



Your Rights as an EU Citizen: Everything You Need to Know

Becoming a citizen of a European Union (EU) member state opens the door to a wide range of rights, freedoms and opportunities across Europe. As an EU national, you benefit from one of the most comprehensive systems of mobility and protection in the world.

Below is an overview of your key rights as an EU citizen and how they apply in practice.

1. Freedom of Movement within the EU

One of the most valuable rights of EU citizenship is the freedom to live, work, study or retire in any EU member state without needing a visa or work permit.

- You can reside in another EU country for up to three months with only a valid passport or ID card.
- To stay longer than three months, you may need to show that you are working, studying, self-employed, or financially self-sufficient, and that you have adequate health insurance.
- After five years of continuous legal residence in another EU country, you may qualify for permanent residence.

This right is protected under EU Directive 2004/38/EC and ensures that all EU citizens can move freely within the bloc.

2. Right to Work and Equal Treatment

As an EU citizen, you have the right to work anywhere in the EU, either as an employee or as a self-employed professional.

You are entitled to:

- The same working conditions, pay and benefits as nationals of the host country.
- Recognition of professional qualifications where required for regulated professions.
- Access to job opportunities across the European Economic Area (EEA), which includes Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, under similar conditions.

This ensures equal opportunities for all EU nationals, promoting labour mobility and professional growth.

3. Right to Study in the EU

You can study at universities, colleges or training institutions anywhere in the EU under the same conditions as local students.

This includes access to student support schemes, tuition rates and scholarships, depending on national regulations. The EU encourages educational mobility through programmes such as Erasmus+, which facilitates study and training exchanges across Europe.

4. Access to Healthcare Across the EU

EU citizens are entitled to public healthcare in any EU country under the same conditions as nationals.

Healthcare access can be provided through your national health system or via the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), which covers necessary medical treatment during temporary stays in other EU countries.

In many cases, social security and healthcare coverage can be transferred when moving for work or retirement within the EU or EEA.

5. Political and Democratic Rights

EU citizenship also brings the right to participate in democratic life beyond your home country. You can:

- Vote and stand as a candidate in local elections and in elections for the European Parliament in the country where you reside.
- Petition the European Parliament or contact the European Ombudsman if you believe your EU rights have been infringed.

These rights strengthen representation and civic participation across the Union.

6. Consular Protection Outside the EU

If you are travelling or living outside the EU and your home country does not have an embassy or consulate in that location, you can seek assistance from the embassy of any other EU member state.

This ensures that all EU citizens are protected abroad, regardless of their country's diplomatic presence.

7. Protection from Discrimination and Access to Justice

EU law guarantees that citizens are protected from discrimination based on nationality in all member states. This applies to employment, education, housing and access to public services.

If your rights are breached, you have access to justice through national courts and, ultimately, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

Living as an EU Citizen

Becoming an EU citizen means gaining the freedom to shape your life across Europe, whether for career growth, education or retirement.

While EU law provides a harmonised framework, each country maintains its own administrative processes, such as residence registration, taxation and healthcare enrolment. It is advisable to check national requirements before moving.