EP Rules of Procedure: implementing the European Citizens' Initiative

2011/2302(REG) - 02/05/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted the report by Zita GURMAI (S&D, HU) on amending Parliament's Rules of Procedure with regard to the implementation of the European citizens' initiative.

The report recalls that the European Parliament adopted the report on the proposal for a regulation on the citizens' initiative at first reading on 15 December 2010 by a very large majority (628 votes in favour, 15 against and 24 abstentions). This result clearly illustrates the broad consensus surrounding this new tool for participatory democracy at European level.

The citizens' initiative will be a powerful tool that European citizens can use to identify issues to place on the EU's agenda. It was first introduced in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and then taken over by the Lisbon Treaty, with the aim of giving citizens powers of political initiative on a par with those already enjoyed by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Its main aim is to provide citizens with a means to be heard by enabling them to refer various issues of interest to the European institutions.

Parliament will be able to help achieve these aims by doing all it can to support the citizens' initiatives it likes, in particular by **organising public hearings**.

With regard to public hearings, Article 11 of Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 on the citizens' initiative stipulates that where the conditions of Article 10(1)(a) and (b) are fulfilled, and within the deadline laid down in Article 10(1)(c), the organisers shall be given the opportunity to present the citizens' initiative at a public hearing. The Commission and the European Parliament shall ensure that this hearing is organised at the European Parliament, if appropriate together with such other institutions and bodies of the Union as may wish to participate, and that the Commission is represented at an appropriate level.

Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 applies as of 1 April 2012. Therefore, it is necessary to **amend the Parliament's Rules of Procedure so that the necessary measures can be taken in terms of organising and conducting the public hearings concerned**. In addition, given that the **Committee on Petitions** has specific experience in this field, Members propose that it should be given the opportunity to engage in political follow-up of initiatives which merit such consideration but which were not ultimately successful.

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs invites its President to take the necessary steps to ensure that a single contact point is set up in the European Parliament, which citizens, representative associations and civil society can contact on matters relating to citizens' initiatives.

The report invites the **Commission** to confirm in a letter addressed to the President of the European Parliament its intention to be represented, at any public hearings on European citizens' initiatives, in principle by the Commissioner responsible for the subject-matter, or, if he or she is unavailable, then either preferably by another Member of the Commission or by the Director-General responsible for the subject-matter.

Lastly, Members ask its Bureau and its Secretary-General to take the appropriate measures to ensure the **greatest possible visibility of public hearings** on European citizens' initiatives by providing appropriate facilities, including the use of the best available information and communications technology.