

EP Rules of Procedure: revision of the petition process

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The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted a report drafted by Gerard **ONESTA** (Greens/EFA, FR) and proposed a revision of the Rules of Procedure with regard to the petitions process. The report called for the inclusion of the following rules:

- where a petition is signed by several persons, the signatories shall designate a representative and deputy representatives who shall be regarded as the petitioners for the purposes of implementation of the rules. Where no such designation has occurred the first signatory or another appropriate person shall be regarded as the petitioners;
- currently the Rules of Procedure do not provide for the withdrawal of support for the petition by the petitioner, and this is remedied in the proposal;
- the Bureau may decide that petitions and correspondence with petitioners may be drafted in other languages used in a Member State (such as Basque or Galician);
- the committee responsible must establish the admissibility or otherwise of the petition in accordance with Article 194 of the EC Treaty. If it fails to reach a consensus, it shall be declared admissible at the request of at least one quarter of the members of the committee;
- if a petition is inadmissible, where possible, alternative means of redress may be recommended;
- petitions, once registered, shall as a general rule become public documents, and the name of the petitioner and the contents of the petition may be published. However, the petitioner may request that his name be withheld in order to protect his privacy, in which case Parliament must respect such a request;
- the petitioner may request that the petition be treated confidentially, in which case suitable precautions will be taken by Parliament to ensure that the contents are not made public;
- petitioners may be invited to participate in meetings of the committee if their petition is to be the subject of discussion, or they may request to be present;
- with regard to an admissible petition, the committee may decide to draw up an own-initiative report, and provisions are made for this;
- the committee may request assistance from the Commission, notably through information on the application of Community law or compliance therewith, as well as by supplying any information or documents relevant to the petition. Representatives of the Commission shall be invited to attend meetings of the committee;
- a new rule of citizen's initiative states that when Parliament is informed that the Commission has been invited to submit a proposal for a legal act under Article 11(4) of the EU Treaty, the Committee on Petitions shall ascertain whether this is likely to affect its work and, if need be, shall inform those petitioners who have addressed a petition on related subjects. However, this amendment may not take a legal effect before the entering into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.