



European
Commission

Europe Direct Contact Centre Annual activity report

Directorate-General for Communication



2019

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Video and photos about the EDCC:

<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-004627>

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**Annual
activity
report
2019**

**Europe Direct
Contact Centre**



The year in summary

In 2019, the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) continued replying to citizens' enquiries about the European Union in all 24 official languages on a variety of subjects, often about the practical and tangible benefits of EU policies and programmes.

The EDCC replied to a total of 122 896 enquiries. They were treated via email (69.6%) or phone (30.4%).

The number of questions handled by the EDCC was 12.8% higher than in the previous year (108 950 enquiries in 2018).

The largest number of enquiries concerned individual rights and opportunities offered by the EU. This includes among others consumer rights, rights of residence, the possibility for jobs and social protection, grants and passengers' rights. The EDCC also saw significant interest in the EU research programme Horizon 2020 and "WiFi4EU" which provides grants for municipalities to set up public wifi.

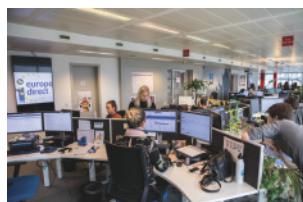
The EDCC acted and was promoted as Brexit help line in the context of the EU's overall preparedness. The contact centre remained open during several week-ends to offer Brexit advice to citizens. The EDCC replied to 4 463 Brexit-related questions.

Ahead of the European elections (23-26 May 2019) the EDCC contributed to informing citizens about the Union, the elections and voting rights.

The EDCC answers questions in cooperation with experts throughout the European Commission and other EU entities. This is among others organised via 30 formal cooperation agreements.

86% of all the questions were replied directly by the contact centre, while 14% of the questions were given by the competent experts in associated entities because of the technical or sensitive nature of the question or because the concerned entity wished to provide the answer itself.

The contact centre is operated by an external contractor on behalf of the Commission.



Isabel's direct line to Europe

The Commission marked the 100 000th question received in 2019.

The question was asked in October by Ms Isabel Zunino from Barcelona. She works for a food delivery company and was interested in knowing more about the EU rules on single-use plastic.

The Commission invited Isabel to visit Brussels, so that she could see the contact centre, meet the Director-General for Communication and learn even more about the EU's fight against single-use plastics.

Watch the [video](#) and read the [article](#).

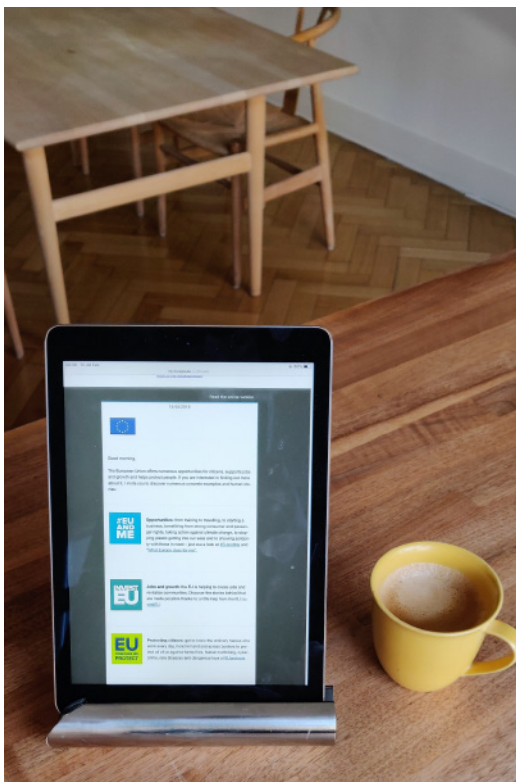


*Food delivery manager Isabel Zunino (right)
and Director-General for Communication, Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen.*

When citizens went voting

The European elections in May 2019 were the single most important democratic exercise on the continent and resulted in an important increase of voter turnout (+8%).

The Europe Direct Contact Centre contributed to the mobilisation of citizens ahead of the elections, in close cooperation with the European Parliament, for example by proactively sending out relevant information to almost 90 000 citizens who had agreed to be contacted by the EDCC. It also answered 848 questions directly related to the elections.



*EU information brought
into the homes of EDCC clients.*

Helping citizens prepare for Brexit

Brexit and the future relationship of the United Kingdom to the EU were a major cause of uncertainty for many people who turned to the EU with their questions. The EDCC acted and was promoted as help line for citizens in the context of the EU's Brexit preparedness. It remained exceptionally open and available for citizens on five week-ends during periods in March/April and October when the risk of a "no-deal Brexit" was particularly high. Altogether, the contact centre replied to 4,463 Brexit-related questions in 2019.

Examples of media coverage: [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#), [Politico](#).



EDCC staff handling questions of citizens about Brexit.



Commission chief spokesperson Mina Andreeva speaking to German ZDF TV news from the contact centre.

Free internet for you



Wifi4EU is the name of an EU scheme, which supports municipalities to set up free internet at public places like squares and parks. The EU grants support through vouchers and the EDCC answered manifold questions from interested municipalities about the scheme and the application process in cooperation with the responsible services. The EDCC replied to a total of 10,770 questions on Wifi4EU .



Towards a corporate communication service

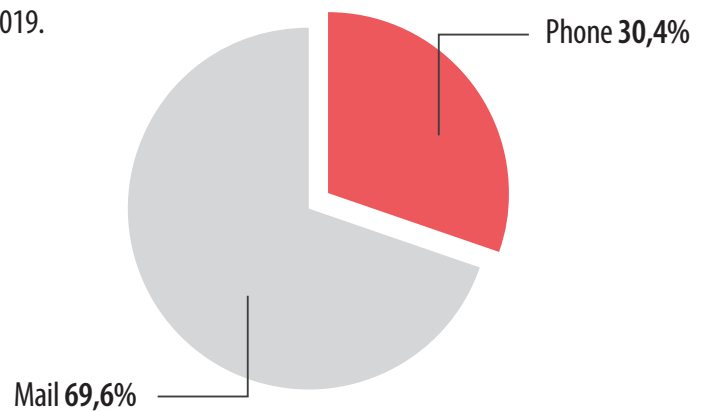
In 2019, the Commission worked on preparing the future course of the EDCC and on making it a truly corporate service of the Commission. The Directorate-General for Communication strengthened the cooperation with other Commission services in the context of its external communication governance, developed a Charter for the EDCC with clear rights and responsibilities and determined ways to ensure a high-quality, cost-efficient and modern service of the European Union to citizens.

The EDCC is financed by the budget for general communication activities as managed by DG Communication. A dedicated Research Enquiry Service continued to be operated by the EDCC on request of and financed by the Research Executive Agency (REA).



Number of questions

Europe Direct Contact Centre replied to **122 896** questions in 2019. The 30,4% of them were phone conversations.

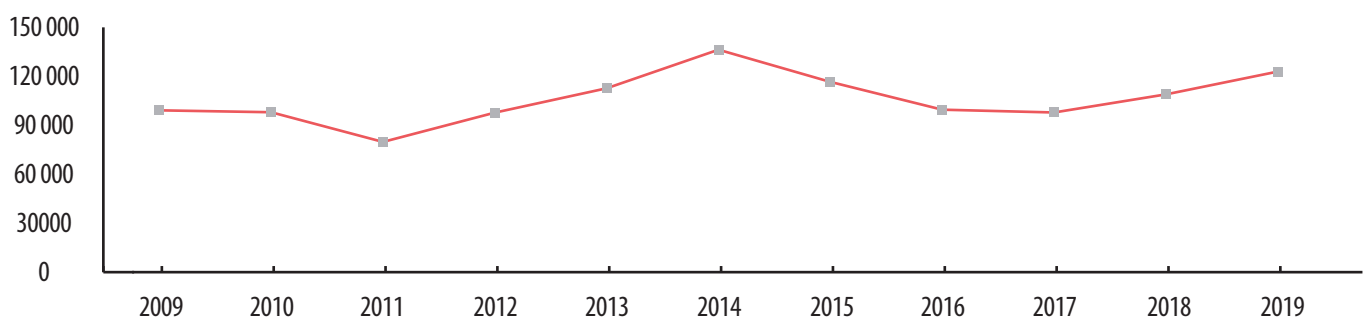


2009	99 154
2010	97 990
2011	79 797
2012	97 742
2013	112 671
2014	136 296
2015	116 571
2016	99 554
2017	97 841
2018	108 929
2019	122 896

Trend in number of questions over years

The total number of enquiries fluctuate from year to year. The reasons for this are varied and depend on many factors, for example on certain political initiatives and developments, European elections, the publication of calls for proposals under EU programmes, certain hot topics, crisis situations, the promotion of the EDCC, etc.

Total number of questions per year.



Use of channels over years

	Phone	Mail
2014	31,1 %	63,9 %
2015	29 %	66,2 %
2016	31,4 %	67,8 %
2017	30,1 %	69,8 %
2018	31,4 %	68,6 %
2019	30,4 %	69,6 %

There is no significant trend in choice of citizens to use either phone or email.

Percentage (%) of all questions per year.



Response time

If you phoned the EDCC in 2019, the EDCC picked up the phone after an average of 14 seconds.

93% of the questions by phone were solved by the first contact – meaning that the EDCC provided the right reply during the conversation or in an email right after.

If you wrote to us, the EDCC replied on the average after 1.3 days. Our promise is to reply within 3 days. This did not include 14% of the questions which were sensitive or technical that they had to be examined by the competent experts in the Commission services. These so-called escalated questions were replied to in 19.4 days in average.

14''

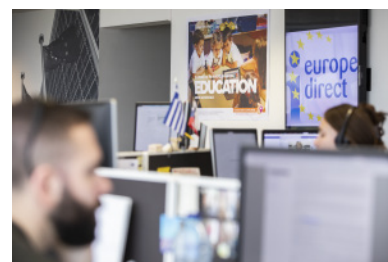
average pick-up time

93%

of questions solved by first contact

1.3 days

average time to reply to emails



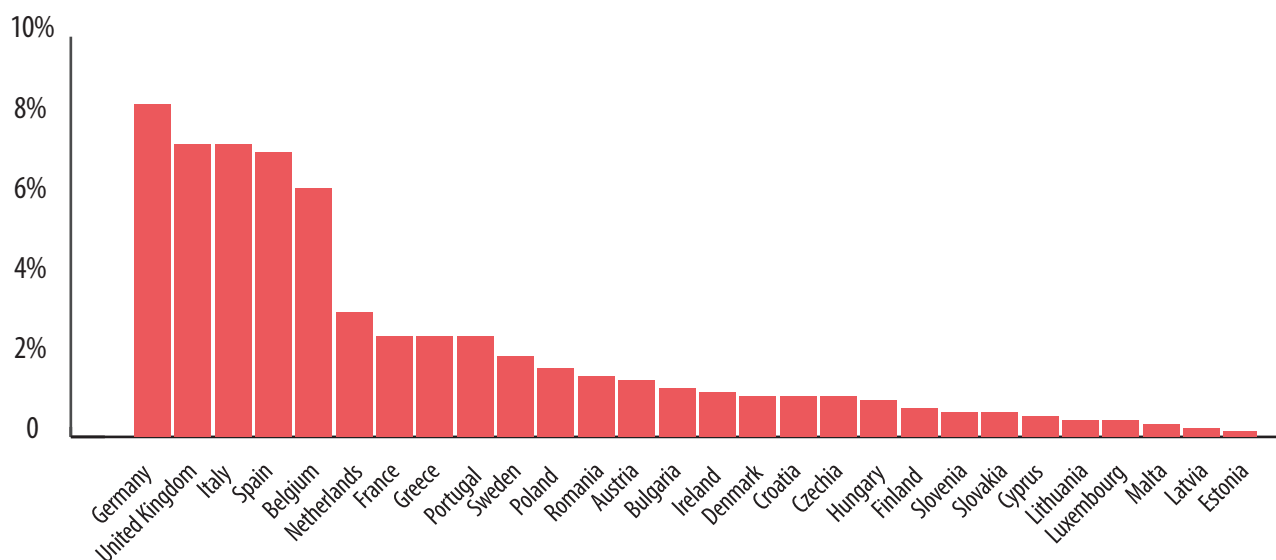
Questions per country

Country	Number of Enquiries	% of EDCC volumes	Per 100 000 inhabitants
Germany	10 171	8,3%	12,3
Italy	8 964	7,3%	14,9
United Kingdom	8 948	7,3%	13,4
Spain	8 717	7,1%	18,6
Belgium	7 606	6,2%	66,3
France	7 375	6,0%	11,0
Netherlands	3 764	3,1%	21,8
Greece	3 047	2,5%	28,4
Portugal	3 026	2,5%	29,4
Sweden	3 011	2,5%	29,4
Poland	2 505	2,0%	6,6
Romania	2 123	1,7%	10,9
Austria	1 874	1,5%	21,2
Bulgaria	1 739	1,4%	24,8
Ireland	1 512	1,2%	30,9
Denmark	1 339	1,1%	23,1
Croatia	1 230	1,0%	30,1
Czechia	1 229	1,0%	11,5
Hungary	1 187	1,0%	12,1
Finland	1 098	0,9%	19,9
Slovenia	806	0,7%	38,8
Slovakia	786	0,6%	14,4
Cyprus	752	0,6%	85,5
Lithuania	653	0,5%	23,4
Luxembourg	517	0,4%	84,8
Malta	441	0,4%	90,0
Latvia	370	0,3%	19,3
Estonia	306	0,2%	23,2
Total EU	85 096	69,2%	29,1

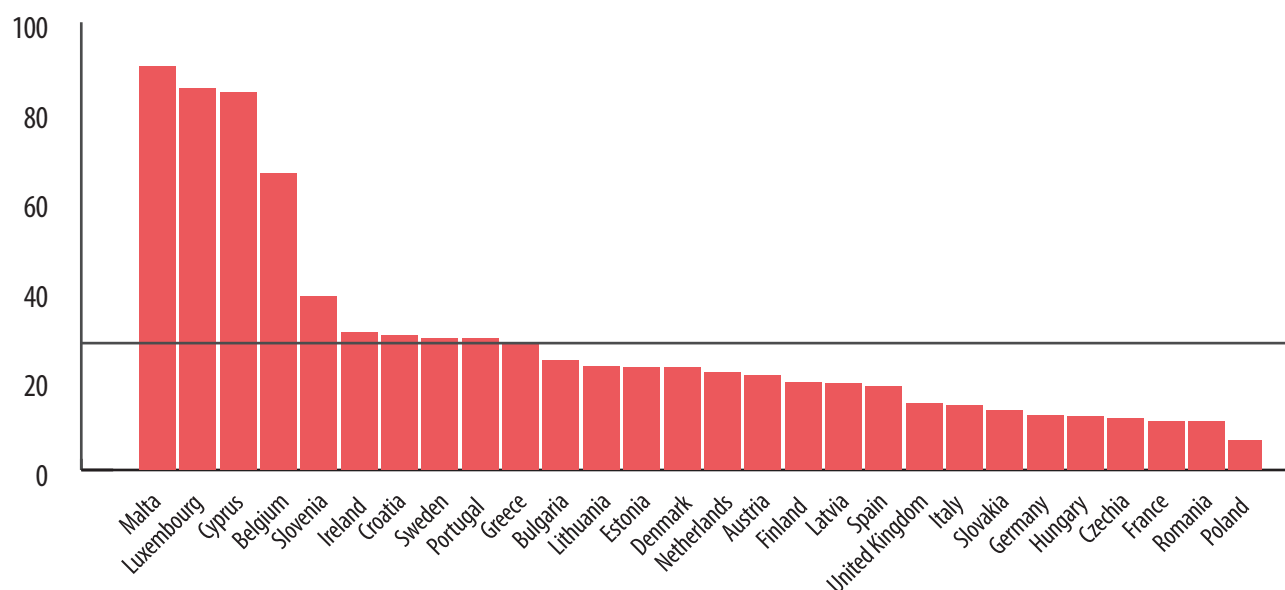
Country	Number of Enquiries	% of EDCC volumes
Australasia	441	13,7%
Other	875	
Africa	2 380	
Latin America	2 528	
North America	2 843	
Other European	3 795	
Asia	3 951	
Unspecified	20 987	17,1%
Grand Total	122 896	

Enquiries came from all EU countries. When comparing with the size of the population, Belgium, Slovenia and some of the smallest Member States are over-represented. Poland is the country with fewest enquiries compared to the population. 14% comes from outside the EU.





Questions by country as a percentage (%) of EDCC total volumes (excluding 'unspecified' enquiries).

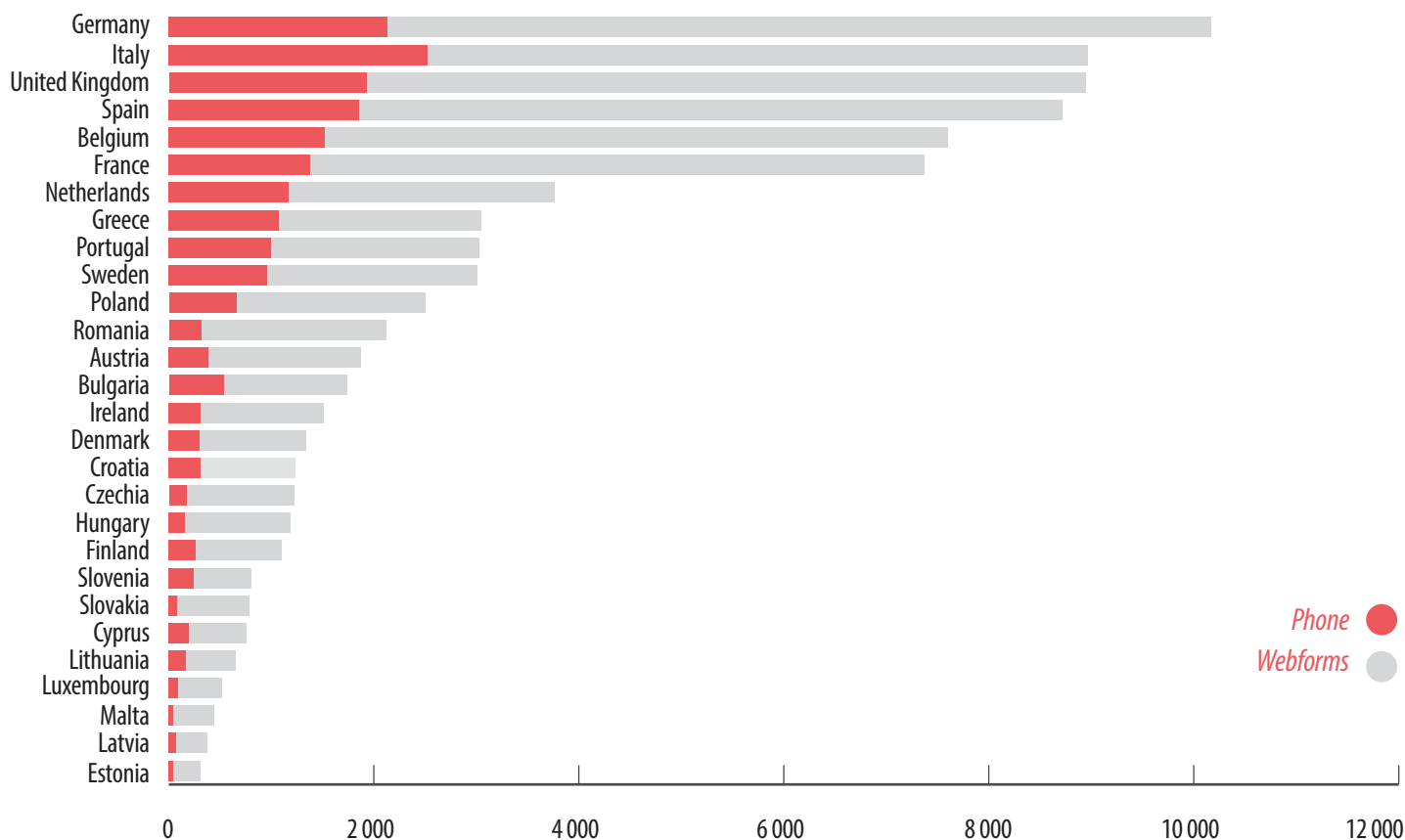


Questions by country per 100 000 inhabitants of the country's population (excluding 'non-EU' and 'unspecified' enquiries).

The horizontal line represents the EU average (29.1 enquiries) per 100 000 inhabitants.



Questions by country and channel



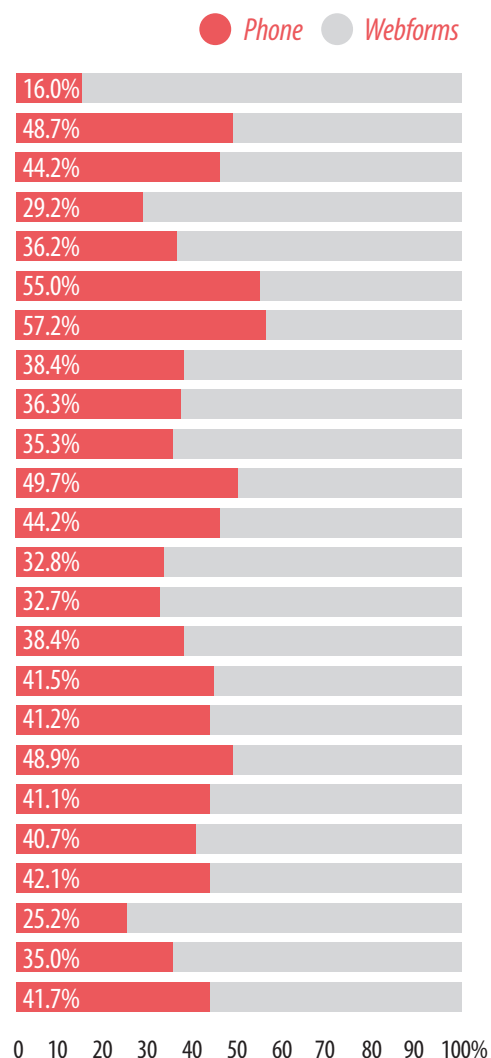
About 30,4 % of the enquiries were phone conversations. The highest shares of phone compared to mail are found in enquiries coming from Greece (35%) and Sweden (32%). Malta has the lowest share (10%).

Number of enquiries per country, sorted by total enquiries.



Questions per language

Language	Phone	Webforms	Total	%
English	8 874	46 399	55 273	45.0%
German	6 351	6 672	13 023	10.6%
French	5 688	7 187	12 875	10.5%
Spanish	2 758	6 678	9 436	7.7%
Italian	2 677	4 702	7 379	6.0%
Dutch	2 386	1 948	4 334	3.5%
Greek	1 674	1 251	2 925	2.4%
Portuguese	998	1 601	2 599	2.1%
Polish	872	1 532	2 404	2.0%
Romanian	834	1 529	2 363	1.9%
Swedish	951	963	1 914	1.6%
Bulgarian	700	882	1 582	1.3%
Hungarian	402	824	1 226	1.0%
Croatian	376	776	1 152	0.9%
Czech	330	529	859	0.7%
Slovak	352	497	849	0.7%
Danish	304	420	724	0.6%
Finnish	324	339	663	0.5%
Slovenian	216	310	526	0.4%
Lithuanian	175	255	430	0.3%
Latvian	88	121	209	0.2%
Estonian	30	89	119	0.1%
Maltese	7	13	20	0.02%
Irish	5	7	12	0.01%
Grand total	37 372	85 524	122 896	100%
<i>Share by channel</i>	30.4%	69.6%		

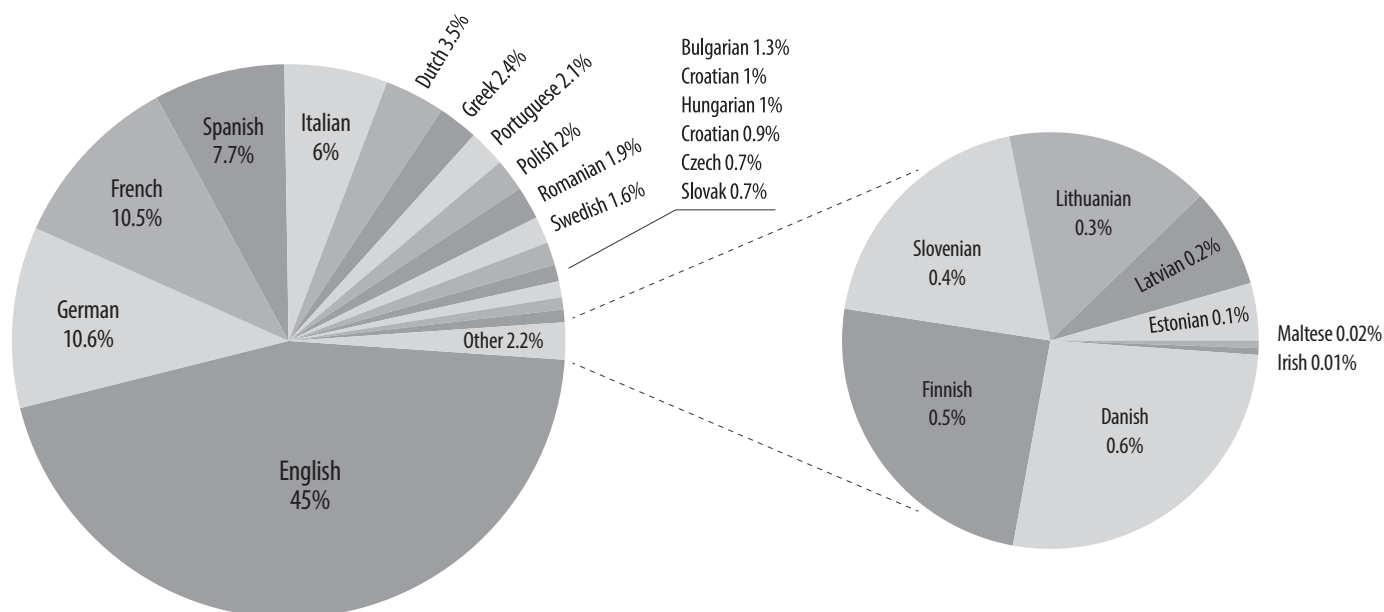


Enquiries by language (2019)

The EDCC replies in all 24 official languages, but almost half of the enquiries are in English. Some enquirers in non-English speaking countries prefer to use English, in particular for written questions.

Proportion of channel





Percentage (%) of enquiries by language (2019)

Language trend over the years

	English	French	German	Spanish	Italian
2014	45.3%	14.4%	10.5%	6.8%	7.3%
2015	48.8%	12.0%	10.3%	6.4%	6.3%
2016	44.2%	10.9%	9.3%	5.6%	5.2%
2017	49.4%	11.5%	9.4%	7.5%	5.2%
2018	48.2%	10.9%	10.8%	8.0%	5.2%
2019	45.0%	10.5%	10.6%	7.7%	6.0%

Percentage (%) of all questions per year for the five biggest languages.

English is by far the most used language, but there is no trend for English to take a higher share of questions. The share for French has fallen slightly over the last years, while Spanish has increased.



Subjects

Top 10 subjects	Total	%
Justice and consumers rights	13 591	11.1%
WiFi4EU	10 770	8.8%
EU general, EU institutions and Member States	10 439	8.5%
H2020 research	9 818	8.0%
Employment, social affairs and inclusion	8 654	7.0%
Education and culture	7 489	6.1%
Passenger rights	6 165	5.0%
Working for the EU	5 341	4.3%
Customs and taxation	5 148	4.2%
Migration and home affairs	4 718	3.8%
Total	82 133	

The largest number of questions concerns individual rights and opportunities offered by the EU. This comprises consumer rights, rights of residence, the possibility for jobs and social protection, study grants and passenger rights. Questions in the category “EU general” are also often based on personal interest. EDCC has a special agreement for questions related to participation in the Horizon 2020 research programme and the WiFi4EU initiative, and has a large number of enquiries in those areas.

** Including Internal Market and services, Climate change, Enterprise and industry, Competition, Information society and media, Mobility and transport other, ECHO).*

Other subjects	Total	%
Other specific policies*	7 979	6.5%
Food safety and public health	2 857	2.3%
Road safety	2 532	2.1%
Trade policy	2 107	1.7%
International cooperation and development	2 086	1.7%
Environment	2 064	1.7%
Foreign policy	1 841	1.5%
Publication orders	1 740	1.4%
European Parliament	1 610	1.3%
Financial markets and capital movements	1 249	1.0%
Agriculture and rural development	1 060	0.9%
Energy	845	0.7%
Regional policy	715	0.6%
SOLVIT	567	0.5%
Europa - the EU websites	481	0.4%
Neighbourhood policy and enlargement	466	0.4%
Your Europe Advice	361	0.3%
Economic and monetary affairs	334	0.3%
Europe Direct	327	0.3%
Council of the European Union, European Council	269	0.2%
European Institute of Innovation and Technology	250	0.2%
Budget	234	0.2%
European Citizens Initiative	219	0.2%
Maritime affairs and fisheries	179	0.1%
Request for contact details	1 446	1.2%
Out of scope	4 850	3.9%
Non-EU language	342	0.3%
Request for clarification (unclear questions)	1 753	3.8%
Grand total	122 896	



Details of the most popular subjects

Justice and consumers rights	13 591
Protection of consumers economic and legal interests	3 111
Free movement of persons	2 405
EU family members and residence	2 130
Fundamental rights and citizenship	1 431
Justice and other related policies	1 353
Judicial cooperation	927
Data protection	627
Consumer policy	522
Anti-discrimination and fundamental social rights	421
Specific document / report / legislation	255
Consumer information / education	151
Consumer security	84
Company law	65
Funding	55
Equality between women and men	41
Consumer food health and other related policies	6
Corporate governance	5
Corporate social responsibility	2

This is a second level classification of the top subjects mentioned on the previous page. No further details are recorded for the subject "Working for the EU". All questions under this category concern the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) . For more information on WiFi4EU, see page 6.

Customs and taxation	5 148
Customs	1 964
VAT Business	1 260
VAT Individuals	493
Direct taxation	413
Tax	255
Tax - cross border queries	248
Tax co-operation and control	106
Tax / Customs questions when combined	97
Excise duties	85
Indirect taxation	83
TARIC / Customs duties – business	56
Requests for documents	33
Website / Documents corrections	24
TARIC / Customs duties – individual	16
Fighting tax fraud and tax evasion	11
Requests for interview	4

H2020 research	9 818
Validation services	3 251
Info on H2020 (NCPs legal docs guides forms)	2 202
Proposal submission and evaluation	811
Obtaining funding under H2020	550
Legal and financial issues	499
Info about on-going H2020 projects	275
H2020 Policy issues	178
Expert	167
Communication	150
Other	1 737



Employment social affairs and inclusion	8 654
Moving and working in Europe	4 830
Social protection and social inclusion	2 622
Funding	525
European employment strategy	476
Skills	96
Agencies and partners	55
Analysis, evaluation, impact assessment	50

Education and culture	7 489
Education and Training, e.g. Erasmus	4 543
Youth policy, e.g. volunteering	1 839
Traineeships	483
Culture	428
Sports policy	174
Languages	22

Migration and home affairs	4 718
Visa <i>Except rights of spouses of EU citizen to reside in EU > DG JUST</i>	1 890
Immigration	1 386
Schengen: internal and external borders, border controls	582
Asylum	523
SIS (Schengen Information System)	86
VIS (Visa information system)	78
Organised crime (including drugs coordination)	61
Terrorism and crisis management (inside EU) <i>Including critical infrastructure (except defence issues > EEAS)</i>	46
Police cooperation	26
Active citizenship	17
Corruption inside EU <i>Except fraud and / or misuse of EU funds > OLAF</i>	16
Drugs coordination	5
PNR (Passenger Name Record) <i>Agreements with third countries and EU-PNR</i>	1
Eurodac (asylum seeker fingerprint database)	1

Passenger rights	6 165
Air passengers' rights	5 949
Bus and coach passengers' rights	68
Maritime passengers' rights	54
Rail passengers' rights	94

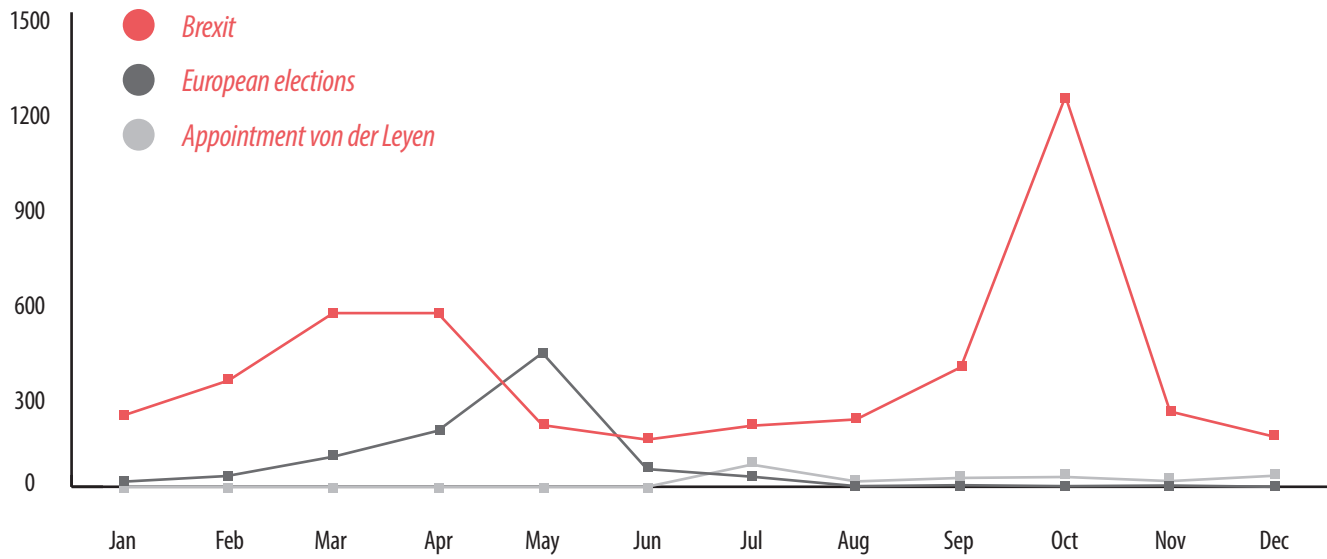
EU general, EU institutions and Member States	4 206
Member States	4 206
European Commission	2 930
Databases / official documents	736
Court of Justice	330
Statistics	315
Future of Europe	288
Agencies	267
Personnel	246
Symbols	178
Other	943

External Relations	7 394
Trade policy	2 107
of which Trade Helpdesk for trade into the EU	821
International cooperation and development	2 086
Foreign policy	1 841
Neighbourhood and enlargement	466
Humanitarian aid	73

The biggest subject for questions about relations between the EU and the rest of the world is trade.



Hot topics



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Brexit	226	336	549	594	195	149	193	213	378	1 234	238	158	4 463
European Elections	17	35	95	177	423	56	32	2	5	2	4	0	848
Appointment von der Leyen	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	17	28	31	18	35	199
Total	243	371	644	771	618	205	295	232	411	1 267	260	193	5 311

Hot topics by country

Just over half of the questions about Brexit came from the United Kingdom.



Brexit

Country	Number of questions
United Kingdom	2 380
Germany	278
Spain	276
France	207
Italy	89
Netherlands	83
Belgium	81
Greece	67
Sweden	55
Ireland	52
Portugal	49
Austria	39
Denmark	33
Poland	24
Bulgaria	17
Czechia	16
Hungary	15
Cyprus	12
Finland	12
Romania	9
Slovenia	7
Croatia	7
Malta	7
Estonia	7
Slovakia	6
Lithuania	5
Luxembourg	3
Latvia	3
Total EU	3 839
Non-EU	224
Unspecified	400
Grand Total	4 463

Appointment von der Leyen

Country	Number of questions
Germany	81
Italy	13
France	10
Sweden	6
Hungary	5
Austria	5
Poland	4
Belgium	4
Ireland	3
Netherlands	2
Spain	2
Bulgaria	2
Greece	2
Romania	1
United Kingdom	1
Slovakia	1
Luxembourg	1
Denmark	1
Portugal	1
Malta	1
Latvia	1
Total EU	147
Non-EU	7
Unspecified	45
Grand Total	199

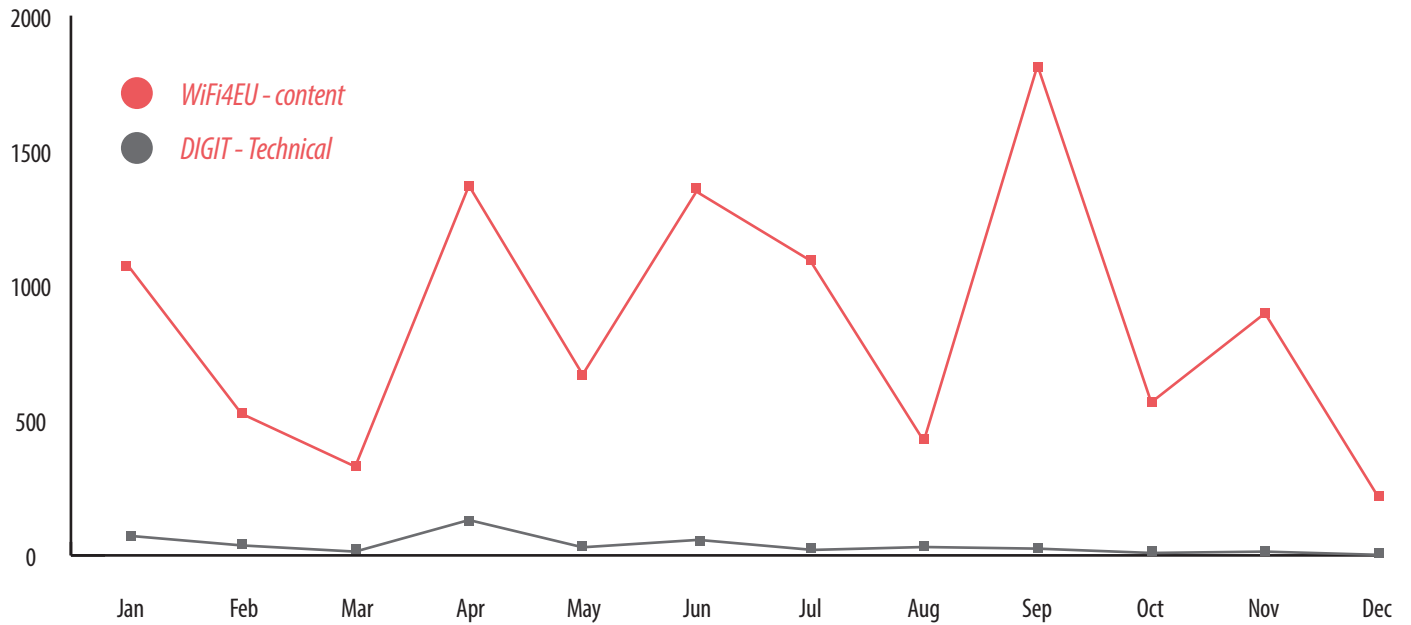
European elections



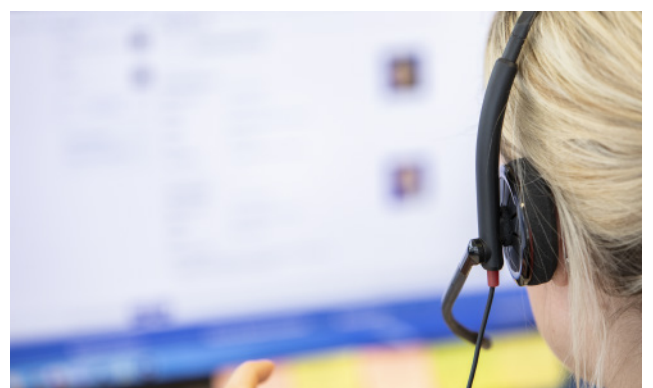
Country	Number of questions
United Kingdom	129
Germany	94
Spain	58
France	50
Netherlands	46
Belgium	43
Italy	35
Sweden	33
Poland	30
Austria	23
Bulgaria	16
Greece	14
Hungary	14
Portugal	13
Croatia	10
Ireland	10
Denmark	8
Finland	7
Slovakia	7
Czechia	6
Romania	5
Luxembourg	2
Cyprus	2
Slovenia	2
Malta	1
Total EU	658
Non-EU	27
Unspecified	163
Grand Total	848



WiFi4EU

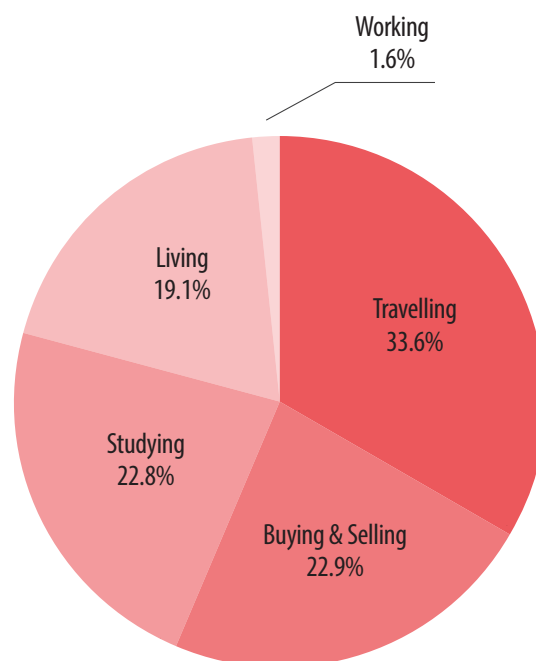


Back office	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
WiFi4EU - content	1 075	525	329	1 370	670	1 348	1 093	424	1 815	567	897	214	10 327
WiFi4EU - technical	73	37	14	131	30	57	20	31	25	9	14	2	443
Total	1 148	562	343	1 501	700	1 405	1 113	455	1 840	576	911	216	10 770



Cross-border issues

Many questions relate to the EU's effort to open up the single market and reduce the obstacles from borders in daily life: travelling, living, shopping, studying and working abroad.



	Cross-border issues	Total	% of cross-boarder cases	% of total volume
<i>Travelling</i>	Passengers rights	6 156	23.8%	6.3%
	Visas and border control	2 551	9.8%	2.6%
	Free movement of persons	2 406	9.3%	2.5%
<i>Living</i>	Immigration	1 386	5.3%	1.4%
	Judicial cooperation	927	3.6%	1.0%
	Welfare (social security, rights at work)	223	0.9%	0.2%
	Protection of consumers economic and legal interests	3 111	12.0%	3.2%
<i>Buying & Selling</i>	Customs	1 965	7.6%	2.0%
	Consumers rights	523	2.0%	0.5%
	Consumer information	151	0.6%	0.2%
	Free movement of goods	106	0.4%	0.1%
	Consumer security	84	0.3%	0.1%
	Erasmus+	2 715	10.5%	2.8%
<i>Studying</i>	Youth	1 840	7.1%	1.9%
	Funding for non-EU citizens	497	1.9%	0.5%
	Education and other related funding programmes	496	1.9%	0.5%
	Recognition of diplomas	338	1.3%	0.3%
<i>Working</i>	Lifelong learning	20	0.1%	0.0%
	Professional qualifications	425	1.6%	0.4%
	Total	25 929	100.0%	23.8%



Escalations

By far the largest number of enquiries are replied directly by the EDCC based on general guidelines and information already published. 14,4% of the questions were so technical or sensitive that the contact centre had to ask experts within the European Commission or other EU entities.

The shown back offices are the services that have a formal cooperation agreement with DG Communication. The DG COMM back office handles escalations under the competence of any other entity within the EU institutions. The files related to Your Europe Advice and SOLVIT are transfers, not escalations.

Back office	Total	% of total escalations
Horizon 2020	6 355	35.9%
WiFi4EU	2 695	15.2%
DG COMM	2 029	11.5%
JUST	455	2.6%
SANTE	449	2.5%
EP	424	2.4%
TAXUD	419	2.4%
SOLVIT	415	2.3%
EAC	372	2.1%
EEAS	372	2.1%
TRADE	360	2.0%
YEA	314	1.8%
ENV	301	1.7%
AGRI	285	1.6%
EMPL	273	1.5%
FISMA	273	1.5%
WEB EUROPA	269	1.5%
DEVCO	241	1.4%
ENER	234	1.3%
HOME	168	0.9%
REGIO	153	0.9%
EPSO	134	0.8%
COUNCIL	111	0.6%
NEAR	110	0.6%
ECFIN	109	0.6%
Road Safety	65	0.4%
Passenger Rights	63	0.4%
BUDG	57	0.3%
EIT	57	0.3%
EC SOLVIT	47	0.3%
ECI	39	0.2%
MARE	37	0.2%
EDIC	10	0.1%
Total	17 695	
DG COMM escalations, share of questions	1,68%	

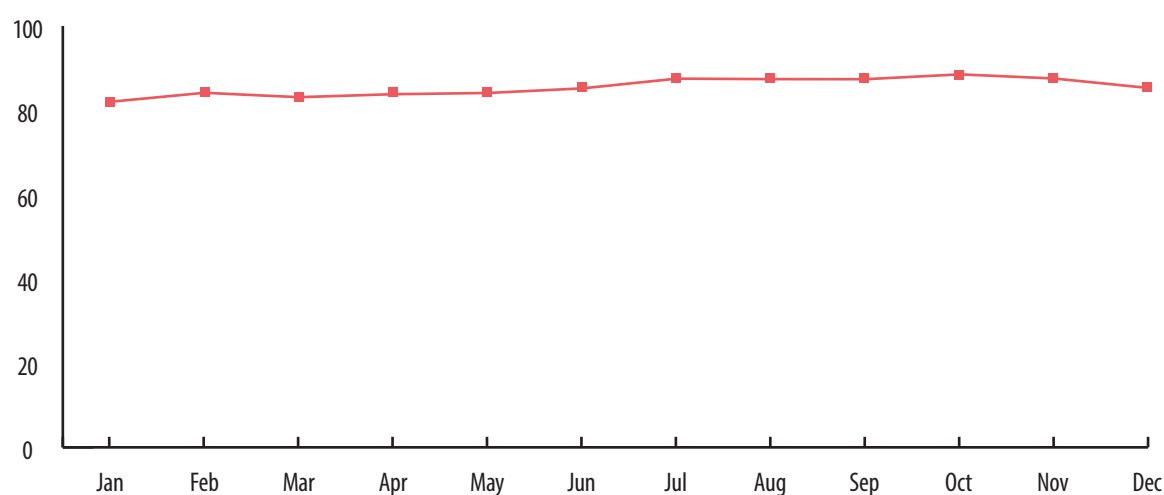


User satisfaction

Citizens have the option of giving feedback to the EDCC service when they receive a reply, no matter if this is given via phone or by e-mail. The overall satisfaction rate in 2019 was 85.5%. This compares to 84.3% in 2018.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Unsatisfied citizens	68	56	73	68	73	57
Satisfied citizens	310	297	359	352	386	328
Total	378	353	432	420	459	385
Satisfaction rate	82.01%	84.14%	83.10%	83.81%	84.10%	85.19%

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Average or Total
Unsatisfied citizens	72	73	73	63	57	44	395
Satisfied citizens	504	506	505	486	400	255	2 032
Total	576	579	578	549	457	299	2 047
Satisfaction rate	87.50%	87.39%	87.37%	88.52%	87.53%	85.28%	85.50%



Satisfaction rate (%)

