostly neutral</b>	<b>Mostly negative (no or limited positives)</b>
AT CY CZ EE FI DE IE IT LT MT NL PL RO SK SI ES SE FR BE	BG HU LU PT	DK	EL LV UK

Below is a list of positive, neutral and negative associations that respondents made to the EU. They appear in the order of frequency with which they were mentioned.

### Positive associations

- Freedom to travel / of movement / freedom to study and work in another Member State (AT 18-35, CZ, EE, FI, IT 18-35, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, SE 18-35, FR, BG, CY, DE, HU, LV, BE)  
*“Travelling to new places is definitely easier, and so is also getting to know people from cultures that may be different – yet close.” (IT, male, 18-35, student)*
- Unity - several countries in one, single economy, unifying regulatory framework (IT 36-54, BG, CY 18-35, DE, HU, EE, ES, DK, LV, RO, PL, LU, SI, SE 18-35)  
*“A union of countries that have common characteristics, similar economies, similar targets, want to compete with other countries such as the USA, China, basically an alliance mostly based on financial interests.” (CY, male, 18-35)*  
*“It is being part of something bigger and prestigious: community comes to my mind.” (CZ, female, 18-35, student)*  
*“It is a unique project historical wise. It is the confederation of democratic countries. I don’t think we have seen this before.” (DK, male, 18-35, student)*
- Euro as a common currency (AT, DE, HU, LU, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES 18-35, SE 36-54, FR)
- Cultural exchange and diversity (FR, DE, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, LU, BE)  
*“The EU as a great cultural diversity.” (LU, female, 18-35)*
- Free movement of goods (CY, LT, PT, SI)
- Financial support given to countries / various projects by the EU (CZ, DE, ES)
- More opportunities (MT, SI, SE 18-35)  
*“Since Malta is a small country, it is a benefit for us to be part of a group with other larger countries, as this increases our opportunities. (MT, male, 36-54)*
- Better quality of life / of food and water (CY, SK)
- Peace (FR, SE 18-35)
- Economic area with gradual movement towards a political area. (DE, EL)
- Something bigger / broader than the country (IE, SI)
- Europe and its history / tradition and culture (LT, LU)

- Schengen agreement (LU, NT 36-54)
- Free movement of capital (BG)
- Sense of identity – as European citizens (IT 18-35)
- Power (FR)
- Welfare society (EE)
- Tidy towns (LT)
- Modern (PL)
- Beautiful landscapes (LT)
- Western Europe (SE 18-35)
- Elite projects (SE younger)

### **Neutral associations**

- The EU flag and stars (CY, FI, HU, LV, LT, NL younger, PT, RO, SK, SI, UK, SE 36-54)
- Brussels (CY, HU, NL 18-35, PT, SK, UK)
- Euro / common currency / euro coinage (AT, FI, ES, UK)
- The EU colours (FI, SK, SE 36-54)
- EU Parliament (DE, RO, SK)
- The map of the European Union (CY, FI, ES)
- Unity aspect: many countries, many people, many languages. (AT, DK)
- Bureaucracy (AT, DK)
- Political meetings (FI, ES)
- EU Commission (DE, SK)
- Constant expansion as more States become EU members. (DE, FR)
- The national representative at the EU (FI, PT)
- The European Court of Human Rights (CY)
- European Court of Justice (DE)
- Cooperation (DK)
- Open borders (DK)
- Politics (DK)
- Laws and regulations (DK, FI)
- Lobbying (DK)
- Economic and agricultural subsidies (DK)
- Work is more regulated (EE)
- Western Europe (PL)

## Negative associations

- Bureaucracy (AT, CZ older, DK, EE, FI, DE, IE, LV, NL younger, ES older, UK, SE older, BE)
- High taxation and cost of living (CY, LV, PL, SI)
- Inequality between Member States / unequal opportunities, e.g. agriculture (LV, MT, DE, FR)  
*"Prices in EU countries should be more or less equal." (MT, male, 36 – 54)*
- Diminishing identity of countries because of greater uniformity and standardisation (EE, NL 18-35, UK) / countries losing their sovereignty (NL 36-54)
- Lending money to other Member States / debt increases (NL, FR, ES 36-54)
- Fear for the long term sustainability of the EU (CY, SI)
- *"The fear of the EU falling apart some day, like the empires fell apart in history." (SI, male, 18-35)*
- Lack of recognition of professional qualifications (CY, DE)
- The restrictive nature of unified EU norms and regulation on the economy, industry and agriculture / negative effects of subsidies (CZ, DE)  
*"There are restraints and quotas prescribing what can and cannot be produced and sold, which is not very positive in my view." (CZ, male, 18-35, student)*
- The current economic crisis, the recovery plans and the sacrifices it requires (EL, IE)  
*"European Union means IMF and loans and cutting back on our wages and economic crisis." (EL, male, 18-35)*
- Lack of any real feeling of togetherness and cooperation (DE, LV)
- The EU is not always seen as acting in a country's best interests and as telling countries what to do (IE) / EU membership is not seen as benefitting the country (RO)
- Laws / loss of control / mismatch between EU law and national law (IE, SK, UK)  
*"We have our own rules and laws indeed; however, the EU overloads us with other norms." (SK, male, 18-35)*  
*"They are trying to get us to live by the same laws, but what works for us might not work for someone else." (UK, female, 18-35)*
- Compromises (DK)
- A politicians project rather than a peoples project (DK)
- Elitist (DK)

- The financial crisis and all the measures the EU asks of its Member States to undertake (CY)
- Inflow of workers from other EU Member States (CY)
- Increasing incidence of crime due to freedom of movement (DE)
- The EU is still in the making / has not reached its full potential yet as cultural community (IT 36-54)  
*“It all began because of financial reasons, while politics and all that jazz have still a long way to go!” (IT, male, 36-54)*
- Fear of competition, e.g. losing one’s job (MT)
- Workers from other Member States coming into the country (NL 36-54)
- Company relocations or immigration (FR)

Respondents in eleven Member States (just over one third of all Member States) **spontaneously associated the EU with bureaucracy**. (AT, CZ)

These associations related to the following aspects:

- Too many people are involved in too many aspects. (AT)
- Too many public servants (DK, ES)  
*“It is bureaucratic. A lot of public servants. It is difficult to say what they do.” (DK, male, 18-35, student)*
- Too many norms and regulations some of which are not always seen as being particularly meaningful, e.g. the shape of bananas and the length of cucumbers (CZ 35-54, EE, DE, UK)
  - Norms and regulations that are seen as having resulted in increases in living costs. (LV)
- Slow decision making processes (DE, IE, BE)  
*“It can easily take up to five years, or even longer.” (DE, male, 36-54)*

In Austria and Ireland respondents viewed the bureaucracy as somewhat inevitable due to the size of the EU.

*“For an organisation of this large size, a large administrative organisation is absolutely necessary; therefore some bureaucracy will be inevitable.” (AT, female, 36-54)*

In the majority of cases associations with bureaucracy were as a result of what respondents had **heard in the media** (CZ 36-54, DK, EE, FI, SE, IE, ES).

Some of these perceptions were as a result of **hearsay** (CZ 36-54, EE, FI, UK).

*“But what I have heard when visiting Estonian rural areas and tourist guest houses there is that they cannot offer this or that because there are regulations. So it is cheaper not to offer something than to comply with all the laws.” (EE, male, 36-54)*

However, in some cases respondents’ associations with bureaucracy were as a result of respondents’ **personal experiences** (CZ 36-54, LV ES, UK):

- There are a lot of norms and training involved for some jobs, e.g. bus drivers (CZ 36–54)
- Price increases that are attributed to membership of the EU and that respondents experience themselves. (LV)
- One person had travelled to Brussels and visited European institutions. (ES)
- Those whose jobs were affected by EU policy bemoaned the bureaucracy and red tape, describing measures they had not thought resulted in improvements in practice. Rules relating to the procurement and insurance industry were considered onerous. (UK)

*“You’re playing the game more than anything. There are no great benefits, although the suppliers might argue that there are because they get to see the benefits.” (UK, male, 18-35)*

Respondents were asked if they had to **sum up the EU in one phrase**, what it would be. Various suggestions were offered by respondents that relate to two broad ideas: **unity/scope of the EU** and the **dichotomy of the EU**.

References to the unity / scope of the EU included that the EU is an alliance, comprehensive, aiming at cooperation, working towards a common future, standardisation, integrative, community, union, common identity, a financial alliance (AT, CY, FI, NL, PL, PT, NL)

References to the dichotomy of the EU was where respondents were trying to integrate what they saw as positive and negative into one definition, e.g. help (EU funds, living standards) vs. restriction (regulations); freedom (of people and goods) vs. control; a common identity vs. an unequal union of states; striving for unity vs. acknowledging cultural differences; working towards a common goal vs. having vested interests (SK, PT, ES, SE)

*“It (the EU) helps us and at the same time it restricts us.” (SK, female, 18-35)*

In terms of the **differences between groups of respondents** it did appear from the reports that in five Member States the younger group of respondents were more positive towards the EU than the older group that had more reservations or were more sceptical (AT, CZ, IT, NL, ES). A general explanation for this appears to be that the younger groups associate the EU with opportunity and possibilities, while the older groups appeared somewhat disillusioned with the EU.

However, this trend is not true in all Member States in Greece the opposite was true – the younger group was more negative towards the EU than the older group because they feel pressured by the economic circumstances and do not regard their future as very positive.

### **3.3 Internal Market**

Respondents were asked what they associated with the phrase 'Internal Market'. Although in the majority of countries respondents were familiar with the term and could explain what it means, in twelve Member States (just more than a third), respondents showed very little awareness of the term (CY, CZ, FI 18-35, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, LV, LT, SK 36-54, BE 18-35). In the majority of these cases respondents associated the Internal Market with their national economy / market (CY, CZ 36-54, EL, HU, LV, LT, SK 36-54).

Respondents who had been aware of the term had a number of positive and negative associations with the Internal Market and in some cases also directly associated it with the four basic freedoms. These responses are reflected in the tables below.

<b>Direct associations with the four freedoms</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
Freedom of goods	AT, BG, CZ, DK 36-54, EE, FI, FR, IE, MT, NL, PT, SI, ES, SE, BE
Freedom of people	AT, BG, CZ, DK 36-54, EE, FI, IE, LU, SI, SE, BE
Freedom of services	AT, FI, FR, NL, PT, SI, SE, BE
Freedom of capital	AT, DK 36-54, FI, NL, SE



<b>Positive associations with the Internal Market</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
The ease with which goods can be ordered over the internet and/or that customs duty does not need to be paid	AT 18-35, FI, HU, LU, SI, BG
Increased competition which gives access to goods and services of higher quality	BG, HU, MT, SK 18-35
Regulation of prices / lower prices	FI, MT, SK 18-35, UK
Increased choice	HU, MT, PT, UK
Simplified trade in the EU	DE, SE, UK
Open borders	LU, SK, ES
Common currency	NL, PT, SI
Conducting trade between different EU countries	NL, PL, ES
Easier bank transfers <i>"Just recently I did transfer some money to another Member State. It was almost as easy as within Austria." (AT, male, 36-54)</i>	AT 36-54
Working, studying and travelling within the EU	CZ
Less bureaucracy <i>"With some parts there is less bureaucracy, with some there is more, but there are fewer formalities regarding the movement of goods and things have therefore become better." (EE, male, 36-54)</i>	EE, FR
Making commerce safer	FI
A trading block that could rival the other major global markets	IE
Standardised norms	LU
A more rapid flow of money	LU
Cooperation between different countries	NL
Easy exchange of goods	NL
Access to a wider job market	PT
Structures and institutions	RO
Protection of the EU from low quality imports from outside the EU	SI

<b>Negative associations with the Internal Market</b>	<b>Mentioned by respondents from...</b>
Some local products have disappeared as a result of products imported from other Member States, e.g. certain types of apples and grapes / foreign products provide too much competition	HU 36-54, MT
Protectionism	DK 18-35
Division	DK 18-35
Possible discrimination against smaller states a companies in bigger states would grow larger and would therefore compete better on a price basis	IE
Globalisation	LU
Quotas and dependence on imports	PT
Possible discrimination in the market place	UK 18-35

When presented with the definition, respondents from all but four Member States were not surprised by the term as it was what they had expected. Respondents from Greece expressed surprised and were still unclear what was meant by the term. Respondents from France expressed scepticism to the issue of prices as expressed in the definition as they think that prices in Europe and France have in fact increased.

*“Bringing down prices, I have doubts. I don’t think that the euro has allowed prices to come down, it would be rather the opposite.”  
(FR, male, 34-55)*

Respondents in the younger group in France also expressed concern that the Internal Market would in fact bring standards down and weaken the stronger EU states that are forced to help the weakest. Respondents from both Italy and Latvia through that the term and definition was too generic and not really relevant to their interests.

When asked whether the Internal Market has an effect on their lives, nearly all respondents were of the view that it did as they are all consumers in the Internal Market and its affects their standard of living. It was only in Denmark, France and Germany where respondents held that the Internal Market did not affect their lives.

There were no notable differences between the groups.

## 4 Internal Market – information and redress

Respondents were asked about sources of help and information in regards to their rights in the Internal Market.

### 4.1 Key findings

- The interviews illustrate that it **cannot always be assumed that respondents inform themselves of their rights in a proactive manner** as a minority of respondents only seek information once a problem occurs.
- When respondents looked for information the **main sources were official authorities, the internet and family, friends and colleagues** who might have information that would help respondents.
- **Consumer and legal advice on a national level were more likely to be used** with low awareness of these sources on an EU level. Respondents thought that they would have to experience a very serious problem to ask consumer advice centres on national or EU level for help.
- **Social networks** were a much **less popular** source of information as the information they contain was not regarded as reliable enough.
- If their **rights were violated when buying something over the internet**, respondents from a quarter of the Member States held that they would **not seek help if the value of the item that they had bought was low**. When looking for help, the most prominent sources were – the **internet, the national consumer protection agency, and friends and family** if they had knowledge that could help.
- If respondents experienced **problems with an employer** while working in another Member State the most preferred source of assistance was **their embassy in the Member State they were working in**.

### 4.2 Information

Respondents were asked where they would look for information about their rights – specifically in relation to the “four freedoms” of the Internal Market.

Respondents who discussed whether they had considered looking for information specifically related to the four freedoms of the Internal Market

raised and interesting point - **they did not always seem to inform themselves of their rights in a preventative or proactive manner** (DK, EE, HU, IE, EL, DE, LU, BE). Some reasons given for this is that:

- One only looks for information if something has gone wrong and not as a preventative measure. (DK, EE, HU, IE)

*"This proactive updating, I don't feel like being updated all the time. I start looking for information when a problem occurs – you simply do not have the time to know everything all the time – those laws, they keep changing all the time." (EE, male, 36-54)*

*"It's amazing... you only look these things up after it's happened." (IE, male, 18-34)*

- Only a minority of the respondents from specific Member States had been in the situation of working or studying in another country and therefore had not needed to look for information. (DK, EL, HU)
- Purchasing things on the internet has in most cases been without complications and respondents do not expect their rights to be violated (DK, DE). This links to the idea that the EU in general is not a place where people think that there will be a violation of their rights (HU).
- A perception is that there are not big differences between practices within the EU. (DK)
- Residents of Luxembourg are so used to crossing borders, they do not think about the issue of rights violations. (LU)

In three instances (EL, IE, BG) respondents were also not convinced that consumer rights fall within the regulatory responsibility of the EU and did not think that these rights might be completely transferable across pan-European states and did not think.

*"I don't think that consumers' rights are determined by the EU, they are determined by companies, the brands." (EL, female, 36-54)*

*"I would have thought that it [consumer rights] was country specific. I wouldn't have thought that everyone has the same standard law in every country. It can't be that simple." (IE, female, 35-54)*

However, the majority of respondents did not have any difficulty thinking of information sources that they would use. From the unprompted discussion three predominant sources of information emerged – **official authorities and institutions**, the **internet** and **friends, family or colleagues** who might have appropriate information.

**Official authorities** and institutions (government and EU) that respondents thought they would approach for information included:

- Embassies of the particular Member State that they were travelling to or had purchased goods from, or their own embassy if they were in a different Member State (CZ, DK, FR, EL, LT, NL, PL, SK, SI, ES)

*“I would go to the country embassy and I think I would get all the needed information.” (LT, male, 18-54)*

- National consumer protection agencies (DK, EE, DE, EL, IE, PT)
- Ministries of Finance / Trade and Industry (CY, FI, RO 36-54, BE)
- European consumer protection agency (AT, BG, CY)

*“There was an advertisement shown about a year ago that basically mentioned that EU consumers have rights; when buying a product within a specified period of time you are allowed to return the purchased product to the retailer you bought it from...contact details were provided...” (CY, male, 36-54)*

- Representation of the EU in their Member State (CY, SK)
- Customs office/authorities (FI, DE)
- Commercial organisations / Chambers of Commerce of the particular Member State where people want to move to or where goods were purchased. (CZ, ES 36-54)
- Unspecified official authorities and institutions (AT)
- Local government (EL)

**Internet sources** that respondents thought that they would approach for information included:

- Web searches through Google (AT 18-35, BG, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU 18-35, IE, LV, LT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK)

*“Firstly, I would go on the Internet, I mean Google, where I would type in the relevant keywords, depending on the concrete area of interest.” (CZ, female, 18-35, student)*

*“You Google and get some answers and those are the ones you read – whether you come across an official site or comments is a different matter. You read what you get.” (EE, male, 36-55)*

- Internet forums where respondents could make direct contact with other people who are facing the same difficulties. (AT 18-35, BG, EE, FR, EL, HU 18-35, LT, LU, MT, PT, ES)

*“I would also take a look at relevant internet forums, in order to get recommendations and help.” (AT, female, 18-35)*

- National government websites (CZ 18-35, DK, FR, DE, EL, IT, MT, RO 36-54, SK, UK) / websites of the relevant foreign offices (CZ 36-54, SK, ES 18-35). Sometimes this is restricted to websites in the country that the respondents are in because they think that language barriers will exist if they look on foreign government websites (DE, IT) / Government websites of the destination country (IT, PT)
- The official EU website (CY, DK, FR, DE, HU 36-54, IE, IT, MT, PT, ES 18-35)

*“In sites of the European institutions, there are always sources of information about rights and duties (PT, female, 18-35)*

- Local websites of the country the respondents would be travelling to (MT, NL)
- European Commission website (FI)
- Company websites if interested in working abroad (CZ 36-54)
- Newspaper websites (SE)
- Job agency / national employment agency websites (CZ)
- Website of the national chamber of commerce (EL)
- The Citizens Advice Bureau (UK)
- Specialised online media, such as economic media (FR 35-54)
- Terms and Conditions of agreement on websites from where items are purchased (MT)

The internet was a preferred source because of the scope of information covered and because it is easy to use.

**Friends, family and colleagues** were another important source of information. (CZ, BG, DK, FI, EL, HU, LV, NL, PL, RO 36-54, SK, ES, SE, BE)

*“They are our friends and family, they have been there, they have experience and are reliable. Everything has been checked. If one of us got his fingers burned, we already know what to watch out for.” (PL, female, 36-54)*

**Other sources** of information mentioned by respondents in the unprompted discussion:

- Guidebooks / TripAdvisor / travel agent / the airport prior to an organised trip (HU, 36-54, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, PL, SI, ES)
- Help desks (CY)
- The school where they study as it cooperates with partner schools in other Member States. (CZ student)

Respondents were prompted on whether they would use sources of information such as government websites, consumer or legal advice at country or EU level, family and friends, and social networks. Some of these aspects were already addressed in the unprompted discussion and it is only when respondents provided additional information that it is reported under the headings below.

### **Government websites (including government you are visiting, official EU website)**

As discussed above, a number of respondents did make use of these websites and in the prompted discussion additional respondents mentioned that they would make use of these sites. (AT 18-35, CY, LT, MT)

For others, looking on the websites of the government they are visiting did not seem an obvious source of information (PL, RO 18-35) while others did not regard government websites in general as an important source when looking for information on one's rights, (EE, FI) and only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website was considered to possibly be of use (EE). The websites of any civil service department are regarded as difficult to use which makes it difficult to find the exact piece of information respondents are looking for (FI, DE).

*"It takes quite a long time before you finally get to the place that you want because it is not always so clearly laid out and user-friendly." (DE, male, 18-35)*

Some respondents were not familiar with the official EU website (CZ, IT, SI, UK) and others were critical of the site for the following reasons (EE, DE, LT). Respondents in Estonia and Lithuania thought there might be a language barrier to understanding the pages in English.

*"Even if you feel free talking [English] on a daily basis, the language there is very specific." (EE, male, 36-55)*

Even the language in EU webpages in Estonian was regarded as too complicated by respondents. (EE)

*"Well, the page in Estonian is also written in a way that even if you speak Estonian without any problems, you need to read the page three times since it is very hard to understand – do you really think*

*people would take up reading this stuff in [a] foreign language?" (EE, male, 18-35)*

The complexity of the EU website was also seen as an obstacle (DE, LT). It is regarded as difficult finding specific pieces of information because the positioning of text (too much fine print) gives the impression that one will need a lot of time to take in the information.

*"Well, for simple information it is certainly no problem, but with more complicated factual matters, I do not know whether you will find the right information on the EU site." (DE, male, 36-54)*

### **(Country) consumer or legal advice**

As discussed above, a number of respondents already stated that they would make use of national consumer protection agencies. In the prompted discussion respondents from a number of different countries reported that they would use country consumer and legal advice (AT 36-54, FI, LV, LT, MT, EE, SK, HU 18-35, ES) but usually only for serious cases (LT, EE, SK, FI, HU 18-35, SK).

Respondents in Cyprus thought that legal advice would be expensive and they would not really consider getting it. (CY)

Other respondents were not aware of these options. (IT, PL)

### **EU consumer or legal advice**

These sources of information were not familiar to some respondents (FI, FR, HU, RO 18-35, PL, SI), while respondents from Cyprus thought that an EU consumer advice centre must exist, although they had never heard of it (CY). Some respondents did not think it likely that they would use these sources as the threshold (size of the problem necessary) for them to be contacted would have to be substantial (FI, HU) and there might be other sources, such as the internet that would be more appropriate (PL, SI).

Respondents from Cyprus thought that legal advice would be expensive and they would not really consider getting it. (CY)

The older respondents from Austria held that they would make use of these sources and respondents from Italy suggested that these sources be advertised more.

*"If they were available, they should be advertised more, these centres could advise me on what I should do when making a purchase abroad: can I bring it to Italy? How ...?" (IT, male, 36-55)*

### **Family, friends and colleagues**

Respondents who did not mention family, friends or colleagues in the unprompted discussion mentioned when prompted that they would consult



these sources for advice (AT 18-35, EE, CY, IT, LT, MT, DE), but only if they knew that they would have the information required (CY, EE, DE, IT, LT) else information is unreliable.

*“When you are with friends, you often have this ‘I heard in the sauna’ situation – everybody is saying that this works like this and that, but then you discover that everybody has a different story and it’s actually hard to get an adequate answer.” (EE, male, 18-35)*

Respondents from the UK did not regard friends as a reliable source at all. (UK)

### **Social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, Digg, Reddit)**

Social networks were a much less popular source of information amongst respondents. It was generally not considered to be a suitable tool to look for official information (CY, CZ, DK, IE, IT, PL, SK, SI, UK). It is not regarded as ‘serious’ enough / not reliable enough (DK, FR, IE, IT, LV, PL 18-35, SK) and is used more for entertainment than official purposes.

*“Facebook is just for fun, you upload your pictures there, it’s not serious. These portals are used for other purposes.” (PL, female, 18-35)*

A small number of respondents did however state in the prompted discussion that they would use Facebook (FI 18-35, HU 18-35, FR 18-35) and social networks in general (MT, NL).

It was also suggested by older respondents in France that professional social networks such as Viadeo or LinkedIn might be reliable as they are based on the experiences shared between workers who have lived in the country concerned. (FR, 36-54)

There were no notable differences between groups of respondents.

## **4.3 Help**

Respondents were also asked where they would go for help if they had any problems or if they felt that their rights under the Internal Market had been breached in two areas: purchasing goods and services, and employment rights.

If they had a problem **purchasing something on the internet** from another EU country and believed that their EU rights were breached.

Interestingly, respondents from approximately one-quarter of Member States felt that if the transaction does not involve a lot of money, they would rather accept the situation and not seek help (EE, FR, DE, HU, PL 36-54, SI, NL).

*“The thing is not worth it.” (EE, male, 18-35)*

*"It would be a question of cost-efficiency which would depend on how much the goods are worth. I would not involve a lawyer if it is a matter of €50, you have to weigh up your chances first of all."* (DE, male, 36-54)

*"Sometimes it does not pay to take the product back abroad, especially in the case of inexpensive products."* (SI, Female, 36-55)

Respondents did mention places **where they would seek help** if they felt that their rights had been violated:

- The internet site where the order was placed (BG, CY, DK, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT 36-54, LV, LT, LU, MT, SK, SI, UK) and the hosts of the site (e.g. eBay) (MT, NL, PL, ES 18-35, SE, BE)
  - Some respondents use PayPal which they consider to be more secure. Paypal allows them to, within 45 days of purchase, open a case concerning problems faced with the purchase. (CY 18-35, DE, LV)

*"In one instance I opened a case regarding one of my purchases and I got my money back...in another case I did not get my money back, but that as for a purchase from a non-EU country."* (CY, male, 18-35)

- National consumer protection agency (DK, EE, FI, DE, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, PL, PT, SK, ES, SE 18-35)

*"That you register your case with them and if other people have also done the same thing, this may possibly prevent other people from falling into the same trap."* (DE, female, 36-54)

- Friends and family if they were knowledgeable on the topic. (DK, FI, HU, RO 18-35, SE 36-54)
- The internet in order to find the contact details of people/organisations that might be able to help. (EE, IE, IT, PT, SE 36-54)
- EU consumer protection agency (AT, BG, CY, FI, BG)
- One's own bank (DK, DE, EL, PT, ES 36-54)

*"I think that I would become stubborn and go to my own bank to retrieve my money."* (DK, male, 18-35, student)

- Internet chat forums (DK, HU, IE, PT)
- Police or other legal public authority if the problem was serious enough (FI, DE, EL, ES 36-54)

- Attorney (FI, DE, EL) or courts (ES 18-35)
- EU websites (DK, DE, MT)
- The Embassy of the country where the purchase was made. (DK, HU)

*"If I had bought something in Italy, then I would contact the Italian embassy in Denmark." (DK, male, 36-55)*

- Facebook (FI, SE 18-35)
- National Chambers of Commerce (AT, ES 18-35)

*"I would contact the Federal Economic Chamber – they have representatives in every country" (AT, male, 36-54)*

- Bureau of Customs. (EE)
- Help lines (AT)
- The VISA or Mastercard foundation (EL)
- If they were in another Member State, then their embassy in that country. (PL)
- Writing to the national media (ES 36-54)

If respondents were living and working abroad in another EU country and had a **problem with their employer** and they believed that their EU rights were breached, respondents would turn to a number of different places for help. However, in two instances it was explicitly mentioned that it was only people who worked officially who would have their rights guaranteed. (EE, LV)

*"If you work unofficially, you do not have any right". (LV, female, 18-35, student)*

Respondents would seek help in the following places:

- Their Embassy in the Member State they were working in. (BG, CY, DK, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, LT, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, UK, BE). This will also help with any potential language barriers (DE, HU).

*"The embassy, because it's easy to communicate with them, they kind of protect our interests, we're from the same country, they just help us." (PL, female, 36-54)*

- European labour inspection authority / Labour Ministry (BG, EE, FR, IT, LV, LU, PL, SK)

*"I think there should be some labour inspectorate, some institution that is responsible for this [protection of labour right] and that helps and consults in such cases." (LV, female, 20, student)*

- Labour unions (EE, FI, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV)
- An attorney (BG, DK, DE, EL, NL)
- Attempt to solve the problem within the organisation they are working in. (EE, IE, IT, PL)

*"To being with, I'd try to solve the issue inside the company and if this will not work, I'd turn to someone higher than the organisation or any other local bodies." (EE, female, 18-35, student)*

- They would look on the internet for people to contact / specialised websites (LT, LU, NL) and internet forums (ES 18-35)
- Colleagues (DK, DE)
- Job centres / job agency in the country they are working in. (HU 18-35, LV, SK)
- EU websites (DK, PT)

*"I know that there is a special EU website where one can read about the different countries and get guidance." (DK, female, 36-54)*

- Local police (EL, ES 18-35)
- Official Representation of Employees (AT)
- Legal protection insurance (AT)
- Official governmental website to look up where they could go for help. (CY)
- Professional organisation/association governing one's profession in the country in question. (DK)
- Asking for help from home – tips and ideas, contacting Hungarian authorities/acquaintance at home who might provide tangible help. (HU)
- Local government department. (IE)
- Friends who had been through similar situations. (LT)
- Ministry of employment of the country they are in. (ES 18-35)

## 5 Purchasing goods and services

Respondents were asked about issues relating to purchasing goods and services from other EU countries – both online and directly.

Cross-border online shopping is identified as one of the key obstacles to the Internal Market.

*13) Cross-border online shopping should be made easier. At present, Europeans still do not feel comfortable mostly due to perceived problems with payment fraud and access to means of redress if problems occur. There are also difficulties with access to services and discriminatory conditions based on nationality or place of residence.*

### 5.1 Key findings

- **The majority of respondents had purchased goods from another EU country, either direct or over the internet.** The most prominent **reason why respondents did not buy goods from other countries** (not considering the barriers discussed below) is because they felt **no need to buy goods from abroad** as they can find what they need locally.
- Although a range of different **barriers** to purchasing online or from another EU country was listed, the **most prominent of these were concerns about the safety of online shopping / security concerns and language barriers** such as not being able to communicate in case of a dispute and not being able to assess if an internet site is trustworthy.
- Despite security concerns being listed as a major barrier, the **majority of respondents had no experience of payment fraud.** Respondents also pointed out that in order to try and prevent this it is important to buy from recognised sites and use secure methods of payment. Examples from respondents who **did have experience of payment fraud** related to non-delivery of goods; payment to a seller that didn't exist; a buyer wanting to settle an electronic transaction with a cheque; and being charged twice for the same product. In nearly all instances respondents were able to get their money back.
- The majority of respondents did not report any notable problems buying goods from other EU countries and if they did, they were **generally successfully resolved with the seller or hosting website.** When respondents had experienced problems the **most prominent was related to receiving faulty products, or products different to what had been bought, or not receiving them at all.**

- The **most prominent restriction to access** mentioned by respondents concerned their **place of residence**. Respondents from more than half of the Member States had some experience of internet sites that would not deliver to their country.
- The actual **problems experienced by respondents when buying goods from another EU country were similar to the barriers to internet purchases**. The most prominent difficulty concerned issues with delivery - high delivery charges, long delivery times, and non-delivery.
- The most widely regarded differences between countries concern **perceptions of trustworthiness of certain countries** particularly Eastern European countries and southern European countries. It should be noted that these views are largely based on perceptions and stereotypes than actual experience.
- Although payment fraud was perceived as a barrier, respondents reported only limited experience of this. The major challenge experienced related to the delivery of goods purchased. Hardly any restrictions to access were experienced on the basis of nationality, but there was a substantial barrier to access in terms of place of residence.

## ***5.2 Overall experience***

Respondents were asked if they had ever purchased goods or services from another EU country.

Overall, **the majority of respondents had purchased goods from another EU country, either direct or over the internet**. There were of course differences in the levels of experience between individual countries, but it was only in a minority of countries where respondents had very limited experience buying goods directly (BE 36-54, RO, ES) or over the internet (BE 36-54, RO, ES).

The most prominent **reason why respondents did not buy goods from other countries** (not considering the barriers discussed below) is because they felt **no need to** buy goods from abroad as they can find what they need locally (AT, BE 36-54, DE, HU 36-54, IE 36-54, MT, NL 36-54). Other reasons included that respondents preferred to see and touch goods in the shop before buying (MT 36-54), ES) and that they did not want to have a credit card (EL). Although it is not possible to generalise across the countries, those who did not buy goods from other countries tended to be in the older category.

*"I don't need to, I buy everything locally" (BE, male, 18-35)*

*"I want some guidance [in store]; I don't have the guts to buy the things online. I want to touch the items." (MT, female, 45-54)*

Respondents reported having bought the following goods from another EU country:

<b>Goods</b>	<b>Bought directly by respondents from:</b>	<b>Bought online by respondents from:</b>
Books	LV	AT 18-35, CY, DK, FI, DE, EL, LV, LT, PT, SK
Electronic devises	CZ, DE, IT, SK	AT 18-35, CZ, FI, LV, LT, MT, PL, PT, SK
Music / games / musical instruments / DVDs	LV	AT 18-35, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, LV, PT
Travel / paid for a hotel / holiday	CY, FI	DK, EE, FI, CZ, EL, MT, PT, SK
Clothing / shoes / accessories / jewellery	CY, CZ, FI, DE, IT, LV, LT, LU, PL, SK, SI	DK, FI, FR, EL, LV, LT, LU, MT, PL, PT, SK, UK
Car / used car / spare parts for a car / car accessories	CY, CZ, FI, FR, DE	LV
Food and beverages	CY, CZ, FI, LV, LU, PL, SK	
Cosmetics	DE, PL	FI, PL
Toys	LT	FI
Hardware / equipment		DK, FI
Pressure indicator from a pharmacy		CY
Camping equipment		FI
Alcoholic beverages like champagne		FI
Outboard engine		FI
Household appliances		FR
Furniture	LU	FR
Bicycle	CY	
Transportation in general – bus, metro, tram, train	CY, CZ	
Flowers	FI	
Animals	FR	
Carpets	IT	
Silverware	IT	
Garden equipment	LV	
Concert tickets		MT
Household decorations		MT
Drug store products	SK	

Respondents discussed a range of different **barriers to purchasing online and to buying goods from other EU countries**:

- Concerns about the safety of online shopping / security concerns (DE, RO 36-54, BE, CZ, HU, IE, IT, PL, RO, ES, UK)

*“I wouldn’t take the risk of paying.” (BE, female, 36-55)*

- Language barriers:

- In the resolution of possible problems (BE, DE, FR, EL, SI, ES)

*“The obstacle of the language if there’s a dispute.” (BE, male, 18-35)*

*“The only thing that is a bit difficult is that if you shop from a country that you do not know the language well, then it is difficult to send an email and tell them that something is wrong.” (EL, female, 36-54)*

- Purchasing a product that comes with a manual or operates in only one language can be a problem. (CZ)

*“I do not want a mobile phone that doesn’t have Czech language capability.” (CZ, male, 18–35)*

- This sometimes makes it difficult to judge the authenticity of internet sites. (FR, IT, LU, SI, ES, UK)

- It is also applicable to direct purchases (UK)

*“It’s the whole language barrier thing. They could be saying anything and you’re just smiling and nodding – you don’t know. When it’s here, at least you know you can talk to someone directly, and even if they’re not telling you the truth, at least you know what they’re saying.” (UK, female, 18-35)*

- Distance which affects paying high delivery costs (BE, EE, DK, FI) and high postal fees for the return of a product (DK), long delivery time (BG), and might pose a challenge in the resolution of complaints (CZ, FR).

*“I’ve never really purchased [abroad], because I have no confidence and then there are all the problems with distance.” (BE, male, 18-35)*

- Concerns about the validity of guarantees and warranties of a defective product. (BE, FI, DK, CZ, IT, LT)

- The country of origin of a product purchased online is not always known. This can cause a problem with guarantees if they apply only to those goods manufactured in Europe. (FI)

- Different warranty periods in different EU countries. (DK, SE)

*“When you purchase in Germany, for example, if you buy from Sony, the guarantee isn’t valid everywhere.” (BE, male, 18-35)*

*“I always think about the guarantee issues, can I send it back abroad without any problems. Makes me think about if it would be*



*more convenient to deal with these issues in Finland.” (FI, female, 18-35, student)*

- Personal preference of seeing / touching an item before purchase (BE 36-54, DK, EL, HU 36-54)

*“It’s the abstract side of it...I prefer to see the thing before buying it” (BE, female, 36-55)*

- The fear of receiving a product which does not entirely meet expectations / delivery of a product different from the ordered one. (BE 36-55, BG, IE)
- The fear of not receiving the product at all. (FR, EL, LT)
- Legal protection differs from one country to another (BE, IT, ES)
- Buying online is regarded as too much effort. (EE, HU 36-54)

*“You feel that the amount of energy that you must put in is so great that you simply do not have the strength.” (EE, female, 18-35, student)*

- Concern about inadvertently buying pirated / counterfeit goods. (FI, FR, SK)
- Differences in VAT rates (BG)

*“For me it’s a problem where VAT should be paid because when purchasing from another country a higher VAT rate may have to be paid and this would make the goods more expensive.” (BG, male, 36 – 54)*

- Not possessing a credit card and therefore having to use the credit card of a friend or relative. (BG)
- Concern about the incompatibility of electronic goods parts, e.g. buying electronics from one country that may not be compatible with the electric voltage in another. (FI)
- Lack of information about the correspondence between clothes sizes. (FR)

*“Sizes are not always the same as in France, 13 for example is 38 but one doesn’t know that” (FR, female, 18-35)*

- Fear of non-adherence to rules, e.g. allowances of goods purchased abroad for personal use. (UK)

### 5.3 Payment Fraud

Respondents with experience of purchasing goods and services from another EU country were asked if they had experienced any difficulties in doing so. They were first asked if they had experienced payment fraud.

The **majority of respondents had had no experience of payment fraud**. It was also pointed out that in order to try and prevent this it is important to buy from recognised sites such as eBay and to use secure methods of payment such as PayPal. (BE, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, MT, UK),

Examples from respondents who **did have experience of payment fraud** are given below. **In summary, these transactions related to:** payment for, but non-delivery of goods; payment to a seller that didn't exist; a buyer wanting to settle an electronic transaction with a cheque; being charged twice for the same product. In nearly all instances respondents were able to get their money back.

**More detailed examples** related by respondents are as follows:

- One respondent bought an electronic device via the internet, paid for it by credit card, but the goods were never delivered to his home address. (AT younger)

*"I ordered some goods via the internet; but they were never sent to me. Trying to contact the store abroad and getting an explanatory answer was quite exhausting and annoying." (AT, male, 18-35, student)*

As the seller took a long time to respond, the "buyer protection" expired. The respondent did not receive any satisfying answer or even the purchased commodities, therefore he threatened to contact a lawyer and as a final result he got his money returned.

*"I never received the ordered goods, which was very annoying!" (AT, male, 18-35, student)*

- A respondent had experience with a French buyer who wanted to settle an eBay transaction with a cheque. The respondent was suspicious, looked for information on internet forums and refused to go ahead with the transaction. (BE)
- A respondent from Denmark had made a travel purchase from a "phony company" in Sweden that did not exist. The 'company' was part of the national travel guarantee foundation so the money was refunded. (DK)
- Being charged twice for the same product. (HU)

*"[We] went online and ordered the tickets. Everything worked fine - only the card was charged twice, but we received a confirmation for*

*only one of them...I know that Germans don't like speaking English in Germany. So...we called our Austrian acquaintances who were our hosts at the time, and asked them to talk to the company and so they did. And we got the money back." (HU, female, 18-35)*

- Payment fraud in-store within the Republic of Ireland. The matter had been handled swiftly by the respective banks involved and at no expense to the respondents themselves. (IE)
- When buying for the first time on eBay, the respondent was asked to send the advance payment document so that the seller can receive the money himself. The goods were not delivered. The seller deleted his account and disappeared from the internet environment. The respondent wrote to eBay administration yet they could not help since the seller did not exist anymore – the account was deleted. (LV)
- Buying concert tickets online from a seller who didn't exist.

*"We bought tickets and the seller did not exist...but they gave us our money back." (MT, female, 18-35)*

## **5.4 Resolving problems**

Respondents with experience of purchasing goods and services from another EU country were also asked if they had experience of resolving problems.

The **majority of respondents did not report any notable problems**. When respondents had experienced problems the **most prominent was related to receiving faulty products, or products different to what had been bought, or not receiving them at all**. These cases were **generally taken up with the seller or the hosting website and generally resolved successfully**. Other problems related to: money deducted but no purchase made; unwillingness of sellers to address problems; and bankruptcy of the seller after payment had been made and before the goods had been delivered.

Detailed descriptions of the above problems include:

- Money was deducted from a card although no purchase was actually made. (CZ)

*"I had a bad experience at a petrol station in France. About EUR 70 was debited from my card account even though I hadn't drawn any petrol. I didn't notice that the pump was out of order. In the end, I managed to solve it right there, on the spot. The money was eventually returned to me." (CZ, female, 36–55)*

- Difficulties in cultural interaction – unwillingness to deal with the problem. (DK)

*“I like to go on holiday in Spain, but I think that the interaction with the Spaniards is difficult...my patience with them is very little. I had bought some shoes there, but they began to fall apart after only two wears. When I bought them he spoke English with no difficulties, but when I came back to complain he spoke only Spanish.” (DK, male, 36-55)*

- Problems regarding receiving faulty or flawed products were resolved by asking the deliverer of goods to compensate the mistake by either delivering the right product or returning the money. (FI, MT)
- Problems concerning delays in the delivery of goods were usually solved simply by informing the deliverer of goods about the situation. (FI)

*“I ordered a sleeping bag for the children. Since I did not hear anything about it I made an enquiry and they asked me to make a new purchase order. It took one week and I received two of them. I sent the other one back and they paid my postage.” (FI, female, 18-35)*

- A respondent had a problem after buying a piece of furniture on the internet as the seller had gone bankrupt after the payment. They explained then that that they had managed the situation by sending friends "to put pressure on" the seller in Belgium. (FR)

*“I bought armchairs in Belgium with a bank card and I came across fraudsters. I have friends in Belgium who put on pressure, they went to see the liquidator and I got my armchairs back...” (FR, male, 36-54)*

- One respondent never received a product that she had bought over the internet because of a theft by the transporter. She solved the problem without difficulty via the seller's site. (FR)

*“I bought a household electronic appliance in Germany on the internet and it disappeared. It never arrived. Through the site, I made a complaint, I recovered my money. They tried to go back up the chain of the transporter but it had disappeared. I had a reply within 20 days, that was pretty quick.” (FR, female, 36-54)*

- The purchased item did not arrive at all, or it was the wrong item but the problem was resolved with the seller or the hosting site and the money was refunded. (IE, LV, PT, PL, SK)
- A respondent had bought a piece of furniture on eBay, from Spain, but when he received the item some features did not match the

product description. As a result he filed a case, but the issue was easily solved thanks to the clear website rules. (IT)

*"I'm a regular eBay customer, also from foreign sellers. You have to comply with some strict rules. I can choose whichever payment method I prefer and I've never had a claim. It only occurred once that a piece of furniture was not as described. The website policies envisage that the complaint be settled by the parties within 45 days, using eBay as an intermediary; it all went well." (IT, male, 36-55)*

- Delivery delays, but these were resolved with the seller. (SK)
- Faulty products that were exchanged (SI)

*"I had a problem with a textile product that changed its colour and shape after washing. I brought it back to the store abroad and got a replacement without complications." (SI, male, 36-55)*

## **5.5 Access restrictions**

Respondents with experience of purchasing goods and services from another EU country were asked if they had experienced any difficulties in accessing services because of their nationality or place of residence.

**Hardly any of the respondents had not experienced any access restrictions based on nationality.** Quite the contrary, respondents from three countries reported that they thought they in fact receive better service because of their nationality (BE, DK, FI). It was only respondents from Romania and Slovakia who thought that they had been treated differently because of their nationality. The Romanian respondents held that as far as online purchases were concerned they were asked by the sellers for additional information as their country was not seen as trustworthy as far as internet purchases are concerned. Respondents from Slovakia related that Slovaks are regarded as people who steal and therefore they do not disclose their nationality when abroad for fear of being treated differently.

*"In Austria it is written at some store[s] 'Slovaks, please do not steal.'" (SK, female, 18-35)*

The **most prominent restriction to access** mentioned by respondents concerned their **place of residence. Respondents from more than half of the Member States had some experience of internet sites that would not deliver to their country** (AT, BG, CZ, DK, EE, FR, EL, HU, IE, LV, LT, MT, PL, SK, SE). They also mentioned raised transportation (delivery) costs because of their geographic location (CY, MT)

*“Recently I had to look up in a website where all EU countries except Bulgaria were listed. A lot of non-EU countries were listed, but Bulgaria wasn’t.” (BG, female, 18 – 35)*

*“There are quite of number of those internet shops who do not deliver to Estonia. There are especially many of them in the UK. They send stuff from Germany, but from the UK, you can only send stuff to Finland, not to Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania or even if you can, then the delivery is very expensive.” (EE, male, 36-55)*

This was not regarded as an issue that could be resolved by respondents, apart from having the product delivered to someone who lives in one of the delivery areas (IE, LT), or buying a similar product locally (LV, SE).

*“I order through my friends - to their address, items come to them, and they send it over to me...because it may be a very long time until those items can be sold in Lithuania...” (LT, male, 18-54)*

**Language** was mentioned by respondents in France as a restriction to access some services as it prevents them from identifying the authenticity of a website, filling in payment forms, and identifying equivalencies of sizes for clothing and shoes (FR). But for Polish respondents France was the country where Polish respondents experienced barriers to purchases because of the unwillingness of the French to speak English.

## ***5.6 Other difficulties purchasing goods and services***

Respondents with experience of purchasing goods and services from another EU country were asked if they had experienced any other difficulties.

The actual **problems experienced by respondents were similar to the barriers to internet purchases mentioned earlier**. These difficulties concerned:

- High delivery charges (AT, CY, EE, IT) and long delivery times (AT, FR) and non-delivery (BE, EL, LV)

*“This one time I wanted to buy some electronic devices from another member state, but in the end the shipping charges would have been almost as expensive as the product itself.” (AT, male, 18-35)*

- Thefts during postal delivery (BE)

*“The postmen steal. There are lots of things I’ve sold which never arrived. The parcels arrive at the post office, but they don’t reach the buyer.” (BE, female, 18-35)*

- Difficulty tracking a package through the postal service once it has entered the country. (EL, LV)

- Different warranties in different countries or warranties not always being valid (DK, IE, PL)

*"We have a 24 month warranty in Denmark, and I thought that it was the same in Sweden. But I found out that it was only 12 months." (DK, female, 36-55)*

*"I bought a camera in England. Paid some £120...I had used it for about half a year in Poland...and my LCD display got broken. They told me that they couldn't replace it in Poland and won't deliver spare parts from England, they asked me to send the camera back to England under the warranty, so the camera could be replaced in England...I just bought a new one, it was more affordable to me." (PL, male, 36-54)*

- Differences between the various amounts of VAT calculated. (AT)
- The sale of pirated or counterfeit goods on the internet (BE)

*"I bought some perfume, and it was a fake. So I phoned the seller and I threatened to make a nuisance of myself. In the end she gave me a full refund." (BE, female, 36-55)*

- Their payment card did not work in some shops. (CZ, SK)
- Difficulty with the purchasing of animals in another EU country. The administrative steps are sometimes regarded as too heavy and can be off-putting. (FR 18-35)

*"Animals in Belgium, that went easily, but for papers it's not the same thing as in France, we need to redo them." (FR, female, 18-35)*

## **5.7 Differences by country**

Respondents were asked if there were any countries which presented greater barriers to purchasing goods and services.

### **Language and currency barriers**

- There was some indication that respondents preferred to buy from countries that speak similar languages and share the same currency as this makes transactions easier. (AT)
- Buying from the UK is difficult as a result of the exchange rate. (IT)

*"You end up spending more, they're complicated and different in every respect, they don't look like an EU Member State." (IT, female, 18-35)*

- Countries in which language was indicated as a barrier to buying from that country included Eastern European countries (FI, FR), Greece (FI), Italy (FI), Latvia (FI), Lithuania (FI) and France (IT).

*“Language barrier is a problem. We speak quite good English here in Finland but the inhabitants of some other countries like Greek are not necessarily able to do that so well so misunderstandings are inevitable.” (FI, male, 18-35, student)*

*“The French always pretend they’re unable to understand Italian, but their English is as poor as ours; getting yourself understood is always painful, also when making purchases.” (IT, female, 36-55)*

### **The compatibility of goods**

- Respondents consider the compatibility of goods, such as electrical appliances as a potential barrier. An example that was mentioned was that in the UK the electrical system (especially sockets) is different. Therefore, an electronic device bought in the UK cannot function in other countries, unless an appropriate adaptor plug is used. (CZ)

### **Perceptions of trustworthiness**

It is clear from the focus group discussions that respondents have certain reservations about purchasing goods from some countries or groups of countries. It must be stressed, however, that **in the majority of cases these views do not appear to be based on actual experience, but rather on perceptions based on stereotypes.**

Respondents were **particularly reluctant to buy from Eastern European countries** due to distrust / not considered as reliable (BE, FI), the fear of being cheated / corruption (DK, DE, ES) or getting inferior quality / pirated products (DK, FI), the fear of payment fraud (FI), or the perception that these countries are not law-abiding and buyers therefore cannot bring products back as they don’t have the necessary paperwork (IT). Sometimes no particular reason was given (SI).

*“I purchase from companies who have a certain reputation, but I’m not going to purchase in the new countries. I’ve got the impression that you’re more likely to be had” (BE, female, 36-55)*

*“The Eastern European countries have poor quality products...copies. One should be very careful about what one buys” (DK, male, 18-35, student)*

*“I haven’t had any problems with the former Eastern block countries. I just have a feeling that the old EU countries like Germany, France or Great Britain are more reliable.” (FI, male, 18-35)*



However, some of these potential problems were acknowledged by respondents from Lithuania:

*“I also think that in those new countries you can expect more fraud, similar as here, unfortunately...but old European countries have much higher standard for a while so the shopping would be simpler and easier...the whole infrastructure is better developed, so it is more convenient buying or selling...” (LT, male, 18-54, student)*

There were also some **reservations about purchases from southern EU countries such as Greece, France, Italy and Spain** Portugal because of their “cultural mentality” (DK), the economic state of some of these countries (DK), perceptions of corruption (DE, NL). In some cases no specific reasons were given (EE, MT).

*“I wouldn’t purchase anything from Greece. It is a mess...” (DK, male, 36-55)*

*“They strike quiet often in France, and then they block everything. I have experienced that they throw the mail in the river, because they got angry.” (DK, female, 18-35)*

*“There are some countries from where you simply would not dare to order, some very exotic countries in the southern part of the European Union.” (EE, male, 36-55)*

## 6 Travel

Respondents were asked about their experience of travelling in the EU both for business and leisure.

### 6.1 Key findings

- **Nearly all respondents had some experience with travelling to another EU country.** The **predominant difficulty that respondents experienced when travelling** included language difficulties, such as not being able to speak the language of the country they are travelling to, not being able to understand road signage, and not being understood in emergency situations. The second most common difficulty listed was concerns about safety and security.
- None of the respondents felt there were any barriers to travelling that would prevent them from travel.
- Problems experienced relating to **travel rights** included lost, delayed or damaged luggage and delayed or cancelled flights by the airlines. Respondents' **awareness of their air travel rights seemed to differ** with many feeling that they are not fully aware of their rights. When a problem occurred, respondents' first point of call was the airline itself. In many cases the problems were resolved or compensation was received, but there was some confusion amongst respondent about what they are entitled to.
- **A minority of respondents had experienced problems relating to car rental.** There were some examples of unfair contractual conditions and unfair practices, such as being charged for damages for which respondents were not responsible, but these did not seem to be widespread amongst respondents. Respondents stressed the importance of using reputable car rental companies. They did not feel that they knew their rights as far as car rental was concerned and had difficulty exercising them due to language constraints.
- **All respondents acknowledged the difference in road traffic regulations across Member States.** Although these can create problems **they do not seem to be a particular obstacle travelling across Europe.** It was only in a minority of cases where respondents considered difference to road traffic regulations and driving behaviour as a barrier that made them reluctant to drive in another EU country. In terms of **knowing their rights**, some respondents looked for information about their rights before travelling, but that did not mean that they knew of all the rules before they travelled. As with car rental rights, language barriers remained a substantial challenge.

- In terms of other difficulties experienced when travelling, language barriers were again mentioned, as was difficulties with card payments.
- The most prominent differences by country again included countries where English is not spoken widely. The country which seemed to present the greatest obstacle to driving was England, due to driving on the left. France was also regarded as a country that is difficult to drive in because of road signage.

## 6.2 Overall travel experience

Respondents were asked if they had ever travelled to another EU country and what difficulties they had experienced. Where participants had no experience of travel, they were asked what difficulties they expected to experience. Respondents were also asked if they had ever not travelled to another EU country because of concerns about potential travel problems.

**Nearly all respondents had some experience with travelling to another EU country.** More respondents had travelled for leisure purposes (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, MT, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK) than for business and study (BE 18-35, CY, CZ, DK, FI, DE, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, SK, ES). Business experiences could not be meaningfully separated from leisure experiences. It was only respondents from Italy who mentioned that on a business trip they feel more protected as there is an entire organisation ready to step in in case of trouble.

*"You can run into problems when travelling on your own, when on a business trip there is nothing you have to worry about." (IT, female, 36-54)*

The **difficulties that respondents experienced when travelling** and that those who had not travelled to another EU country expected to experience were the same and included the following:

- Language difficulties (AT, BG, CY, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, PL, PT, SK, ES, SE, UK)
  - Not being able to speak the language of the country or neither parties being able to speak English. (AT, BG, CY, FR)

*"We got lost in a subway in Barcelona, there was a language barrier...Spaniards are very nice, they want to talk with tourists but few of them speak English. We finally managed to get out of this subway, but this language barrier is always a problem for me. You can't speak English in every European country, many average people don't speak English in non-English speaking countries." (PL, female, 18-35, student)*

- Not being able to understand restaurant menus and public signage on trains and roads. (FI, MT, SK)
- Experiencing language difficulties in an emergency situation. (DK)

*"I have been to the hospital in Greece, and the doctor who had to stitch me in my face could not speak a word of English." (DK, female, 18-35)*

- Concerns about safety and security (FR, DE, LV, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE) e.g. not leaving their car unattended for fear of it being stolen, or being a victim of theft (DE, LV, MT).

*"Yes, I have experiences. I was attacked in Bulgaria by some guys, armed with knives and bats, I was with my own car. We managed to escape quite difficultly." (RO, 18-35, male)*

- Uncertainty about health insurance and whether it is necessary to take out additional insurance. (DK, DE)
- Cultural difference (DK, EE), e.g. concerning the pace of life, for example, waiting for a car mechanic having a lunch break for two hours (DK).
- Being cheated when paying a bill, for example at a restaurant or in a taxi/cab. (DK, FI)

*"If you are out eating they think that they can earn some easy money" (DK, male, 18-35, student)*

- Bus and car checks / roadblocks (CZ)
    - In Germany, the police often check the identity cards and passports of bus travellers. (CZ)
- "The German police stop the bus and check everyone. Then we end up being delayed; it is a bit humiliating." (CZ, female, 18-35, student)*
- In Italy and France busses are stopped to check if they are roadworthy. (CZ)
  - One of the older respondents recalled being stopped in her car (in Germany), where authorities wanted to check on the medicine and pills she has to take regularly. (CZ)

*"They wanted to make sure that the medicine and pills were packaged together with the appropriate information leaflets." (CZ, female, 36-55)*

- Booking a vacation with a company that became bankrupt. (DK)

- The difference between expectations when making a booking and the reality when one arrives at the destination, e.g. a hotel that is situated far away from where it should have been. (FI)
- Differences in currency. (FR)
- Being charged high fees when withdrawing money from a cash machine from a bank other than one's own. (ES)
- Higher prices for food and other goods in countries travelled to. (ES)
- One respondent had been detained by police at a security check point in Amsterdam on suspicion that she had a criminal record, but after examining all her documents, she was released. (PL)
- Delayed reimbursement for expenses incurred when a respondent had been involved in a car accident as a passenger. (IT)

**None of the respondents related any barriers to travelling that would prevent them from undertaking a trip.** In fact, travelling to other EU countries has become easier for the following reasons:

- Free movement of people (HU, IT, LT)
- The single currency (BE, AT)
- The fact that travellers can now make reservations and organise their travel independently (BE)

*“Even for reserving tickets. You used to have to go to the travel agent.” (BE, female, 36-55)*

- The general lowering of transport costs (BE)
- Travelling is seen as relatively safe (FI)
- The opening customs posts (BE)

Respondents did mention taking some precautions before travelling, such as taking out additional travel insurance, collecting important contact numbers such as that of the consulate, checking traffic regulations when travelling by car, etc.

### 6.3 Air travel

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any issues or problems relating to air travel rights.

This has been identified as one of the key obstacles to the Internal Market.

*Air passenger rights generate large numbers of questions. It appears there is a lack of clarity about rights and how to implement them in practice.*

Respondents mentioned the following **problems that they experienced** relating to their travel rights:

- Lost, delayed or damaged luggage. (BG, CY, EE, FI, EL, HU, LV, LT, PL, RO, SI, ES, CZ)

*"I was flying to the Netherlands for a business meeting and my luggage was lost. As I had to attend the meeting and had no clothes to wear, the air carrier company – when I went to claim for my luggage – informed me that I could buy the necessary attire for my meeting and they would compensate for it...which they actually did." (CY, male, 36-55).*

*"Last week I travelled abroad and at the airport it turned out that my suitcase was damaged. I submitted all documents to the carrier and explicitly asked for the time within which it was supposed to receive the reimbursement. But, considering Bulgarian reality, I am not sure to what extent I could expect to receive the money within 14 days." (BG, female, 36-54)*

*"I didn't really know what I was entitled to, but they delivered my luggage to me and I figured that was enough...perhaps I should have looked into it deeper, I will now research more so the next time I will know where to go and who to tell..." (LT, male, 18-54)*

*"I once got back a damaged baggage in London. Because I didn't have additional insurance, I didn't get any compensation. (SI, male, 36-55)*

Respondents had different experiences when exercising their rights in this regard. When they did pursue the case, it was with the airline. In some cases they were compensated for their lost or damaged bags (CY, LV, PL) and were able to buy clothes and other supplies either through the airline or their won travel insurance (FI, FR). In other cases respondents were not so lucky (SI). Respondents also mentioned avoidance behaviour of airline staff

that blame each another and send passengers from one place to the next (HU).

- Delayed or cancelled flights by the airlines (BG, CZ, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, MT, PL, SK, ES, UK)

*"I know, I never read the small print, yet they are always so complicated, you never understand a thing, and they always come up with paragraphs and catches so that they never pay you... terms should be made easier to understand." (IT, female, 18-35)*

*"Our flight was 12 hours overdue. The travel agency did not give a damn about us. I was tired to do anything about it." (SK, female, 18-35)*

Respondents were not clear about whether they were entitled to meal vouchers or other forms of compensation as they had inconsistent experience of this (IE, IT, PL). Some respondents were compensated from cancelled flights through their travel insurance (FR).

- Overbooked flights / duplicated tickets (BG, FI, DE, ES)

*"In Athens they had overbooked the plane but when that was found out they gave me a ticket to the first class." (FI, female, 18-35)*

A respondent in Germany had a similar experience with overbooking and was also upgrade to first class, while another got his ticket transferred to a later flight but received financial compensation by the airline and a free night's accommodation.

- The lack of clarity and transparency in low-cost airlines' practices, e.g. pricing policies. (BE, FR, SE)

*"Ryanair have promotions, but there are always extra costs. And then you have to print the tickets, they add taxes on both legs. Yesterday I booked a ticket that started off costing €167, and by the end it was €280." (BE, female 36-55)*

- The perception that air travel rights are different (less) with low cost airlines. (SE)

*"I was in Spain, I travelled with a budget airline, [...] it was a strike and I had to stay in Spain as they did not compensate my ticket." (SE, male, 36-54)*

- Language barriers in terms of communicating with airline staff (EL) or understanding airport announcements when a plane has for example been rerouted (HU).

*"My story is that we flew to England and, owing to the fog, the plane landed at a different airport, with quite a delay... Like others,*

*we also had people waiting for us at the other airport, where we had originally been scheduled to arrive. The majority of passengers did not speak English and there was no info whatsoever in Hungarian. Passengers were trying to help each other...” (HU, female, 18-35)*

Long waits ensued and passengers were taken by bus to the airport where they had been scheduled to land in the first place. Better organisation was called for as well as something to drink during the long wait.

- Security checks at airports, although this is accepted as understandable. (CZ 18-35) / identity checks at borders such as England (FR)

- Rigid security regulations and measures at airports. (AT)

*“All of these security checks, these procedures are so annoying – looking into bags and rummaging through personal stuff are just too extreme measures.” (AT, female, 18-35, student)*

- Cancelled flights by the passenger in which case there was uncertainty about air travel rights. (IE)
- Baggage restrictions, especially on hand luggage, are regarded as an inconvenience. (BE 18-35)
- Inconsistent rules regarding allowable luggage weights and sizes between different airlines. (CZ)
- Different air travel prices on the same route depending from which country you depart. (DK)

*“If you travel from France to Denmark it is half the price than from Denmark to France.” (DK, male, 36-55)*

- Not knowing which planes or regional airlines are involved in the flight routes of the trip. (FI)
- Unsafe flying conditions e.g. the lack of seatbelts on a Greek aeroplane. (FI)
- Having to produce a passport on arrival when respondents thought that the EU had passed a directive allowing passengers to travel within the EU without a passport. And airlines accepting different forms of identification. (IE)

Respondents' **awareness of their air travel rights seemed to differ**. There were those who felt that they knew their rights well (BG, FR, PT); those who had some general awareness of their rights, but not necessarily the detail (AT, DE, LT, LU, ES); those who did not know them (BG, DK, FI,



EL, HU, IE, LV, NL, SE) and did not know where to get more information or who to contact in case of a complaint (IE). Respondents did not consider air passenger rights to be a key issue (CZ). They only think about their rights when there is a problem (PT, CY).

*“I hardly know my air travel rights; I just presume that I can handle all the difficulties.” (FI, female, 18-35, student)*

As can be seen from the above examples, the first point of call is the airline itself. In many cases the problems were resolved or compensation was received, but there was some confusion amongst respondents about what they are entitled to.

## **6.4 Car rental**

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any issues or problems relating to car rental.

This has been identified as one of the key obstacles to the Internal Market.

*Renting a car in another EU country must be made easier by tackling a number of problems (unfair practices, discrimination based on nationality, unclear contractual conditions)*

It was a **minority of respondents who had experienced any problems relating to car rental**. Examples of these problems include:

- Unclear contractual conditions (UK, BE)

Respondents were aware that there were likely to be contractual conditions which they had not seen or understood, which disadvantaged them in the event of conflict with the rental service. (UK, BE)

*“There are so many get-out clauses, you don’t know the language or the rights, they could be different from here, just say you have got to pay this.” (UK, male, 35-65)*

This ‘small print’ was seen as a means of adding charges and profit for the company, such as through charging for a full tank, even if little petrol was used. (UK)

- Unfair practices such as being charged for damages that they were not responsible for (UK, DE)

Respondents experienced frustration and felt forced to accept this malpractice due to language barriers and the feeling that they had been manipulated because they were foreigners who were unlikely to pursue the matter after their departure. (UK)

*“It was no argument. It was like – you have to pay it, or we will call the police. Being foreigners, they know you will go home in a short space of time and then there is no come back, is there?” (UK, female, 35-65)*

- Varying age restrictions that apply across countries (BE)

*“I went to Spain last year, and it was prohibited if you were under 25.” (BE, female, 18-35)*

- Not getting the car that one had reserved. An example was of a respondent who got a smaller car than the one they had reserved. The respondent accepted the car she was offered. (DK)
- One respondent experienced a serious incident in Portugal. A tyre on the rental car blew out and the company blamed the respondent. The retailers then threatened to call police. This unnerved the respondent as she did not speak the language and the supplier had her driver’s license and passport at that point. Eventually she paid the money requested and left. (IE)
- Problems renting a car in one country with the intention of driving to another. Additional money has to be paid for this. (LV)
- A car that broke down, but the rental company resolved the problem immediately and gave them a better car. (MT)
- Very high deposits when renting a car. (ES)

Respondents stressed the importance of using reputable car rental companies. They did not feel that they knew their rights as far as car rental was concerned and had difficulty exercising them due to language constraints.

## ***6.5 Traffic regulations***

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any issues or problems relating to traffic regulations in different EU countries.

This has been identified as one of the key obstacles to the Internal Market.

*Road travel create many complaints for consumers in the EU; most often because rules are not consistently applied.*

**All respondents acknowledged the difference in road traffic regulations across Member States** such as differences in speed limits (AT, BE, BG, DE, IE, IT, RO, SK, ES), rules about stopping on a highway

(BG), driving on the opposite side of the road than respondents are used to (CZ, FI, EL, IE, IT, MT, SI, UK), the use of headlights when driving (CZ, BE, SK), the types of licences required to drive certain vehicles (BE), road priority rules (BE, IE, LT), blood-alcohol limits (BE), winter tyre regulations (BE), accident management (BE, DK), duty to give way (DK), different rules regarding parking (FI, SI), traffic rules favouring cyclists (FI, FR, IE), the meanings of the colours in traffic lights (IT), the driving culture that is different (LV), differences in some countries having toll-roads and others not (PL), and differences in road signage (PT, RO, ES, UK).

Respondents try to adapt to these changing rules and although these can create problems **they do not seem to be a particular obstacle travelling across Europe.**

*"I am always nearly getting killed the first 24 hours that I am in London. It takes about a day before I have normalised." (DK, male, 36-54)*

*"As soon as I cross a border, there's always a sign that gives information about the different maximum speeds in that country." (LU, male, 18-34)*

**Problems experienced** included the following:

- Language barriers – not being able to understand road signs and rules (FR, IE, MT)

*"Which direction should I park in? In Sweden I parked on the left, a man told me I couldn't, that it was in the same direction as the traffic. I didn't know this. There was a sign, but it was in Swedish. It's better to inform yourself beforehand." (FR, female, 36-54)*

- Accident management (DK)

*"I was involved in a traffic accident in Poland, and we wanted to solve it here and now. But when the other part saw my Visa card it suddenly became very expensive." (DK, female, 36-55)*

- Regulations regarding the carrying of bicycles on trains. (FI)
- Traffic regulations are not consistently applied by the citizens or coherently controlled by police or other authorities. (FI)
  - High speed driving in Greece, Poland and Latvia. (FI)
  - Parking tickets are not given after certain time limits even if there is no parking allowed. (FI)
- Traffic tickets for violations of laws (IT)

*“I was fined in Pamplona because the passenger on the rear seat had not fastened his seatbelt. I went to the police station and used my debt card to pay the ticket” (IT, male, 18-35, student)*

Certain **differences in road traffic regulations and road traffic behaviour of other EU countries made people reluctant to want to drive there**, for example:

- Difference in road traffic rules and lack of knowledge about them. (NL, UK)

*“You don’t know the way, there are dangerous side-streets, the traffic rules are sometimes different, you find road signs lacking or, on the contrary, there are too many road signs. Oh no, I find it much too dangerous to drive the car myself when abroad.” (NL, male, 18-35)*

- High speed driving in Greece, Poland and Latvia. (FI)

*“In Greece we drove quite excitingly by bus. I wouldn’t dare to drive there myself since speed limit means minimum speed. If you drive 80 kilometres per hour in the area where the speed limit is 80 kilometres per hour it means that everybody drives faster than you.” (FI, female, 18-35)*

- Constant using of horns in Latvia, France, Spain and southern Europe generally) (FI)
- General talking and shouting with other motorists through the car window. (FI)

Respondents from the Czech Republic were of the view that some traffic regulations should be unified across Europe, for example car equipment (e.g. first-aid kit, registration and insurance), rules on consuming alcohol while driving, driving misdemeanours should be trackable and applied equally throughout the EU. However, an opposite view was held by Irish and Spanish respondents who had no great desire to homogenise road traffic laws across the EU as they thought it contributed to a country’s individuality and it was better to be educated on local customs.

In terms of **knowing their rights**, some respondents looked for information about their rights before travelling, but that did not mean that they knew of all the rules before they travelled. As with car rental rights, language barriers remained a substantial challenge.

## 6.6 Other travel issues

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any other issues or problems relating to traffic regulations in different EU countries.

Examples of such problems related to:

- The knowledge of foreign languages, especially English, which has very different usage in individual EU countries. (BE, DK, IE)
- Difficulty with card payments / cards not being accepted everywhere. (EE, FR, IT)

*“My child just went to France and there was a problem that their payment cards did not work everywhere and the other problem was, that here it does not matter which sum you pay with the card, but there you cannot do a card payment below the sum of €5 or €10.” (EE, female, 36-55)*

- Telephone and Internet access rates applied by companies when people are abroad (BE, FI)

*“The rate they dare to apply for mobile roaming. I switched it on for two minutes to find my way in the Netherlands, and that cost me €39. It’s scandalous!” (BE, male, 18-35)*

- Differences in treatment because of nationality (LT, UK)

Some respondents had particularly bad service in cafes in France and Spain when they were asked where they are from (LT), although there was some acknowledgement that other Lithuanians travelling abroad had contributed to this reputation through bad behaviour.

*“Depreciation is very obvious – oh, they are from the Eastern block, they will be satisfied with anything they get...they count us as Russian or Soviets, it is obvious they don’t really like us...” (LT, female, 18-54).*

Respondents from the UK expressed the view that British tourists are regarded as ignorant and it was felt that service providers in the UK exploited this fact (UK). They realised that this was in part their own doing.

*“It’s just taking advantage of our ignorance – and we let them.” (UK, female, 36-54)*

- Problems with public transport
  - In Cyprus the service was infrequent. (MT)

- Students sometimes have difficulty proving that they are entitled to reduced fees as student cards differ. (PL)

*“I had a problem in a train in Berlin, because my student card was not recognized, it’s a different card, different country, they were afraid the card could be fake.” (PL, female, 18-35, student)*

- Petty corruption (RO) and theft (SK)

*“When I was in Hungary, I had a small scratch on my ID card, they did not want me to pass. I understood afterwards that they do this with almost everyone. It is managed by a small contribution of 5-10 EURO.” (RO, male, 18-35)*

- National rules that one doesn’t know about, such as when to give a tip, or where to smoke, or how to pay at car parks. (DK, FR)
- Cultural differences, i.e. the speed at which things are done. (DK)
- Rules in hotels – being asked for deposits. (EE)

*“When we bought plane tickets and booked the hotel in Prague via the internet. The hotel was very nice and clean, but when we arrived there, they said that the payment was OK, but that they also need collateral money and this was something totally new and when I was paying for the hotel, it did not say anywhere that collateral will be charged in case I start breaking things there...” (EE, female, 36-54)*

## **6.7 Differences by country**

Respondents were asked if there were any countries which presented greater barriers to travel.

It was generally held that every country is different and therefore everyone has to adapt accordingly while travelling. **Respondents did not mention any major differences by country**, but examples include:

- Barriers travelling to countries where English is not widely spoken. (DK, FI, DE, LU, MT, PL)
- The country which seemed to present the greatest obstacle to driving was England, due to driving on the left. (BE, EL, IT, LV). France was also regarded as a country that is difficult to drive in because of road signage (IT).
- Travelling alone in Bulgaria (RO, SK, UK) and Romania (SK, UK) is considered dangerous.

- The further respondents travel from their home country the more challenges they would expect. (AT, FR)
- Countries like Greece, Italy and Spain are criticised for their slower pace of life. (DK)

*"The further south, the bigger the problems. Spain, Italy and Greece. The weather is perfect, but they have a relaxed and lazy attitude towards things...indifference. Now I have my break and the customers can wait." (DK, male, 36-55)*

- UK respondents were of the view that Britons were disliked within Europe, in particular France and Spain, and this was perceived to be a barrier to travel to these countries. Several respondents commented that this was one of the reasons they no longer visited France.

*"You go to France or Spain, and they just don't want you there." (UK, male, 35-65)*

- A key barrier to travel in Western Europe was the exchange rate and the rapid decline in Britons' purchasing power there in recent years. (UK)

## 7 Studying and working abroad

Respondents were asked about their experience of working and studying in other EU countries.

### 7.1 Key findings

- Experience of working or studying abroad varied amongst respondents. **Only about one quarter of respondents had experience with studying and working abroad.** Respondents mentioned a **range of different barriers to going to live in another EU country.** The most prominent were **language, family and finding employment.**
- **Mixed level of awareness** about the issue of the recognition of professional and academic qualifications. Although the **majority of respondents were aware that such an issue existed many were not.** The majority of respondents regard it as important that **there should be some way of recognising qualifications obtained across different countries.** Respondents' personal experience of the recognition of professional and academic qualification was very limited. There was a definite sense in some countries that the situation has improved.
- **Only about one-eighth of respondents had experienced working in another country.** Respondents commented on whether they thought the process of finding employment would be easy or difficult. Respondents felt that the easiest way of finding work in another country is if one is sent by a company one works for already. Respondents who thought that finding **work might be difficult** cited the following **obstacles** that people could experience – language barriers and the non-recognition of diplomas and qualifications. Nearly all those who expressed a view on **when they would look for a job** – before or after moving – noted that they would look for work before leaving their country.
- The focus groups indicated that **residency issues was not something that respondents had difficulty with** and there was an **overwhelming expectation** amongst respondents that **movement within the EU is supposed to be easy.** There was **no experience amongst respondents of the issuing of visas and residence cards to non-EU nationals who are family members of an EU citizen,** but it was imagined that this process might be challenging.
- The **level of awareness** of health insurance and social security issues **differed substantially across countries.** Respondents regarded these issues as **difficult to understand** and there was a **call for more information.** A **widely held expectation amongst respondents was that there would not be any difficulties**



regarding health cover in other EU Member States and that the refunding of costs would be straightforward. There was **uncertainty amongst respondents about whether all costs would be covered by the European Health Insurance Card**, and whether it was necessary to take out additional insurance. There was also uncertainty about the uniformity and differences between social systems across the EU.

- Respondents from **just over a third of the Member States did not know much about reclaiming VAT reimbursements**, while others had found the issue quite **confusing and troublesome**. There was also the **perception that VAT is not refundable to EU citizens**. Respondents from **over a third of the Member States did not think that there was any risk of double taxation**. Interestingly, **respondents from approximately two-thirds of Member States did not regard opening a bank account in another Member State as complicated** and problematic at all. This should be seen in the broader context of only about a quarter of respondents having lived in another Member State and it was not always clear if this view was based on personal experience or perception. Respondents from **roughly a third of the Member States were of the view that opening a bank account can be a problem** and what often complicated the process were requests for utility bills, or the need to have a residential address.
- The majority of respondents had no experience of switching utilities in another EU Member State. Their expectations were generally that there would not be significant differences between switching utilities in another EU country and switching utilities in their home country.
- There were no other obstacles experienced while working or studying in another Member State that were significant and examples included accommodation and learning to deal with everyday practicalities.
- The **various barriers and obstacles discussed in the focus groups did not greatly alter the way in which respondents thought about the idea of leaving** to study or work in another EU country. The **benefits that respondents saw as outweighing** the obstacles included: experiencing new things that will result in personal enrichment, higher wages, and improving academic qualifications.
- Respondents were asked if there were any countries which presented greater barriers to working and studying there. It is regarded as harder moving to a country where a different language is spoken and easier when a common language is shared. Western European countries were preferred destinations and Eastern European countries the least preferable.

## ***7.2 Overall experience and barriers***

Respondents were asked if they had ever travelled abroad to either work or study in another EU country.

Experience of working or studying abroad varied amongst respondents. **Only about one quarter of respondents had experience with studying and working abroad.** In Germany and UK none of the respondents had had experience with working or studying abroad.

Both respondents who did and didn't have experience of living in another country mentioned a **range of different barriers to going to live in another EU country**.

The following table summarises these responses:

Barrier	Relevant to working	Relevant to studying
<p><b>Family</b></p> <p><i>"I wouldn't go because I have links here. I don't want to cut them."</i> (BE, female, 36-55)</p> <p><i>"Being away from the family is a strong consideration."</i> (PT, female, 36-54)</p>	<p>BE 36-54, CY, CZ, EE, FI, EL, PT, HU 36-54, IE, LV, LT, MT, PL, RO, SK, UK</p>	<p>CZ, EE, FI, EL, HU, IE, LV, LT, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK, UK</p>
<p><b>Language barrier</b></p> <p><i>"I have to be able to speak the langue reasonably well, otherwise I am lost."</i> (FR, female, 36-54)</p>	<p>BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU 36-54, IE, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE, UK</p>	<p>BE 18-35, CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, FR, DE, EL, IE, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, ES, SE, UK</p>
<p><b>Finding employment</b></p> <p><i>"They'll always employ local labour first."</i> (BE, male, 36-55)</p> <p>Finding employment appropriate to ones qualifications</p> <p>Finding employment for a spouse</p> <p>Getting used to a new work culture</p> <p><i>"The way of working, the rhythm of work; in Germany it's a different rhythm, there are hours and schedules, whereas in Italy, it's more relaxed."</i> (FR, male, 36-54)</p>	<p>BE 36-54, BG, CY, CZ, FI, FR, IT, PL, SI, ES</p>	<p>BE 18-35, IT, PL, SI, ES</p>
<p><b>Social rights and social cover</b></p> <p><i>"To think of starting again from scratch. What do you do if it doesn't work? Here we have security, you know what you have."</i> (BE, female, 36-55)</p> <p>Not knowing what one's social rights are</p> <p>Uncertainties regarding retirement provisions</p>	<p>BE 36-54, CZ, FI, DE, FR, DE, NL</p>	<p>CZ, FR</p>
<p><b>Finding accommodation</b></p> <p><i>"Finding somewhere to live easily, in a decent area. People to live with, the price."</i> (BE, female, 18-35)</p> <p><i>"Even finding a house would worry me."</i></p>	<p>CZ, IT, NL, ES, AT</p>	<p>BE 18-35, CY, CZ, IT, NL, ES, AT</p>

<i>(IT, female, 18-35)</i>		
<b>Making friends / creating social links / differences in culture</b>  How one would be received	BG, CY, DK, FR, DE, LV, PL, PT	BE 18-35, DK, FR, DE, LV, PL, PT
<b>Motivation</b>  <i>"Nothing prevents, really, but I do not want to. This would be a radical change and I would go with the whole family." (EE, male, 36-55)</i>  You must be adventurous and courageous	EE, FI, HU 36-54, SI, UK	EE, FI, HU 18-35, SI, UK
<b>Recognition of qualifications</b>  Having your qualifications recognised in the country you are going to study in.  Recognition of your qualifications obtained abroad in your home country.  <i>"Some credits were not accepted, so I had to prolong my study." (CZ, female, 18-35, student)</i>		BE 18-35, BG, CY, CZ, SK
<b>The food</b>  <i>"The composition of the ingredients. You have to get used to it." (BE, female, 18-35)</i>	PL	BE 18-35, PL
<b>The weather</b>  <i>"When one is used to the Cyprus weather, it is quite difficult to get accustomed to weather in other EU countries – the rain, the snow, low temperatures." (CY, male, 36-54)</i>	CY, PT	BE 18-35, CY, PT
<b>Finding an appropriate school for children</b>	BG, CY, FR, NL	
<b>Tuition fees</b>		CY
<b>Difficult selection process</b>		CZ, DK
<b>Bureaucracy in the destination country</b>	FI, FR	FI, FR
<b>The quality of life they can expect</b>	FR, MT	MT

### 7.3 Academic and professional qualifications

Respondents were asked about specific obstacles to working or studying abroad.

EU-wide recognition of academic and professional qualifications has been identified as a key barrier.

*Attention is required on recognition of professional qualifications as there are substantial problems with both the EU law and with its application. There is also an "expectations gap," as citizens expect their qualifications to be accepted anywhere in the EU.*

*Students find that their diplomas cannot easily be accepted in another EU country as EU law does not cover mutual recognition of academic diplomas.*

Participants were asked to discuss their experience and perceptions of this issue.

The focus group discussions showed a **mixed level of awareness** about the issue of the recognition of professional and academic qualifications. Although the **majority of respondents were aware that such an issue existed**, this was by no means universal. Amongst respondents from a minority of countries there appeared to be a lack of awareness that this could be an issue (NL, MT, PL, IE, HU).

*"Inside the EU it is not a problem, but in countries outside the EU it is a problem." (MT, Male, 18-24, student)*

Respondents thought that it was **an important issue** because it prevents well-qualified people from obtaining appropriate employment across the EU and therefore restricts freedom of movement. The majority of respondents therefore regard it as important that **there should be some way of recognising qualifications obtained in different countries**. However, some reservations were expressed about the consequences of such as system of harmonisation as it was feared that it could be a lowering of the value of diplomas and professional experience (FR). Respondents from Ireland took the view that perhaps not all qualifications are in fact transferable. They referred to three categories of qualifications: (1) qualifications that are fully transferable as they do not require country specific qualifications, such as medicine; (2) qualifications that are partly transferable which require a base qualification, but for which 'top-up' exams could be required based on the specific national context. An example would be the legal profession (3); qualifications that are non-transferable and very country specific (IE). Respondents from Lithuania were of the view that it was more important to have a clear system of criteria by which specific diplomas or qualifications are recognized or not, than recognizing them all as equal (LT).

Respondents were sensitive to the challenges that might be faced by others, such as long timeframes to get qualifications recognised and unclear rules about which qualifications are recognised or not, but there was a definite sense in at least seven countries that the situation has improved and should improve further since the Bologna agreement (BE, HU, LU, PT, SI, ES, SE).

*“The Bologna Treaty standardises it and has made it a bit better.”  
(BE, female, 36-55)*

Some respondents were also of the view that the recognition of professional qualifications should not be seen in isolation, as there are issues that are related to it. The first concerns language skills which is important if someone wants to work in another EU country (BE, DK).

*“I have friends who went to Portugal and France. They had to do an extra year for the language.” (BE, male, 18-35, student)*

Educational standards differ across countries and this does not just affect tertiary education, but also education preceding this.

*“For primary and secondary schools, Spain is the bottom. Those who go there on Erasmus exchanges all pass without attending the course.” (BE, female, 18-35)*

This is related to the distrust of qualifications from certain countries, especially those from Eastern Europe.

*“The eastern European countries that have joined, what’s their diploma worth? I’d like to know that.” (BE, male, 18-35)*

**Respondents’ personal experience of the recognition of professional and academic qualification was very limited.** Respondents had mixed experiences – in some cases their qualifications were accepted without any problems and in other cases not:

*“Once I applied to a university in England and I had this diploma from Tallinn Technical University and they were fine with this and acknowledged that I had higher education.” (EE, male, 36-50)*

*“I applied for a position and they asked for educational experience and I have this diploma from a German Schools of Technology and this diploma was in the English Language, but they were really careful about that – looked into it, but they did not make a problem out of it.” (EE, male, 18-35)*

*“I was in the Great Britain at the same time than a Spanish guy. They said to me that my degree is OK no matter from what vocational school I come from since I am a Finn. But they were much stricter for the Spaniard and made sure that he had conducted his practical training and all the other requirements.” (FI, female, 18-35)*

*“I have a German certificate. For me to receive a confirmation here [in Latvia] I have to go to Chamber of Crafts. Although it [certificate] should be recognized worldwide.” (LV, male, 36-54)*

*“I’m a lawyer and I’ve had problems myself” (BE, female, 18-35)*

A barrister from Ireland who had received her qualification in London returned to her home in Belfast to work. However, when she attempted to practice in Belfast she was informed that her qualification was not recognized – even though the two cities are in the same jurisdiction. She moved to Dublin instead where, while the qualification was not fully recognised, she received byes in many of the exams but had to sit others in order to ‘top-up’ her qualification and make it applicable in Ireland. (IE)

## ***7.4 Finding a job abroad***

Respondents were asked about specific obstacles to working or studying abroad.

Participants were asked to discuss their experience and perceptions of finding employment in another EU country. **Only about one-eighth or respondents had experienced working in another country.** The experiences of those who did go and work abroad included those who looked for a job before moving to the country (HU, LT), those who went as part of an inter-company transfer (EE, PL) and those who moved to the country first and then looked for a job (EE, IE). It is unclear who the other respondents went about looking for a job.

*“I did not hesitate. My boss proposed me to go to work there and I accepted. It was a good experience.” (PL, male, 18-35)*

*“My experience with going to work and live abroad from many years ago is that it’s hard in the beginning. But then you get used to it.” (SI, male, 36-55)*

Respondents commented on whether or not they thought that it would be easy or difficult to find work in another EU country, and why they thought so. Respondents who thought that it would be an **easy process** expressed their opinion as follows:

- Finding work and moving to another country would be easiest if one is sent by a company one works for already (BE, CY, FI, DE, HU, IT, PT, ES, SE)
- If one has high educational qualifications then it should be easy to find a job (AT, BE, BG)
- Due to the vast employment market as a result of membership to the EU the job search should be easy (CY)

A minority of respondents held that finding a job in another EU country might not be harder than finding employment locally (AT, EL), while respondents from the Netherlands related not wanting a job in another EU country in the first place because the current standard of living in their country is quite high and would be difficult to match elsewhere.

Respondents who thought that finding **work might be difficult** cited the following **obstacles** that people could experience:

- Language barriers (BE, DK, FR, LV, LT, MT, PL, SE, UK)
- The non-recognition of diplomas and qualifications (BG, DK, LV, NL, PL)

*“There are certain matters that we must know about before going, such as the cost of living, how much is the rent of an apartment, whether our diplomas are recognised, etc.” (PL, female, 36-54)*

- Procedures and conditions when changing social security systems / what about pensions in the long run / the risk of losing social security in one’s home country / finding out what the social benefits are in the new country if one is unemployed (DE, FR, BE, LU, ES)
- Not being able to find a job relevant to their qualification or being paid less than locals (BG, SK, ES)
- The unemployment rate of the country one wants to find a job in (BE, UK)
- The ‘vicious circle’ of the steps that need to be taken to find work (BE, FR)

*“If I look for work, I need an address there. But I don’t want to leave until I’m sure I have a job. It’s a bit of a vicious circle.” (BE, female, 18-35)*

- Cultural differences – different customs concerning social interaction (DK)
- Limited networks to draw on to find work (DK)

*“It is all about having the right connections. If you know somebody you get first in line. Abroad I think that you have limited access to networking...it can be much more difficult.” (DK, male, 18-35, student)*

- Uncertainty about what salary to get to at least have an equivalent standard of living as in their own country. (DK)
- Lack of confidence (LT)
- The process of looking for a job is unclear (LT)
- The attitude of the country in question towards foreign workers (BG)



- Official barriers to working in specific countries such as Austria and Germany (CZ)
- The vast number of people competing for the same job (MT)

Both those who did and didn't have experience looking for a job offered suggestions on **where to look for one**.

- Internet sites / community sites / the EURES website / internet chat forums (BE, CZ, DK, DE, EL, HU, IE)
- Recruitment agencies – in person and their websites (BE, CZ, DE, DE, IE)

*"There is a European employment agency in a European Union site. I know because I have searched it for my son who is interested to work abroad since it is extremely difficult to find a decent job in Greece." (EL, female, 36-54)*

However, there was distrust amongst Polish, Romanian and Slovakian respondents about fraudulent employment agencies or fear of being offered an attractive job opportunity that is very different from the actual job when they arrive in the country.

- Friends and family (EL, HU, RO, SE)
- International newspapers (BE)

Finally, nearly all those who expressed a view on **when** they would look for a job – before or after moving – noted that they would look for work before leaving (UK, BE, CY, DK, EE, FI, HU, PT). It was only the younger group in Spain who had no reservations about moving to a new country first before looking for a job. For a minority being unemployed would make the decision to move to another EU country a lot easier in case a job opportunity arose and none was available locally (ES, CY, EE, IT 18-35). However, Hungarian respondents raised the practical concern of not being able to afford the cost of moving to another country if they are already in such a precarious position.

## ***7.5 Residency issues***

Respondents were asked about specific obstacles to working or studying abroad. Participants were asked to discuss their experience and perceptions of family and residency issues when working or studying abroad. Such issues have been identified as key obstacles for the Internal Market.

*In the area of residency, national procedures for granting visas and residence cards to non-EU nationals who are family members of an EU citizen need to be rendered easier, faster and more transparent while fully*

*complying with EU law.*

The focus groups indicate that **residency issues was not something that respondents had difficulty with** and there was an **overwhelming expectation** amongst respondents **that movement within the EU is supposed to be easy** (BE, BG, DK, CZ, PL, EE, FI, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, PT, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK) as long as a person can show that they can support themselves financially (DK).

*“There are no problems in the Europe.” (BE, female, 18-35)*

It was only respondents from the Netherlands who mentioned that they thought that the rules for residence permits had become stricter but that this was necessary in order to prevent unwanted flows of workers or immigrants moving from one EU country to another.

What was sometimes considered to be a challenge was the **conditions that needed to be in place before working**, e.g. having a bank account or place of residence before one could start working (EE, LV, RO). But this was not a problem in all cases, for example a respondent from the Czech Republic had shown the rental contract for their flat to be able to open a bank account in France. And even if residency issues would be a challenge, once a decision had been taken to move to another country, it would not be an insurmountable challenge (CY).

It was only respondents in France and Poland who mentioned concrete differences in residency matters between EU countries.

*“When I heard I needed a green card to live in Belgium I didn’t understand why because I am European, but the country that receives you overrides the EU...” (FR, female, 36-54)*

*“Some countries are still closed to foreigners, Germany and Austria as far as I know.” (PL, male, 18-35)*

Other points raised by individual respondents included:

- Residency issues is one of the first things one deals with when moving to another country (AT)
- It is seen as easier for Belgian respondents to obtain a residence permit in another country, than it is for citizens of another country to obtain a residence permit in Belgium. (BE)

There was **no experience amongst respondents of the issuing of visas and residence cards to non-EU nationals who are family members of an EU citizen**, but it was imagined that this process might be challenging.

## 7.6 Social Security

Respondents were asked about specific obstacles to working or studying abroad.

Participants were asked to discuss their experience and perceptions of social security systems, identified as key obstacles for the Internal Market.

*Social security systems are different in all EU countries which can make it sometimes difficult for citizens to understand procedures when moving abroad. There is a need to facilitate social security procedures in cross-border contexts.*

Recognition of health insurance across the EU is a particular obstacle.

*In cross-border healthcare, Europeans sometimes encounter problems with recognition of European Health Insurance Cards and reimbursement of medical expenses from another country. Rules and procedures in this area towards citizens and healthcare providers should be clarified.*

The **level of awareness** of health insurance and social security issues **differed substantially across countries**. However, there was a general sense amongst respondents that **these are important issues that should be looked into by people considering working or studying in another EU country**.

*“You should start to research about your rights even before you leave...” (MT, female, 36-54)*

Although there were respondents who had never thought of these issues (CY), others found these issues **difficult to understand** and there was a **call for more information** into the detail of how these issues would work if people did decide to move to another EU country. (DE, IT, ES)

A **widely held expectation amongst respondents was that there would not be any difficulties** regarding health cover in other EU Member States and that the refunding of costs would be straightforward. However, other respondents thought that although the European Health Insurance Card was in theory valid in all Member States, it was not applied equally everywhere (AT, EE, FI).

*“Getting healthcare with the aid of the e-card should be possible in any Member State; however I’m aware of the fact that there might be some national differences!” (AT, male, 36-50)*

Respondents also discussed the different quality of health care across the EU, such as people coming to certain countries to receive care and problems experienced regarding receiving specialised medical care.

*“But that’s not the same across Europe. People come here from all over Europe and get the same level of treatment as we get, but I’m sure, if we went over there and needed some major surgery due to illness, then that’s when travel insurance comes in. So we pay that in addition to the EHIC card. But if it was the other way around, it would never.” (UK, female, 36-54)*

*“It was quite peculiar situation in Italy where if you like to visit a specialized physician, you have to make an appointment – today I call for an appointment for after two or three months, no earlier date available. When having a problem everyone there went to an emergency room.” (BG, male, 18 – 35)*

There was some confusion and **uncertainty amongst respondents about whether all costs would be covered by the European Health Insurance Card**, and whether it was necessary to take out additional insurance. Respondents raised questions such as to what extent health insurance policies are transferable, in other words, whether they can still remain a member of their national health insurance and the extent their own insurance cover is transferable to another country; whether they would receive all primary health care services with EU health card; whether they need to take out additional insurance; or whether a life insurance policy taken out separately works abroad.

*“I have the card, but I am not sure what I am covered for with the card.” (MT, female, 18-35)*

Respondents’ individual experiences with health insurance and reimbursements when falling ill in another EU Member State seemed generally positive, with a few exceptions.

*“I called the Belgian health fund. My daughter had a problem, and I rang the European card number. It was excellent, very quick, a card with an emergency number. They ask which country and they get in contact.” (BE, female, 36-55)*

*“My daughter as treated in Italy. I don’t know how it was sorted out but it went well. I feel secure everywhere in Europe.” (FR, female, 36-54)*

*“An important thing when we are about to go to another EU country is the health assistance – we should ask here the Health European Card. I had an accident in Barcelona, the authorities took care of that, I received very good care, the card worked very well. I was very pleasantly surprised.” (PT, male, 18-35)*

*“I’m not entitled to many services under this card. If I get a toothache, I can’t go to a doctor or a dentist, because we won’t be reimbursed.” (PL, male, 36-54)*

There was also **uncertainty about the uniformity and differences between social systems across the EU**. Again, there was the perception that social benefit systems seem to be functioning across Europe and that there would not generally be a problem when going to another EU country. However, a minority of respondents thought that social benefits and systems are not equal across the EU and that they are in fact better in their countries – in other words, these respondents would be worse off if they moved. (LU, NL, SE, UK)

Again, some uncertainty exists, due to a lack of knowledge of how these systems would work across countries.

## **7.7 Taxation and banking**

Respondents were asked about specific obstacles to working or studying abroad.

Participants were asked to discuss their experience and perceptions of the financial aspects of living abroad. Specific issues identified as obstacles were discussed:

*Procedures for reclaiming VAT paid in another Member State should be rendered more effective and faster.*

*Double taxation remains an issue for many Europeans who work cross-border, both from an employer and employee perspective. Efforts are needed to avoid double taxation.*

*Opening bank accounts cross-border should be made easier: banks still operate in a national context, which makes it difficult for non-nationals to open a bank account in another country. The issue of switching banks is also problematic on a national level.*

### **VAT**

Respondents from **just over a third of the Member States did not know much about this issue at all** (BG, CY, FI, FR, EL, MT, PL, PT, ES, SE). Other respondents had found the issue quite **confusing and troublesome** (AT, BE, DE, LV, UK).

*“When I buy commodities online I sometimes come across the varying amounts of VAT; the price for commodities after taxation often depends on the country where it is sent to.” (AT, male, 36-50)*

*“There are things which aren’t very logical. Sometimes you have to pay additional VAT when you come back into the country on certain products.” (BE, male, 18-35)*

A small minority of respondents did not think this is a problem at all (LU, RO, SI). There was also the **perception that VAT is not refundable to EU citizens**, but can only be claimed back by non-EU citizens (EE, NL, ES), and respondents from Slovakia did not believe that anyone can claim VAT back.

Only one personal experience was related of a respondent who had attempted to claim back VAT. The respondent bought a car and paid the VAT in Germany and, when registering the car, again in the Czech Republic. She finally succeeded in reclaiming the VAT from the German company that sold her the car, but not without some difficulty (CZ).

*“At first, they did not want to give me the VAT back in Germany but, thanks to my brother-in-law who lives there and speaks German fluently, the tax was refunded to me in the end. But we had to consult a lawyer and send the text of the law to the company.” (CZ, female, 18–31)*

### **Double taxation**

Respondents from **over a third of the Member States did not think that there was any risk of double taxation** (BE, CY, CZ, IE, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, SI). There was some awareness of an agreement signed between Member States on this matter.

*“I believe that a couple of years ago, an agreement concerning double taxation was signed between all member states...” (CY, male, 36-55)*

Others did not think it is a particularly complicated problem (AT, EE, EL, HU), while respondents from four countries regarded it as very problematic (FR, HU, SK, ES).

### **Opening a bank account**

Interestingly **respondents from approximately two-thirds of Member States did not regard opening a bank account in another Member State as complicated** and problematic at all. This should be seen in the broader context of only about a quarter of respondents having lived in another Member State and it was not always clear if this view was based on personal experience or perception.

*“Opening a bank account in another country is not very complex; however there are some differences between the various banks, for some it might be easier to open a bank account and for others it might be more complex” (AT, male, 18-35)*

*“You can do that without problems. Maybe you need to have an address abroad.” (BE, male, 36-55)*

However, respondents from **roughly a third of the Member States felt that opening a bank account can be a problem** and some of them

spoke from personal experience. What often complicated the process were requests for utility bills, or the need to have a residential address.

*"I know that in France one has to have a place to live to get an account. And to get a place to live one has to have an account. We found someone who got me a residence before I left. Then I had the address, and I went to the bank to prove it. It is not easy if one doesn't have a place to live. "* (DK, female, 18-35)

*"They might ask for documents that you don't have on you. It would be better if they saw to everything or if you could provide self-certification to speed up procedures"* (IT, female, 18-35)

Respondents from three countries said that they did not know much about this topic. (PL, PT, UK)

## **7.8 Switching utilities**

Respondents were asked about specific obstacles to working or studying abroad.

Participants were asked to discuss their experience and perceptions of utility service providers.

*In the utilities sectors (fixed phone lines, mobile subscriptions for voice and data, internet service provisions, postal services, and electricity and gas markets, in particular in Member States where traditional national incumbents are the major operator) switching between operators should be made easier for customers.*

The majority of respondents had no experience of switching utilities in another EU Member State. Their expectations were generally that there would not be significant differences between switching utilities in another EU country and switching utilities in their home country (DE, EL, IT, LV, LT, PL, SL, ES, PT, HU).

*"I think that in case of the utilities it should be like here: we show a residence document and they install the service. It would be peaceful, perhaps with the necessary bureaucracy."* (PT, female, 35-54)

A minority of respondents expected that services in another EU country would be more efficient than in their own (MT, RO, ES, BG).

### **Telephone and mobile and internet**

Respondents thought that switching between mobile service operators would not be a problem because the market for telephone providers is now dominated by a few major multinational firms which means that **services have been internationalised** (DE, IT, PT).

*“Mobile phones for example: there will certainly be a Vodafone there [in the EU country moved to], a company which people know everywhere, which is active worldwide and I think they have more or less the same procedures everywhere.” (DE, male, 18-35)*

However, respondents from the Netherlands held that the privatisation of the telecom and postal markets should never have taken place. They were of the view that since these are valuable and essential services, the government should be responsible for them. Respondents came up with the idea of creating a European network for the telephone services, so that everyone can share in the benefits of a collective network.

Some respondents raised the issue of **contract agreements with mobile service providers**. There was some sense that these should be made clearer as they are currently valid for various lengths of time in different countries (AT). It was also thought that minimum contract periods are too long (DK) and that contracts should be cancelled if a person is no longer resident in a country (UK).

Respondents thought that some of the issues that might pose a problem to people wanting to change service providers are that one **might need a residential address in order to get a phone or internet service** (DK, LT, FI, PL). However, other respondents disagreed that this should be a challenge as they held that setting up a prepaid account should not be a problem as there are no residential requirements (IE, IT).

Respondents did express some unhappiness about what they thought were **excessive roaming** and international data transfer **charges** and it was thought that clients were not informed well enough beforehand (FI, FR, IE, SE).

The standardisation of costs across the EU was also something that respondents said that they would welcome (HU, IT).

One respondent related the example of a friend's son who went to Brussels to study and it took four months to have telephone and internet access in his apartment. (LU)

## **Electricity and gas**

Again respondents felt that switching service providers in this area in another EU country would not be any more complicated than in their own countries and should not pose a big problem, although these processes are usually slightly complicated. (BE, ES, SY, CZ, DK, UK, LU)

*“Even in Belgium, when you look into changing to another supplier, it's complicated.” (BE, female, 36-54)*

*“I don't think there's an electricity or gas company that works more quickly. It's the same everywhere!” (Male, 35-55)*



Respondents seemed in favour of harmonising these services and especially breaking the monopoly of some service providers (BE). This would result in more favourable pricing arrangements across countries (BG, CZ).

Respondents did regard gas and electricity as a slightly more complicated issue than phones and internet services as there was uncertainty about how to register for gas services in another country (DK) and the billing systems in other countries are regarded as more complicated (FR, AT).

The focus groups from the Netherlands were of the view that Europe should join hands to ensure a constant and secure gas supply.

Respondents from the UK thought that changing service providers might be a complicated administrative process, but that there are relocation companies that can provide help with this.

*“There are firms to deal with the legal side and help you to set things up, because there are a lot of things done differently that you may not realise.” (UK, female, 36-55)*

### **Postal services**

Respondents were unclear why this would pose a challenge to someone who has moved to another EU country (IE, ES) and thought that the use of the postal service is decreasing as a result of emails and text messaging (FI, SK). Some saw the postal services across Europe as efficient and reliable (BE, CY, HU), while others mentioned the occasional loss of parcels through theft (BE), high prices (DK), and post taking long to arrive (DK, FR).

Respondents from the Netherlands thought that postal services should be given back to the state and that there should be a collective postal company throughout Europe (NL).

## ***7.9 Other issues with working / studying abroad***

Respondents were asked of any other issues they had faced working or studying abroad. These included the following:

- Accommodation as students which is often difficult to find and expensive (CY, DK)
- Knowing how to deal with everyday practicalities, e.g. who to phone if a pipe bursts (DK, FR)
- Not being treated equally as other citizens, e.g. locals being preferred for employment opportunities (HU) or their documentation not being trusted (IT)

*“I went to Greece with a Swiss friend and all he needed to do was show the Swiss passport to get anywhere. They would look at my Italian ID, up and down!” (IT, male, 36-55)*

- Missing one's social network (DK)
- Recognition of the time worked abroad (SK)  
*"Some of the young people start their work carrier abroad. Then they return back and have problems. They needed 2 or 3 years to have recognized."* (SK, male, 18-35, student)
- Long travelling distances in other countries if one is not used to it (MT)
- Hostility in the country towards those from other countries (FR)

## **7.10 Impact of obstacles**

Respondents were asked if they would still consider working or studying abroad, given the obstacles discussed.

The **various barriers and obstacles discussed did not greatly alter the way in which respondents thought about the idea of leaving** to study or work in another EU country.

*"These are just minor problems that can happen anywhere. The positives are greater."* (BE, female 18-35)

*"Those difficulties are not such that cannot be overcome and obstacles are not so serious..."* (LV, female, 35-54)

*"With sufficient planning and arranging in advance, I'm quite sure that there are no major problems regarding moving to any country in the EU."* (AT, male, 18-35, student)

Those who had been keen to go and work or study in another EU country remained so and those who had not been keen, especially some of the older respondents (BE, BG, DE, ES) were still not keen to go.

*"The difficulty of just leaving everything, taking your suitcase and leaving it all."* (BE, female, 36-55)

However, in France and the Netherlands the focus group discussion and the obstacles mentioned did make people much more reluctant to go to another EU country.

It should also be mentioned that barriers such as family and language still remained strong and influenced respondents' willingness to go abroad.

The **benefits that respondents saw as outweighing** the obstacles included:

- Experiencing new things that will result in personal enrichment: cultures, language, wine, meeting new people (AT, CZ 18-35, DK, IT, LV, LT, MT, PL, PT)

*"I would say personal enrichment, meeting new people, knowing new customs, new horizons are opened." (PT, female, 36-54)*

- Higher wages (MT, PL, PT, RO, ES, DK)  
*"Quite frankly the money..." (PT, female, 18-35)*
- Improving academic qualifications (PT, RO, ES, CZ 18-35)
- A desire for wider professional experience (LT, MT)
- Dissatisfaction with the currently national political and economic situation in the country / better national governance (CZ, IE)
- Warmer weather (DK, IE)
- Better and more secure jobs (IE)
- Higher standard of living (PL)
- More relaxed work-life balance (UK)  
*"Lifestyle, getting away from this country. The way of life is a lot slower...." (UK, female, 18-35)*

### ***7.11 Differences by country***

Respondents were asked if there were any countries which presented greater barriers to working and studying there.

#### **Countries which are preferred:**

- It is harder moving to a country where a different language is spoken and easier when a common language is shared. (AT, FI, FR, IE)  
*"Since the Accession to the EU moving to Germany is just like moving to any other city in Austria." (AT, male, 36-54)*
- Countries where cultural differences would not be stark (IT, PT)
- The older EU countries were generally regarded as more attractive to live in.
- Countries that are more open to people coming to work and study there such as the UK and Ireland (CZ)
- It is easier to work in a country that shares similar work practices, such as Germany and Sweden (DK)
- Countries with strong economies such as Germany and Netherlands (UK)

#### **Countries which are not preferred:**

- The Eastern European countries were not regarded as places where people would like to move to for reasons of distrust, security, language difficulties, lower living standards, an inadequate school system and not being regarded as economically stable. (BE, DE, EL, IE, SE, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, ES, UK)

- France was seen as a difficult country to find employment in (EE), to open a bank account in (LV), has a high language barrier (PL) and is regarded as not very welcoming towards foreigners (UK)
- The southern European countries because of their different mentality and susceptibility to corruption (DE) and bureaucracy (EL, LU)
- Italy because of high unemployment, little social security and cumbersome administration (BE, PL)
- Denmark was associated with greater levels of nationalism which had a negative impact on people's desire to live there (IT) and was regarded as expensive to live in (MT)
- England because of the high cost of living and cumbersome bureaucracy (BE)
- Nordic countries are difficult in terms of climate and lifestyle (PT)  
*"The climate would be an obstacle for me to live and work in Denmark, Sweden, Finland. I would miss the sun terrible..." (PT, female, 18-35)*
- Countries that are more restricted in terms of their labour market such as Germany (CZ)
- Greece because of its current economic situation (UK)

## 8 Annex 1 - Discussion Guide

### OBSTACLES CITIZENS FACE IN INTERNAL MARKET GENERAL PUBLIC TOPIC GUIDE

*This research will feed into the ongoing evaluation of the 'Information and Assistance Networks'. The latter assists citizens and businesses in exercising their rights in the EU's internal market (Europe Direct, Your Europe Advice – former Citizens Signpost Service, European Consumer Centres, Enterprise Europe Network and SOLVIT). As such, the results of the focus groups will provide helpful information on the effectiveness of DG MARKET policies in as far as they address citizen's concerns and priorities.*

*Based on the feedback from these mechanisms, a preliminary list of 14 most common obstacles for citizens in the Internal Market has been prepared (included in Annex 1). The focus groups will:*

- check to what extent these obstacles are expected / experienced by the citizens, i.e. to test the gap between people's expectations about the single market and the problems / frustrations they experience on a daily basis;*
- check if there are other obstacles than these identified by the Commission;*
- help to better understand the root causes of the specific problems e.g., a lack of understanding / application of EU rules by local authorities, and*
- if possible identify, per area/obstacle discussed, how serious the problems are (where and how often they occur and what the effects are).*

*As with all qualitative discussion guides this document is not intended to be an exhaustive questionnaire but, rather, an indication to the moderator of the topics to be covered, the approximate time to be apportioned to*

*each area of discussion and to provide some suggestions around possible areas of investigation. The discussion guide will be accompanied by an in-depth briefing of the moderators, to provide them with a full understanding of the programme and its objectives.*

## **1) Introduction (5 minutes)**

*In this section the moderator establishes the rules of the depth interview, and begins to develop the essential rapport with respondents, putting them at their ease and beginning to get to know them.*

Moderator

- Self
- TNS
- Independent

Process

- Confidential
- No right or wrong answers
- All views equally important

Topic

- Perceptions of the EU and the Internal Market
- Information and redress
- Purchasing goods abroad
- Travel abroad
- Studying and working abroad
- Differences between different countries

Respondent

- Name
- Personal situation (age, occupation)

## **2) General Perception of the EU and Internal Market (10 minutes)**

When I say 'European Union', what thoughts come to mind?

- What words would you use to describe it?
- What images do you associate with it?
- If you had to sum up the EU in one phrase, what would it be?

INSTRUCTIONS: If bureaucracy is mentioned explore where their perceptions of bureaucracy come from. Is it their personal experience vs. people they know vs. Hearsay/rumour.

And what about the phrase 'Internal Market'?

- Does this mean anything to you?
- If so, what?

- Where / when have you come across the concept?
- Does the Internal Market concern you directly? If yes, in which form?

PROVIDE ALL RESPONDENTS WITH THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION

*The internal market is the economic cooperation between European Union member states (countries) which removes the barriers to trade and competition within the EU, with the aims of producing more choice and lower prices for businesses and consumers.*

Explain to respondents that we will be discussing various obstacles they will face when exercising their rights in Internal Market. For example, when they travel abroad, go to live, study or work abroad.

### **3) Information and redress concerning the Internal Market (15 mins)**

The EU gives you rights in a number of areas, such as free movement of people, capital (such as money), services and goods.

If you were going to an EU country other than your country of residence or buying something from abroad and wanted to know your rights, where would you first look for information?

*INSTRUCTIONS: encourage the respondents to generate an UNPROMPTED list of all the possible sources of information. Probe: What else?*

*Then use the following prompts:*

- Government websites (including government you are visiting, official EU website)?
- (Country) consumer or legal advice?
- EU consumer or legal advice?
- Family, friends and colleagues?
- Social network (such as Facebook, Twitter, Digg, Reddit)

If you had a problem purchasing something on the internet from another EU country and you believed that your EU rights were breached, where would you first turn for help?

*INSTRUCTIONS: encourage the respondents to generate an UNPROMPTED list of all the possible sources of information. Probe: What else?*

If you were living and working abroad in another EU country and had a problem with your employer and you believed that your EU rights were breached, where would you first turn for help?

*INSTRUCTIONS: encourage the respondents to generate an UNPROMPTED list of all the possible sources of information. Probe: What else?*

#### 4) Purchasing goods and services from abroad (15-20 mins)

Has anyone ever purchased any goods or services from another EU country either directly or using the internet? What kinds of goods and services have you purchased?

Did you experience any difficulties **purchasing goods and services online**, such as:

Payment fraud. What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?

Resolving problems if they occur. What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?

Access to services being restricted as a result of your nationality or place of residence? What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?

Anything else? What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?

Has anyone NOT purchased goods and services from another EU country because you were concerned about how to deal with any problems that might arise?

PROBE: Potential barriers to purchasing goods and services from another EU country.

#### 5) Travel abroad (15-20 mins)

Who has travelled abroad on business and/or on holiday to another EU country?

If you have travelled abroad to another EU country for business or for holidays have you ever experienced any difficulties when you are abroad? What kind of difficulties?

INSTRUCTIONS: Encourage respondents to identify all the issues that come to mind. Use the probes below. Explore both actual experiences and potential barriers to using goods and services.

Did you experience any issues or problems related to **travel**, such as:

Air travel rights (Probe: Clarity about rights and how they are implemented?) What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?

Renting a car abroad (Probe: unfair practices, discrimination based on nationality, unclear contractual conditions, anything else?) What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?



Different road traffic rules (Probe: traffic rules not being consistently applied) What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?

Anything else to do with travel? What did you do? Did you resolve them? How?

Has anyone NOT travelled abroad to another EU country because you were concerned about how to deal with any travel problems that might arise?

PROBE: Potential barriers to travel in another EU country.

## 6) Studying abroad or working abroad (40 mins)

Who has travelled abroad to study in another EU country?

Who has travelled abroad to work in another EU country?

*INSTRUCTIONS: For each of the following areas in this section on studying and working abroad, it is important to get the views of both those who have and those who have not studied or worked abroad. Start with everyone's views and then focus on those who have studied abroad or worked abroad. If no-one has studied or worked abroad then explore the views of the group to the barriers to studying and working abroad.*

Firstly what kind of considerations might make it difficult for anyone in [country] to study or work abroad in another EU country? What kind of barriers or obstacles come to mind?

PROBE GENERAL BARRIERS: family, motivation, and language.

I now want to cover a number of potential areas and would like to hear the views of everyone, irrespective of whether you have studied and worked abroad.

- (a) What are your thoughts and feelings about issues or problems you might experience / or have experienced which relate to ...**the recognition of academic diplomas and professional qualifications?**

INSTRUCTIONS: Collect the views of the whole group and then probe the specific experience of those that have studied or worked abroad. Did they face such problems? If yes, did they manage to resolve them? If yes, how? If no, why?

- (b) What are your thoughts and feelings about issues or problems you might experience / or have experienced which relate to ... **finding a job abroad?**

PROBE: the experiences of finding a job before or after moving, finding a job via an existing employer, or looking for jobs in other markets if made unemployed or none available locally.

INSTRUCTION: Collect the views of the whole group and then probe the specific experience of those that have worked abroad. Did they face such problems? If yes, did they manage to resolve them? If yes, how? If no, why?

- (c) What are your thoughts and feelings about issues or problems you might experience / or have experienced which relate to...**family or residency issues**?

*PROBE:*

National procedures for granting visas and residence cards?

Rules for non-EU nationals who are family members of an EU citizen?

*INSTRUCTION:* Collect the views of the whole group and then probe the specific experience of those that have worked abroad. Did they face such problems? If yes, did they manage to resolve them? If yes, how? If no, why?

- (d) What are your thoughts and feelings about issues or problems you might experience / or have experienced which relate to... **social security systems**

*PROBE:*

Medical services and access to health care in another MS?

Recognition of European Health Insurance Cards and reimbursement of medical expenses from another country?

*INSTRUCTION:* Collect the views of the whole group and then probe the specific experience of those that have worked abroad. Did they face such problems? If yes did they manage to resolve them? If yes, how? If no, why?

- (e) What are your thoughts and feelings about...issues or problems you might experience / or have experienced which relate to...**taxation and banking**

*PROBE:*

Double taxation?

Reclaiming VAT paid in another Member State?

Opening bank accounts abroad or switching banks?

*INSTRUCTION:* Collect the views of the whole group and then probe the specific experience of those that have worked abroad. Did they face such problems? If yes, did they manage to resolve them? If yes, how? If no, why?

- (f) What are your thoughts and feelings about issues or problems you might experience / or have experienced which relate to...**utility services and switching services**

*PROBE:*

Telephone and mobile?

Postal services?

Electricity and gas?

*INSTRUCTION:* Collect the views of the whole group and then probe the specific experience of those that have worked abroad. What did they do? Did they resolve them? How?

- (g) **Did you experience any other issues or problems related to studying and working abroad?**

What were these? What did you do? Did you resolve them? If yes, how? If no, why?

- (h) **Finally, after having discussed all obstacles to working or studying abroad, would you still consider doing it? If yes, why? (what are the expected benefits that would exceed the obstacles?)**

## **7) Differences between countries (10 mins)**

Are there greater barriers in some countries rather than others when:

Purchasing goods and services?

Travelling abroad?

Studying or working abroad?

In which countries are there more barriers?

Thank and close.