

20 main concerns of European citizens and business with the functioning of the single market

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The European Commission has also compiled the **20 most frequently encountered problems faced by EU citizens and businesses when travelling, moving or working abroad**. The report, which was requested in the [Single Market Act](#), deals with issues such as professional qualifications, social security, tax barriers, access to finance and on-line shopping.

The key results in the latest Eurobarometer survey on the Single Market show that **many Europeans are not aware of the Single Market and its benefits (35%)**. European citizens are, in general, satisfied with the possibilities that the Single Market offers in terms of a bigger choice of products (74%), more jobs (52%) and fair competition (47%).

On the other hand, the Single Market is perceived as only benefiting big companies (62%), worsening working conditions (51%) and not benefiting poor and disadvantaged people (53%). 28% of those interviewed are considering working abroad in the future.

Removing these obstacles and making the Single Market work better can help boost growth and increase trust in it. That is why the Commission is focussed on eliminating these problems. In many of the problem areas identified, work is already under way. For example, before the end of 2011, the Commission will set out proposals to **modernise the system for recognising professional qualifications** and to **improve access to public procurement opportunities**. Following proposals from the European Commission in April 2011, the costs for patents in Europe should be reduced by 80% in coming years.

The report offers a snapshot of real-life obstacles encountered in the single market. It is based on an analysis of complaints handled by the Commission and its assistance services (SOLVIT, Your Europe Advice, Enterprise Europe Network, European Consumer Centres, Europe Direct Contact Centre, EURES-European Employment Service), combined with the results of the recent Eurobarometer and focus group surveys.

The 20 main areas of concern have been identified without establishing any order of importance. For each concern, the Commission services have identified one or more possible root causes (whether the problem is one of information, implementation or legislation gaps) based on the practical experiences examined.

As a general matter, the 20 main concerns report confirms that there is still a divide between expectations and reality in the single market and that this divide stems from those inter-related gaps:

- **an information gap:** people often do not sufficiently know or understand their rights and do not know where to look for information or help;
- **implementation gap:** in many areas, a gap can be noted between the EU legal framework and the way it is implemented and applied in practice;
- **legislative gap:** in some areas, the EU legal framework itself does not match citizens' and businesses' expectations.

The 20 main concerns report will form the basis for discussion at the **Single Market Forum on 2-4 October**. This Forum is co-organised together with the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Parliament and will bring citizens, stakeholders and policy-makers at all levels of government together to discuss the state of the single market. This will be done in the framework of eight

workshops and that will debate some of the concerns identified such as: recognition of professional qualifications, posting of workers and fundamental social rights, and improving the functioning of the EU public procurement legislation.