Annual report of the activities of the Committee on Petitions 2011

2011/2317(INI) - 21/11/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the activities of the Committee on Petitions in 2011.

Petitions in 2011: Parliament notes that the petitions received in 2011 continued to focus on alleged breaches of EU law in the fields of **the environment, justice and the internal market**. It also notes the increasing number of petitions and other submissions from citizens seeking legal and financial redress on issues that fall outside the EU's area of competence, such as, for example, requests to review the calculation of national pensions, overrule decisions by national courts, support proposals to re-draw Europe's frontiers, force a bank to grant a personal loan, etc.

The resolution fully supports the action taken by Parliament's responsible Directorates-General to find a solution for dealing with these submissions from citizens while taking into account Parliament's obligations with regard to its correspondence with citizens.

Transparency and responsibility: the resolution welcomes Parliament's to develop **a practical and visible petitions portal** on its website, which will facilitate access for citizens to the petitions process.

Parliament believes, nevertheless, that the role and responsibilities of the Petitions Committee would be best performed, and its visibility, efficiency, accountability and transparency best enhanced, if its means of being able to bring issues of importance to European citizens to plenary were improved, and if its abilities to call witnesses, conduct investigations and organise on-site hearings were enhanced.

Political influence: Members want Parliament to confirm its determination to continue to promote and defend citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms by making use of its political influence regarding such admissible cases as may be raised with the Committee, in close cooperation with the Commission and relevant authorities within the Member States of the Union.

With this in mind, the resolution:

- calls on the Committee on Petitions to examine the effects of the Equal Rights Trust case law on the reliability of petitions, and to investigate the question of what actual obstacles lie in the way for EU citizens applying for a preliminary ruling from the European Court of Justice in order to obtain reliable interpretations of central issues under European legislation in cases before the national courts;
- considers it important to enhance cooperation with Member States' parliaments and governments, based on reciprocity, and, where necessary, to encourage Member States' authorities to transpose and apply EU legislation in full transparency;
- stresses the importance of the Commission cooperating with the Member States, and deplores the negligence of some Member States with regard to transposing and enforcing European environmental legislation;
- considers that the petitions procedure should not be exploited and used to achieve objectives on the political agenda in Member States, but should be carried out objectively, reflecting the position of the European Parliament.

Compliance with legislation: Parliament stresses the importance of the **Waste** Framework Directive being correctly implemented in all Member States. It also calls on the Member States to comply with their

obligations under the Free Movement Directive 2004/38/EC on the **right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the EU**. It reminds Member States of their obligation to facilitate entry and residence without any discrimination, including for same-sex couples and their children, Roma people, and other minority groups.

Parliament also supports wholeheartedly the underlying objective of the **Ley de Costas,** namely that the environment of the Spanish coast be protected from overdevelopment so as to preserve it for wildlife and for future generations. It recalls that Parliament has held that the Ley de Costas has had a disproportionate impact on individual property owners while at the same time having insufficient impact on the real perpetrators of coastal destruction.

Parliament calls on the Commission, furthermore, to ensure implementation and enforcement of the Habitats and Birds Directives by the Member States.

In summary, Members are determined to **make the petition procedure more efficient, transparent, and impartial**, while preserving the participatory rights of the Members of the Committee on Petitions, so that the handling of petitions will stand up to judicial review even at a procedural level.