

# SOLVIT: assistant in solving problems under EU law (2/19/20)

SOLVIT can assist where public authorities of other member states lay down requirements that are not consistent with EU law. This network mainly functions online and its services are free of charge, an important factor considering the global emergency caused by COVID-19.

## About SOLVIT

SOLVIT is a network of EU services set up by the European Commission in collaboration with other member states for solving problems in the internal market.

SOLVIT can help in cross-border disputes that arise from inappropriate application of EU law and involve a decision or action taken by a public authority. SOLVIT can help in disputes over pension entitlements, foreign employment, unemployment benefits, VAT refunds, trade and services, as well as residence rights in other member states.

SOLVIT cannot help where litigation is pending or threatened (with the exception of appealing a public authority's decision in administrative proceedings). SOLVIT cannot act in parallel with official procedures or litigation. Also, SOLVIT cannot help in disputes between businesses or over consumer rights, in disputes arising at EU institutions, or in cases where compensation is sought for damages. It is important to note that SOLVIT is not a court and can only indicate an infringement committed by another member state's public authority and persuade the authority to do what is right under EU law.

Each member state has set up its own SOLVIT centre. In Latvia, the functioning of the SOLVIT centre has been ensured by the Department for EU and External Economic Relations at the Ministry of Economics since 2004.

## How SOLVIT works

An EU business or citizen whose rights are infringed emails a complaint to the SOLVIT centre in Latvia or completes an e-form at [www.solvit.eu](http://www.solvit.eu). The complaint will be handled by two SOLVIT centres:

- the home centre;
- the lead centre in the country where the problem occurred.

Within a week after receiving the complaint, the home centre will contact the complainant, ask for further details if necessary, check whether the complaint comes within the competence of SOLVIT, prepare a case, and send it off to the lead centre. The home centre will also keep the complainant informed of how their case progresses.

Within a week after receiving the complaint, the lead centre will confirm whether they accept or refuse it. SOLVIT will try to find a solution to the problem within ten weeks after the case was accepted by the lead centre.

## Examples of cases solved by SOLVIT

SOLVIT has handled a variety of cases. For example, where Greek authorities refused to recognise a Bulgarian citizen's entitlement to a portion of his pension (he had worked in both Bulgaria and Greece), SOLVIT settled this matter with the pension authorities of the two countries, and the citizen was able to receive the full pension. A solution was found within six weeks.

In another instance, an Estonian citizen had worked for two years in Cyprus, regularly visiting Estonia, where she lived permanently. When her employment contract expired, she decided to apply for an unemployment benefit in Estonia. Before her departure, she asked the Cyprus authorities to issue a document stating the periods in which she had paid social insurance contributions in Cyprus. This information would help her calculate the benefit due to her in Cyprus. Four months later the Cyprus authorities had not yet responded, but they eventually sent the required document to the Estonian authorities within six weeks after SOLVIT was involved.

The statistics of complaints received by the SOLVIT centre in Latvia suggest a fairly low level of activity, with two complaints on average received a year, mostly about actions taken by public authorities of other countries. We feel that SOLVIT has not been sufficiently publicised in Latvia, and residents are not aware of this option.