

# Briefing: Travelling to the EU: Your Rights and Important Information



**Summary:** This briefing relates to travelling within the EU

## Travelling to the EU: Your rights and Important Information

Being an EU citizen means being able to travel freely in Europe. This briefing will provide you information on travel as well as useful links to help you make the most of your rights

### 1. Getting there

#### *By Air*

Air passengers enjoy numerous rights provided by the EU to ensure that air travel is as safe, cheap and hassle-free as possible. When things do go wrong, the EU has ensured that passengers' rights are protected and that adequate help and compensation is provided.

Disabled and elderly passengers are entitled to free help both in the cabin and airports, so that their ability to travel like any other EU citizen is not restricted.

Information for disabled and elderly passengers is available [here](#).

For information on what you are entitled to if your flight is delayed or cancelled, or if you are declined boarding, click below and go to your rights under '[Your Rights when Travelling by Air](#)':

### Security

Please be aware that for security reasons there are EU-wide restrictions on certain items that are not allowed in the cabin on flights. The list is available [here](#).

There are also restrictions on the liquids that passengers may take through airport screening points in hand luggage. Liquids must be in individual containers with a maximum capacity of 100ml and must be shown to airport security in a transparent, re-sealable plastic bag of no more than one litre capacity. Medicines and baby food needed during a trip are exempted from these restrictions.

Cabin baggage size restrictions apply; please check these with your carrier before you go.

### By Road

Your driving license is valid in all EU countries. If you are planning to travel by road to the EU, you should acquaint yourself with the various laws and regulations of the countries you plan to visit, which may differ to those in the UK.

This [link](#) provides comprehensive information on speed limits, maximum blood alcohol content, and potentially mandatory equipment such as winter tyres in all EU countries.

### By Rail

To ensure the safety and protection of EU citizens when using the 210,000 km of railways in the EU you are entitled to numerous [rights](#).

The EU is investing into high-speed rail lines to expand the 5,000 km already in use in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom so that EU citizens can enjoy the benefits of higher rail efficiency.

## **2. When to Travel**

To help you choose an appropriate time to travel, please find information on average temperatures in EU capitals, time zones and public holidays in EU countries by following the links below:

- [Average temperatures in EU capitals and time zones](#)
- [Public holidays in EU countries](#)

### **3. Necessary documents**

The Schengen rules mean that there are no longer any border controls between 22 EU countries as well as three additional countries (Switzerland, Norway and Iceland). The EU Member States which are not full Schengen members are Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom. This means that you will have to present a valid passport or ID card to travel to/from these five countries. This is also necessary when entering or leaving the EU at any external border.

### **4. Money**

Sixteen EU countries share the euro as legal tender, allowing you to avoid excess worry about exchange rates when visiting these countries. The following is a list for your convenience of those countries using the euro and those not:

*EU countries using the euro:*

Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain (in addition, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican city have adopted the euro as their national currency and countries using it as their *de facto* currency include Andorra, Kosovo and Montenegro).

*EU countries not using the euro:*

Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom

### **5. Shopping**

As an EU citizen you may purchase any amount of goods and take them to other EU countries without excise duty as long as they are for personal rather than commercial use.

In order to determine this, there exist certain guide levels on the amount of tobacco and alcohol you may take with you when you travel between EU countries.

If you are returning to the UK, you may take an unlimited amount of goods with you. However, if there are doubts as to whether certain goods such as alcohol and tobacco may be for a commercial purpose rather than for personal consumption, an officer may ask you questions and make checks. The following list is a guide issued by the Home Office indicating at what levels the amount of goods you have might result in questioning:

- 3,200 cigarettes
- 200 cigars
- 400 cigarillos
- 3kg tobacco
- 110 litres of beer
- 90 litres of wine
- 10 litres of spirits
- 20 litres of fortified wine (sherry, port, etc.)

## **6. VAT**

Rates of VAT vary between EU countries and are included in the goods you purchase. For a detailed table of the varying rates of VAT in EU Member States follow this [link](#).

“Duty-Free” shopping does not exist as such when travelling between EU countries because citizens profit from the diversity of choice, taste, taxes and prices offered by the EU as a single market.

## **7. Staying healthy**

As a UK resident you are entitled to health care in all EU countries (and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland for most UK residents, for details visit this [link](#)). This is at a reduced cost and is occasionally free. To obtain this treatment, you must take a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) with you.

To receive your EHIC, apply for one via this [link](#) or call 0845 606 2030. Please prepare to provide the following information: your NHS or National Insurance Number, Surname, Forenames and Date of Birth for each applicant.

Your EHIC is not a replacement for normal travel insurance, so ensure that you have adequate cover. In the case of a medical emergency, travel insurers might waive the excess on a claim if you possess a card and sometimes travel insurers require you to have a card.

## 8. Using your mobile phone in the EU

Labour MEPs have contributed significantly to reducing the cost of using your mobile phone in the EU. They have pushed through EU laws limiting roaming charges and forcing mobile operators to present customers with the best and cheapest policies. The **Euro Tariff** sets maximum costs operators can charge, which increases competition and thus decreases your costs:

- Maximum cost of receiving a call per minute from another EU country: around 20 pence
- Maximum cost of making a call per minute from another EU country around 40 pence
- Maximum cost of sending an SMS from another EU country: around 11 pence
- Receiving an SMS is free

In addition, mobile phone operators are obliged to assist smart phone users in setting limits for internet use to make sure you do not exceed how much you want to spend.

Further information on using your mobile phone when travelling in EU countries is available [here](#).

## 9. Pets

Are you planning on travelling with a cat or dog? The EU has made it a lot easier for you to do so with the new EU pet passport available from any vet. The passport must contain details of a valid rabies vaccination.

For entry into the UK, Ireland, Malta and Sweden, owners must provide proof that this vaccination has been effective until the end of 2011. Additionally for these countries

(and Finland) treatment for ticks and tapeworm must be provided until the end of 2011.

By July 2011, all countries will require pets to be identified by an electronic microchip. The UK, Ireland and Malta already require this.

Further information on travelling with pets in the EU is available [here](#).

## 10. Timeshares

Some disreputable companies and individuals may try to put you under pressure to buy into dubious timeshare schemes. If you ever feel under pressure, do not sign a contract. If you are pressured into making a commitment that you later regret, your EU rights guarantee you a minimum 10 day cooling-off period.

Find more information [here](#).

## 11. What to do in emergencies

The emergency number you can use throughout the EU is **112**.

### Loss/Theft

Report thefts to a local police station and be sure to retain the police report to claim compensation from your insurer. If lost or stolen, cancel any credit cards immediately.

In the case of a lost or stolen passport, report it to your country's consulate or embassy as well as the police. To find your embassy in any country of the world follow this [link](#).

## 12. Environment & Culture

There are various measures you can take in order to ensure your travels are environmentally-friendly. Follow this [link](#) for tips on how to respect the environment and how to calculate your carbon footprint.

### European Capitals of Culture

Each year the Council of the European Union chooses cities which will be **European Capitals of Culture**. These capitals provide living proof for the diversity and richness of European culture. The title attracts people to these cities and thus fosters regeneration

and brings a new vitality to cultural life.

The European Capitals of Culture for 2011 are: **Turku** (Finland) and **Tallinn** (Estonia)  
For further information on the European Capitals of Culture such as past, present and future capitals follow this [link](#).