



Building bridges: providing citizens with the information they request

This quarterly review is a compilation, by the [Citizens' Enquiries Unit](#), of information garnered directly from citizens through the correspondence sent to the European Parliament. The Unit aims to give citizens, when asked, information about the EP, how it works and how legislation is formulated.

We provide one of the bridges between citizens and their representatives across which they can express themselves in writing and receive replies. The purpose of the review is to give an insight into the issues that were preoccupying citizens who wrote to our Unit.



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Repercussions of Lampedusa

The migrants' boat tragedy off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa, and the ensuing broad debate about European policy on immigration and asylum, sparked a significant amount of correspondence from citizens. They expressed a wide variety of viewpoints and addressed different aspects of the issue of irregular migration.

Citizens often expressed grief about the fate of the migrants and voiced their support for demands made by President Schulz and many MEPs that the European Union and the Member States take action to prevent the loss of more lives and improve conditions for asylum-seekers and irregular migrants arriving in Europe.

Others, however, showed their disagreement with the calls to improve support for refugees and migrants. Often referring to the difficulties in which many Europeans currently find themselves or expressing concerns about their integration, they questioned the EU's capacity to cope with increasing migration. Some citizens specifically criticised the EP's demands for stronger solidarity and responsibility-sharing between Member States in accommodating those seeking refuge or opportunities within the EU, while others acclaimed this initiative.

Some of the citizens' correspondence also contained proposals for measures the European Union could take to improve the situation in the migrants' countries of origin so they wouldn't need to leave their home countries anymore.

These suggestions were often coupled with scepticism about the effectiveness of EU development aid and criticism of Europe's economic policy towards developing countries. Some citizens demanded fairer trading conditions between the European Union and Africa or made concrete suggestions on how the development aid system could be improved in their opinion.

More information

[EP resolution of 23 October 2013 on migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events off Lampedusa](#)

[Migration: EU must act to prevent further tragedies, says Parliament](#)

[President Martin Schulz on migration at the European Council \(24/10/2013\)](#)

[Irregular migration: a European Issue \(Infographics\)](#)

Situation in Ukraine

In the wake of President Yanukovich's decision not to sign the association agreement with the EU, citizens expressed their concern about this postponement of closer links with the EU and Ukraine, as well as the current situation in the country.

Most messages were an appeal for help from the EU, as citizens felt their democratic rights were being suppressed by the Ukrainian government. Above all, citizens affirmed that they have the right to be heard, and expressed their belief in European values as well as their desire to be part of the EU.

More information

[MEPs debate in plenary the future of Ukraine](#)

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

In light of debates on the own-initiative report on sexual and reproductive health and rights, citizens turned to the Parliament and expressed their deep concerns about some aspects of the report, calling for the EP to reject the proposal. Some citizens felt particularly strongly about the abortion aspects of the FEMM Committee's report. The [report](#) tabled for the plenary in December fell and an [alternative resolution](#) was adopted.

More information

[MEPs say sexual and reproductive health and rights are matter for Member States](#)

Sakharov Prize 2013

The award of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, presented in November of this year to Pakistani teenager Malala Yousafzai for her fight to promote education for girls, triggered an influx of messages from citizens on this matter. Some enquired about the nomination process and how Members of the European Parliament voted; others made suggestions of their ideal candidate for the prize.

More information

[Sakharov Prize – 25 years of promoting human rights](#)

European elections 2014



In the past months, citizens have continued to enquire about the European elections coming up in 2014.

The most frequently asked questions were how citizens themselves could become a Member of the European Parliament and the conditions under which political parties could run for election.

Citizens also enquired about the incompatibility of the mandate of an MEP and that of a member of a national

parliament and how an MEP's credentials are verified by the Parliament.

The 'Act. React. Impact.' campaign, which was launched in September, also evoked reactions from citizens, thus confirming the importance of such an initiative.

More information

[European Parliament elections webpage](#)

[EP launches information campaign](#)

European Youth Event

The launch of the upcoming European Youth Event (EYE) 2014, which will take place in May, has already triggered a flurry of enquiries concerning the rules of participation.

In particular, citizens regularly brought up the obligation to participate as a group of minimum 10 people due to the fact that many seem unable to muster up sufficient enthusiasm amongst fellow peers to meet this entry requirement.

Several citizens have thus requested that participants be accepted on an individual basis and then pooled together at a later stage with other individual entries.

More practical questions, such as entry requirements and deadlines for submitting applications, have also been received.

More information

[European Youth Event webpage](#)

Themes throughout 2013

In the course of 2013 there have been certain topics which have systematically cropped up. Some of these recurrent themes are listed below in alphabetical order:

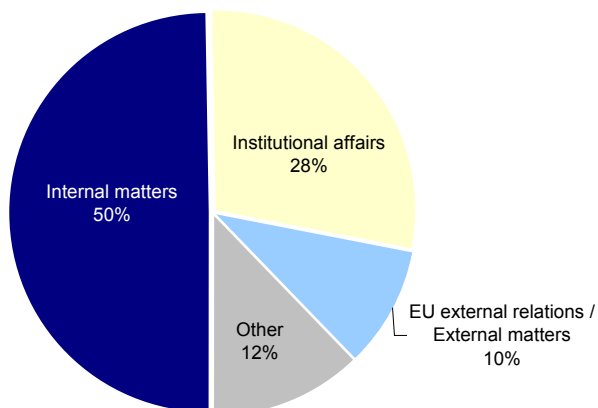
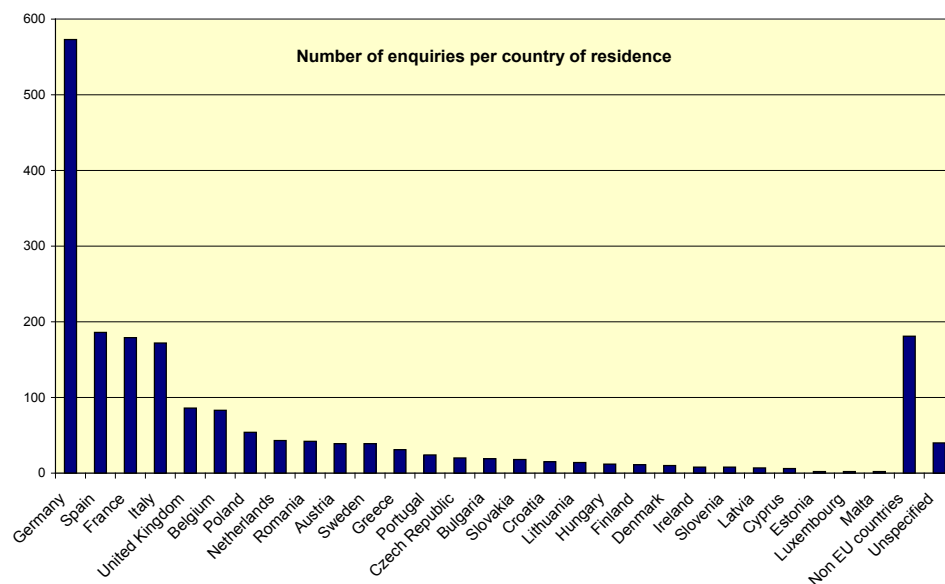
- Animal welfare
- Civil liberties and human rights issues
- EP elections
- Questions of independence in Catalonia and Scotland
- Socioeconomic crisis
- Surveillance programmes
- Trade agreements

Statistics for the fourth quarter of 2013

In the fourth quarter of 2013, the Unit treated a total of 1926 enquiries coming from every Member State, as well as non-EU countries.

As in the past, the largest percentage of queries concentrated on internal matters. Civil liberties, justice and home affairs topped this category, reflecting the number of correspondence received on immigration and asylum policy, as well as citizens' rights.

The number of enquiries regarding EU external relations and external matters represented 10% of the total received this quarter. More than half of these dealt with foreign affairs issues. Those relating to institutional affairs increased slightly this quarter, indicating the high public interest in the upcoming EP elections.



Internal matters	
Civil liberties, justice and home affairs	39%
Agriculture and animal welfare	23%
Economy and finances	11%
Employment and social affairs	7%
Education	3%
Consumer protection	3%
Environment	3%
Public health	2%
Energy	2%
Transport	2%
Women's rights and gender equality	2%
Culture	2%
Miscellaneous	2%

Institutional affairs	
European Parliament	88%
EU institutions and constitutional affairs	9%
Budget	2%
Enlargement	1%

EU external relations/external matters	
Foreign affairs	52%
International trade	15%
Human rights	14%
Humanitarian aid and development	3%
Employment and social affairs	3%
Fisheries	3%
Miscellaneous	10%