

# EP Rules of Procedure: revision of the petition process

2006/2209(REG) - 06/05/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 616 votes to 23, with 16 abstentions, a decision on revision of the Rules of Procedure with regard to the petitions process.

The main changes approved by MEPs are as follows:

- 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. With the envisaged change, each petitioner may at any time withdraw support for the petition. After withdrawal of support by all the petitioners the petition shall become null and void;
- petitions must be written in an official language of the European Union. 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);
- if the committee responsible fails to reach a consensus on the admissibility or otherwise of the petition, 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. The right to speak shall be granted to petitioners at the discretion of the chair;
- with regard to an admissible petition, the committee may decide to draw up an own-initiative report or submit a short motion for a resolution to Parliament, provided that there is no objection by the Conference of Presidents;
- when investigating petitions, establishing facts or seeking solutions the committee may organise fact-finding visits to the Member State or region concerned by the petition. Reports on the visits shall be drafted by their participants. They shall be forwarded to the President after approval by the committee;
- 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;
- the committee may request the President to forward its opinion or recommendation to the Commission, the Council or the Member State authority concerned for action or response;
- 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.

