Your Europe Advice – Annual trends

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The European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) is an international, Brussels-based non-profit organisation with a pan-European membership and 30 years of experience in empowering citizens in order to create a more inclusive and stronger European Union by:

• Promoting and defending citizens’ rights, and
• Developing and supporting mechanisms to increase citizens and citizen organisations’ democratic participation in, and engagement with, the EU.

ECAS believes in an inclusive, transparent, citizen-centric and democratic European Union in which citizens’ rights are at the heart of decision-making at all levels and in which citizens are informed, consulted and active participants.
Your Europe Advice is an EU advice service on the personal EU rights of citizens and businesses that ECAS manages under contract with, and on behalf of, the European Commission.
Nature of the Enquiries

★ YEA provides advice on EU rights and on the implementation of EU law in all Member States;
★ It covers a wide range of topics; enquiries can vary from simple requests to real analyses of EU law;
★ These enquiries provide an insight into the problems experienced by EU citizens when exercising their right of free movement;
★ In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis had an enormous impact on the movement of citizens and businesses within the EU.
Higher number of social security enquiries (23%) in 2020, mainly because of the COVID-19 crisis and Brexit.
YEA received enquiries from citizens from all 27 EU countries, from British, Icelandic and Norwegian citizens as well as from other third country nationals who are family members of EU citizens.

The enquiries received related to all 27 Member States, as well as Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.
The main issues in 2020

**Social security – country of insurance**
- Difficulties in keeping a social security coverage, and to know which country is competent;
- Lack of coordination/cooperation between Member States;
- Old age Benefits;
- COVID-19;
- Brexit.

**Residence: Conditions of the right to stay – family rights**
- Restrictive practices by national authorities;
- Bureaucratic barriers: having to prove a durable relationship and proving sufficient resources.
- COVID-19
- Brexit

**Entry: travel documents for EU citizen and Long-term/short-term visas – Visa Exemptions for non-EU family members**
- Non-EU family members of EU citizens experience difficulties in obtaining visas;
- Lack of awareness of the visa exemptions under the EC Citizenship Directive (2004/38/EC);
- COVID-19
- Brexit.

**Common Points**
- Lack of information and training of the national authorities.
- Grey area in the EU Law.
Mobile Europeans were disproportionately affected by the pandemic

**Social security:** A Finnish citizen with an employer based in Sweden teleworked from Finland because of COVID-19. He asked the Swedish National Agency for Social Insurance and the Finnish institution to advise him on which national social security system was competent for him. Neither agency responded. As a consequence, the citizen has been unable to claim social benefits in either country.

**Entry:** A German citizen living in Hungary, but not officially registered there, was refused entry. A Slovak pensioner living in the Netherlands wished to return to Slovakia to be close to her family during the COVID-19 crisis but, without proof of permanent residence there, was not allowed to enter the country.

**Residence rights:** Administrations were closed during the first lockdown, therefore in the Summer, when lockdowns ended across Europe, administrations were overwhelmed, the result was that it was difficult for some EU citizens to comply with their residency registration obligations.
Cooperation with other services

• Europe Direct
• SOLVIT
• EU rights clinic…

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