

# Annual report of the 2013 activities of the Committee on Petitions

2014/2008(INI) - 11/03/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 482 votes to 120, with 60 abstentions, a resolution on the activities of the Committee on Petitions 2013.

The resolution noted that 2885 petitions were received in 2013, which was ‘the Year of the European Citizen’, representing an increase of almost 45% on the year 2012 and that for the current legislature until now, almost 10 000 petitions have been registered.

**Improving the petitions procedure:** Parliament acknowledged the substantial and fundamental role of the Petitions Committee in defending and promoting the rights of EU citizens and residents. The petition procedure should be made **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.

Members noted the **variety of thematic key areas** concerned in the citizens’ petitions, such as fundamental rights, internal market, environmental law, public health issues, child welfare, transport and constructions, Spanish Coastal Law, new Regulation on good administration, persons with disabilities, age discrimination, public access to documents, European Schools, Fiscal Union, and the Steel Industry, animal rights and many more.

Petitions which fall under said thematic areas lend proof to the issue that the frequencies of widespread situations of unsatisfactory transposition of EU legislation or misapplication of the law are still occurring. This is why Parliament 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 with full transparency.

Parliament also emphasised:

- the importance of **citizens direct involvement in the Parliament’s activity** and to have their concerns, proposals or complaints specifically addressed by the Committee members;
- points out the amount of work that had been done to resolve possible infringements of citizens’ rights and by cooperating with national, regional and local authorities on issues related to the application of European laws; while maintaining a vital role in reconnecting with European citizens and reinforcing the democratic legitimacy and accountability of the EU decision-making process;
- the Commission’s significant role in assisting with the handling of the cases raised by petitions. The Commission’s investigation of petitions should go into **greater depth** and look into the substance of cases with regard to EU legislation;
- the need to find better solutions for dealing with the submissions from citizens while taking into account Parliament’s obligations with regard to its correspondence with citizens on **issues that fall outside the EU’s area of competence**;
- the need for a more active collaboration between the petitions committee and the **SOLVIT network**, which regularly uncovers and resolves problems linked to the implementation of internal market legislation.

Deploring that European citizens continue to experience frequent problems caused by the **misapplication of Internal Market law** by public authorities while exercising their freedom of movement, Parliament

called on the Commission to propose legislation to resolve the issues surrounding mutual recognition by Member States of **civil status documents**, while respecting the competences of the Member States.

**New horizons and relations with other institutions:** the resolution underlined the importance of making this Committee work more substantial inside the House by raising its profile as a **scrutiny Committee**. It invited the newly elected Petitions Committee to nominate internal Annual Rapporteurs on the major policies, which are of concern of European petitioners, and to enhance cooperation with other parliamentary committees.

Parliament highlighted the need to **reinforce the Petitions Committee collaboration** with the other EU Institutions and bodies, and the national authorities in the Member States. Structured dialogue and systematic cooperation with Member States especially with the National Parliaments' Petitions Committees should be enhanced. For their part, Member States are urged to play a proactive role in responding to petitions related to the implementation and enforcement of European law.

**Working methods:** Parliament is invited to adopt **final internal rules** to ensure maximum efficiency and openness in the work of the Committee.

The Petitions Committee is called upon to adopt **clear deadlines** in the process of petitions in order to **speed up the petitions life-cycle** in the European Parliament and make the whole process even more transparent and democratic. This could put in place a **defined lifecycle** of the petition from registration until their final closure in the European Parliament.

These deadlines should establish an **alert mechanism** which automatically draws Members' attention to petitions on which there has not been any action or correspondence for a considerable amount of time, in order to avoid old petitions staying open over years without substantial reason.

Parliament called for an **urgent revision of the relevant rules**, in order to enable the newly elected Members to carry out efficient visits and report swiftly back to the petitioners and the Committee on their findings and recommendations.

Lastly, concerned that delays and **response times are still too long** throughout the registration phase and the admissibility phase in the process, Parliament called for providing the Unit for Reception and Referral of Official Documents and the Petitions Committee Secretariat, respectively, with an additional administrator with juridical background, to issue recommendations related to whether the petition lies within the competence of European law.