SOLVIT

2013/2154(INI) - 27/02/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 447 votes to 18 with 19 abstentions a resolution on SOLVIT.

It stressed that EU law guaranteeing rights in the single market needed to be enforced effectively to ensure that citizens and businesses all benefit from the internal market's potential.

SOLVIT currently handles around 1 300 cases a year, and manages to find solutions for around 90 % of its clients within the deadline of 70 days. It plays an important role as a means of ensuring better compliance with Union law pertaining to the single market, but in spite of this, SOLVIT remains under-used and has not fulfilled its potential.

Effective use of rights and opportunities in the single market: Parliament called on the Commission to put pressure on those Member States that are not complying with single market rules. Many problems relating to the implementation of single market rules are detected through the SOLVIT network. In this regard, Parliament commended the contribution of SOLVIT to administrative and regulatory changes to remedy such problems. The Council is urged to take measures to improve the tasks of public administrations in order to strengthen the cooperation between national authorities and the Commission. The resolution also stressed the need for SOLVIT to have an **efficient means of alerting** the Commission to internal-market problems arising from non-implementation of EU law that have come to its notice. It highlighted the use of **zero-tolerance for non-compliance** with, and of peer review in the implementation and transposition of, the Services Directive, as methods to ensure effective application of single market law.

SOLVIT: helping individuals and businesses solve problems: Parliament welcomed the new Commission recommendation on the principles governing SOLVIT, paving the way for SOLVIT 2.0. Although the SOLVIT network has achieved tangible results and proved its usefulness, Members noted that there is ample room for improvement, in particular as regards settling business-related disputes and the time taken to resolve queries. A **special focus** is called for on all cross border labour law issues, social rights and equal treatment, paying particular attention to issues related to pensions, European Union workers and posted workers. Parliament noted that a large majority of SOLVIT clients are citizens, and it stressed the need to unleash the large potential of SOLVIT as a problem-solving tool for businesses. More needs to be done to make businesses, in particular SMEs, more aware of SOLVIT.

Parliament drew attention to the fact that SOLVIT is still attracting a large volume of non-SOLVIT cases, and that this is slowing down the handling of SOLVIT complaints. It stressed, therefore, the need for SOLVIT's remit to be better explained to citizens and businesses.

Member States were called upon to ensure that adequate resources (financial and human) are made available to maintain the SOLVIT network. Parliament stressed the importance of maintaining the quality of the service offered by SOLVIT in spite of budgetary restrictions and limited human resources. It stressed the importance of ensuring that SOLVIT centres had sufficient numbers of well-trained staff, **with adequate legal expertise and knowledge of the relevant Union languages,** and that staff are accordingly provided with appropriate training in order to continually upgrade their skills and knowledge. It regretted that many business-related cases that could be handled by SOLVIT were **rejected on the grounds that they were too complex, and** considered that this was a problem that needs to be addressed locally at those SOLVIT centres which rejected cases.

As regards **complaints**, Parliament called for better streamlining with other complaint-handling procedures, in particular the **EU Pilot**. The SOLVIT centres should be bolder and more efficient in responding to complaints and, in particular, in handling more complex cases.

Furthermore, the Commission is called upon to:

- continue monitoring, within the annual report on the single market integration, the performance of the Union's problem-solving mechanisms – in particular SOLVIT – as part of the Annual Growth Survey;

- strengthen single market governance by establishing a specific pillar of the European Semester, including dedicated country-specific recommendations;

- set up measurable milestones for the desired development of SOLVIT.

Member States should also set their own **measurable targets** and deadlines for the development of case handling in local SOLVIT centres. Splitting up citizen- and business-related cases for the purpose of monitoring progress could be the way forward. If these targets are not reached, the possibility of replacing the informal procedure by a **legislative act** should be reconsidered, taking into account existing mechanisms such as those provided for in Directive 2013/11/EU on alternative dispute resolution and Regulation (EU) No 524/2013 on online dispute resolution. The Council is urged to follow Parliament's ambition in this respect.

Your Europe: Parliament encouraged the Commission and Member States to make a **clear difference between Your Europe and SOLVIT** while coordinating their respective visibility campaigns. It considered that, that through branding and with the inclusion of SOLVIT, the Your Europe portal should become the single access point for European consumers and businesses when confronted with problems or when seeking information. Such a single access point could serve as the reference point of citizens and businesses and better facilitate their access to different information tools and specialised problem solving mechanisms, including SOLVIT.