

# Identifying obstacles in the Single Market: The role of assistance services



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# The role of assistance services

- ❑ What are assistance services?
- ❑ How can they help identify obstacles?

## Not many Europeans are aware of assistance services

- 11% - European Consumer Centres
- 6% - Europe Direct
- 4% - Your Europe
- 3% - Citizens Signpost Service
- 2% - SOLVIT
- 69% - do not know any of the services

# The role of assistance services

## What we want to achieve:

- Better information
- Better access to fast assistance and real solutions
- Better enforcement of rights
- Listen, learn and make better policies



# I. Better information: The new Your Europe portal

- ❑ 'One-stop shop' access to information on single market rights for citizens, consumers, and businesses
- ❑ Information also available via free-phone number 0800 6 7 8 9 10 11

The screenshot shows the 'Your Europe' portal for citizens. The header includes the European Commission logo and the text 'Your Europe'. Below the header, there is a navigation bar with 'European Commission > Your Europe > Citizens'. The main content area is titled 'Europe made easy' and 'Help and advice on your life, work and travel in the EU'. It features a grid of categories: Travel (Coming soon), Work (Passport, Jobseeker, Migrant worker, Cross-border worker, Other), Vehicles (Driving license, Insurance, Registration), Residence (Coming soon), Education (School, University, Traineeship, Researcher), Health (Unforeseen treatment, Planned treatment, Help from the chemist, Settling abroad), Family (Coming soon), and Buy & Sell (Shopping abroad, Online shopping, Cars, Personal finance, Entrepreneuria). There is also a 'Highlight' section with the text 'Information on health is now live. Find out when you can get medical treatments in another EU country, and what level of reimbursement to expect.' The footer includes 'Last update: 18/06/2010 | Contact | Print version | Top'.

The screenshot shows the 'Your Europe' portal for businesses. The header includes the European Commission logo and the text 'Your Europe'. Below the header, there is a navigation bar with 'European Commission > Your Europe > Business'. The main content area is titled 'Your Europe, your opportunity' and 'Practical guide to doing business in Europe'. It features a grid of categories: Starting (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead), Managing (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead, Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis), Expanding (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead, Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis), EU market (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead, Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis), Innovation (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead, Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis), Finance & Support (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead), Stopping (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead, Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis), and Responsible business (Memo enim isam, Aspernatur aut ead, Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis). There is also a 'Highlight' section with the text 'Multilingual practical information and online government services for companies looking for business in another country. Provided jointly by the European Commission and national authorities.' The footer includes 'Print version | Sitemap | Search | Contact | Legal notice | En'.

# I. Better information: The new Your Europe portal

## Key innovations:



- User-centric:** no jargon, practical info, honest presentation of the situation
- Single access point** to specialized assistance
- National information**
- Listening to users' feedback**
- Innovative promotion**



# Innovation 1: user-centric

The screenshot shows a government website interface with a navigation bar at the top containing categories: Travel, Work, Vehicles, Residence, Education, Health, Family, and Buy & Sell. The 'Buy & Sell' section is active, displaying a sidebar with links like 'Shopping abroad', 'Online shopping', 'Cars', 'Personal finance', and 'Entrepreneurs'. The main content area is titled 'Shopping abroad' and 'VAT', with sub-sections for 'Pay VAT in the country where you shop', 'Exception for cars', and 'Still need help?'. Three orange circles highlight specific user-centric features: 1) A circle around the 'Pay VAT in the country where you shop' section, which includes a warning icon and text explaining VAT rules for EU countries. 2) A circle around the 'Exception for cars' section, which includes a warning icon and text explaining VAT rules for used cars. 3) A circle around the 'Still need help?' section, which includes a red lifebuoy icon and text asking if the user has a problem, with links for 'Get fast, free legal advice', 'Solve problems with a public authority', and 'Get help or advice from your country's European consumer centre'. On the right side, there is a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section with a question 'Do I need to pay VAT on products I buy in another EU country?' and a 'More FAQs' link. Below that is a 'This could be you' section featuring a photo of a woman and a 'Problem' section with a 'Solution' button. At the bottom right, there is a 'Submit' button.

Buy & Sell

Shopping abroad

VAT

Pay VAT in the country where you shop

As a private individual shopping in the EU, you should only pay VAT once, in the country where you make your purchase.

You can bring goods from another EU country, without stopping at the border, making a customs declaration. The only condition is that your purchases must be for your own or your family's personal use, and not intended for resale.

Exception for cars

For new cars bought in another EU country, VAT is paid in the country where you register your car, that is, in your country of residence.

A 'new car' means one which has travelled less than 6 000 km, or is less than six months old. This VAT scheme also applies to other new means of transport such as boats and aircraft.

For used cars and other second-hand vehicles bought from a private person, the VAT will already have been paid by the original buyer in the country of purchase.

You should therefore not pay VAT for a used car bought from a private person, either in the country where you buy it, or the country where you register it.

A 'used car' means one which is more than six months old and has travelled more than 6 000 km.

For new and used cars, you will still need to pay the local fee for registering your car in your country of residence.

Still need help?

Haven't found the information you're looking for? Do you have a problem to solve?

Get fast, free legal advice

Solve problems with a public authority

Get help or advice from your country's European consumer centre

Still need help?

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to pay VAT on products I buy in another EU country?

More FAQs

This could be you

During a trip to Poland, Agneta found the model of washing machine she wanted at a price far lower than what she would have to pay for it at home in the United Kingdom. However, she was worried that she would have to declare it at customs and end up paying VAT again.

Problem Solution

...being asked to pay VAT for a new car in the EU, which you intended to take home to another EU country?

Yes

No

Submit

# Innovation 2: Single access point to assistance services

The screenshot displays a website interface with a navigation bar at the top containing tabs for Travel, Work, Vehicles, Residence, Education, Health, Family, and Buy & Sell. The 'Education' tab is selected. On the left, a sidebar lists categories: Education (with sub-items School, University, and Traineeships), Researchers (with sub-items Grants and research positions, Residence rights, Taxation, and Health care), National contacts, and FAQs. The main content area is titled 'Researchers' and includes sections for 'Taxation' and 'Tax exemption'. A warning box states: 'But researchers in the EU can sometimes simply continue paying tax in their home country.' Below this, text explains that PhD students or those with income from public bodies may be covered by bilateral tax agreements to avoid double taxation. A section titled 'Paying tax as a post-doc' notes that post-doctoral researchers usually pay tax in their country of residence. A 'Tax situation by country' section includes a dropdown menu with 'Austria' selected. On the right, there are utility icons, a 'Still need help?' button, a 'Frequently Asked' section with a link to 'Will I lose my maintenance grant from my government if I go abroad to study?' and a 'More FAQs' link, a 'This could be you' section featuring a photo of a woman and a story about a Portuguese researcher in Greece, and a 'Problem/Solution' toggle. At the bottom, another 'Still need help?' section offers links for 'Find a research job', 'Get fast, free legal advice', and 'Solve problems with a public body'.

# Innovation 3: National content (potential obstacles)

European Commission  
Your Europe

Sitemap | About this site | Contact | Legal notice | English (en)

European Commission > Your Europe > Citizens > ... > Unforeseen treatment > Expenses and reimbursement

Travel Work Vehicles Residence Education Health Family Buy & Sell

## Health

### Unforeseen treatment

[Health cover for short visits](#)  
[Going to a doctor abroad](#)  
[Emergency hospital treatment](#)  
**Expenses and reimbursement**

Planned treatment +  
Help from the chemist +  
Settling abroad  
National contacts  
FAQ

### Unforeseen treatment

#### Expenses and reimbursement

If you need unexpected medical treatment in another EU country, presenting your [European Health Insurance Card](#) will simplify access to medical treatment in that country's **statutory health care system** which **cannot wait until you return home** - such as setting and plastering a broken leg.

If that medical treatment is **free for local residents**, you will not have to pay. If the country requires payment, you can either ask for reimbursement there, or put in a claim with your health insurer back home. **Your expenses are reimbursed according to the rules of the country where the treatment was received.**

If your hospital bill is an additional cost which is not normally reimbursable in the country of treatment, but would have been reimbursed by your health insurer back home, you can ask your health insurer for the additional reimbursement.

**!** The European Health Insurance Card does **not cover repatriation, mountain rescue or stolen property** - so take travel insurance to cover those risks.

#### Sample story

##### Take out additional insurance for travel risks

Sven, a Swedish national, went to France to go spelunking. During one of his trips, he was trapped in a cave and had to be freed by the french rescue services. Back home, he received a huge bill, which he had to pay in full, as rescues are not covered by the European Health Insurance Card.

Useful national addresses and websites:

<a href="#">Austria (DE) (EN) (FR)</a>	<a href="#">Latvia (LV) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Belgium (NL) (FR) (DE) (EN)</a>	<a href="#">Liechtenstein (DE) (EN) (FR)</a>
<a href="#">Cyprus (EL) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Lithuania (LT) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Czech Republic (CS) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Luxembourg (FR) (DE) (EN)</a>
<a href="#">Denmark (DA) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Malta (MT) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Estonia (ET) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Netherlands (NL) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Finland (FI) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Norway (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">France (FR) (EN) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Poland (PL) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Germany (DE) (EN) (FR)</a>	<a href="#">Portugal (PT) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Greece (EL) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Slovakia (SK) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Hungary (HU) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Slovenia (SL) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Iceland (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Spain (ES) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Ireland (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">Sweden (SV) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>
<a href="#">Italy (IT) (EN) (FR) (DE)</a>	<a href="#">United Kingdom (UK) (FR) (DE)</a>

Still need help?  
Frequently Asked Questions  
[How do I claim reimbursement for unforeseen medical treatment abroad?](#)  
[More FAQs](#)

This could be you  
Jade, a British national working in France, had an accident in Spain during a business trip. She is in hospital. Jade has no European Health Insurance Card. She wonders if the costs are covered by a health insurance body in Spain, France or the United Kingdom, and how she should proceed.

Problem Solution

Are you having problems...  
...getting reimbursed for unforeseen medical treatment abroad?  
 Yes  
 No  
[Submit](#)



# Innovation 4: Listening to users' feedback

The screenshot shows a website interface for vehicle registration. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for Travel, Work, Vehicles, Residence, Education, Health, Family, and Buy & Sell. The 'Vehicles' tab is selected. Below the navigation bar, the page is divided into sections. On the left, there is a sidebar with a 'Vehicles' icon and links for 'Driving licence', 'Insurance', 'Registration', 'National contacts', and 'FAQs'. The main content area is titled 'Registration' and 'Formalities and documents'. It contains a warning message: 'You can only register a car in the country where you normally live or have permanent residence. You cannot register your car in a country where you have a secondary residence or holiday house.' Below this, it states 'To register your car, you will have to submit the following documents:'. A modal window is open over the main content, displaying the text: 'At the moment there are no EU rights for this situation. Help Europe make better laws by telling us what happened to you.' with a 'Submit' button. On the right side, there are several utility boxes: 'Still need help?', 'Frequently Asked Questions', and 'This could be you'. At the bottom, there are two orange circles highlighting feedback elements: one around a 'Give us your feedback' button with a pencil icon, and another around a 'Problem' section with a 'Solution' button and a 'Are you having problems...' form with a 'Submit' button.

Travel Work **Vehicles** Residence Education Health Family Buy & Sell

**Vehicles**

Driving licence +

Insurance +

**Registration**

▶ [When and for whom ?](#)

▶ **Formalities and documents**

National contacts

FAQs

**Registration**

**Formalities and documents**

⚠ You can only register a car in the **country where you normally live** or have permanent residence.

You **cannot** register your car in a country where you have a secondary residence or holiday house.

To **register** your car, you will have to submit the following **documents**:

to study in: + Display all

At the moment there are no EU rights for this situation. Help Europe make better laws by telling us what happened to you.

Submit

Haven't found the information you're looking for? Do you have a problem to solve?

**Give us your feedback**

**Still need help?**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

I want to buy a car in Germany but take it back home to Holland to register it. Do I have to pay the VAT twice and then claim it back?

[More FAQs](#)

**This could be you**

Problem **Solution**

**Are you having problems...**

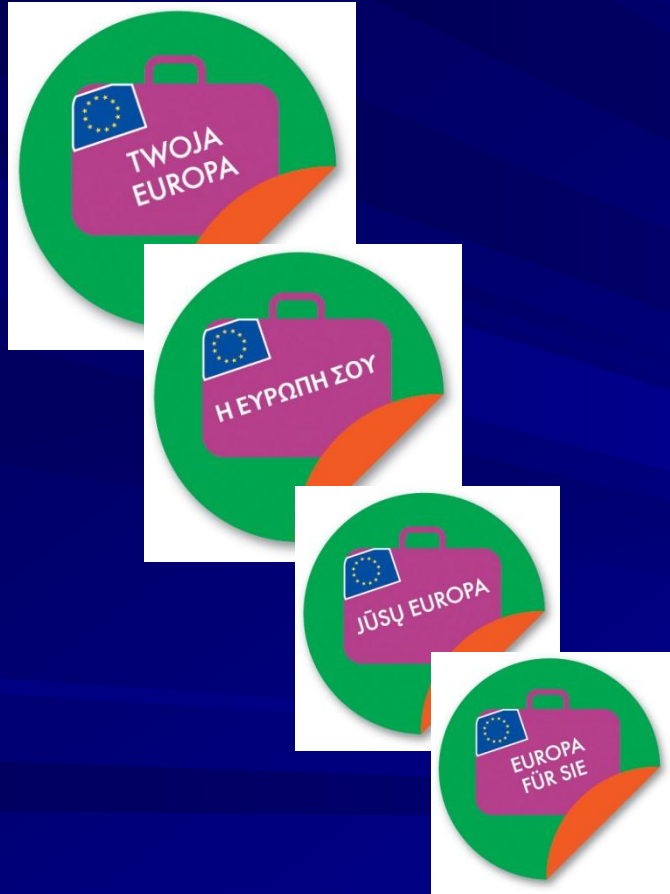
... registering your car in another EU country?

Yes [Tell us more](#)

No

Submit

# Innovation 5: Promotion



- ❑ Will users **find us**?
  - Search Engine Optimization
  - Promotion campaign
- ❑ Promoted as 'European' rather than Commission
- ❑ Promotion of service rather than brand

## II. Fast assistance and real solutions

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- ❑ Your Europe is front office
- ❑ Relies on back office of many specialised services
  - Your Europe Advice
  - SOLVIT
  - European Consumer Centres
  - Enterprise Europe Network
  - etc....

## II. Your Europe Advice

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- ❑ Formerly Citizens Signpost Service recently renamed 'Your Europe Advice'
- ❑ Your Europe Advice provides...
  - free legal advice on EU single market rights
  - a fast reply in any EU language
- ❑ Deals with 10 000 cases per year

- ❑ SOLVIT criteria:
  - concrete cross-border problem
  - due to bad application of EU law
  - by public authorities
- ❑ SOLVIT centres in each country work together to find a solution in 10 weeks
- ❑ Commission assists the network and provides informal legal advice
- ❑ Deals with 1500 cases per year



## II. European Consumer Centres

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- European Consumer Centres...
  - give information and help find solutions to cross-border shopping problems
  - offer legal and practical advice
  - contact a company in another country
  - direct to dispute resolution schemes
  
- Deal with over 60 000 cases every year

## II. Enterprise Europe Network

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- ❑ Enterprise Europe Network...
  - helps small businesses make the most of the European market place
  - answers general business questions
  - gives information and advice on funding
  - keeps a record of problems faced by business
  
- ❑ Records around 1000 cases per year

# III. Listen, learn and help Single Market progress

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- ❑ Data is collected through assistance services
- ❑ This evidence should be analysed and used to inform future policy-making
- ❑ Traditionally, each service reports individually:
  - Report on professional qualifications
  - SOLVIT cases used by Commission services when preparing legislation

# III. Listen, learn and help Single Market progress

- ❑ Aim is to coordinate feedback reporting and make it integrate it better into policy-making
  
- ❑ Ongoing 'feedback report' by external contractor on functioning of the single market:
  - evidence-based, with information from 5 services
  - broad remit: whole internal market
  - will make recommendations for future studies

# III. Listen, learn and help Single Market progress

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## □ Next steps:

- Defining common actions in response to obstacles
- Generating a common discipline to secure delivery under the actions
- Presenting actions clearly: The 'Top 20' obstacles
- Further follow up over time



# IV. Conclusions

- ❑ Feedback from assistance services has been and under-utilised source of **evidence for policy work**
- ❑ It is one source of evidence, but not **the only one**
- ❑ It should be **complemented** by other formal measures and informal tools (e.g. surveys) to determine the real obstacles
- ❑ How can feedback and other tools be applied to identify obstacles in the **Baltic Sea Region?**