

Report on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2016

2017/2222(INI) - 14/12/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 356 votes to 206 with 61 abstentions, a resolution on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during 2016.

Members recalled that petitions were an important source of first-hand information for detecting violations and gaps in the application of EU legislation at national level. The petitions allow Parliament and other Union institutions to reconnect with Union citizens concerned by the application of Union law.

The resolution stressed the wide range of areas covered by the petitions. In terms of **statistics**, Parliament underlined the increase by 10 % in the number of petitions received in 2016 (1 569). 1 110 petitions (70.8 %) were considered admissible. There were 6 132 users of Parliament's Petitions Web Portal who supported one or several petitions in 2016, as compared to 902 in 2015.

Main areas concerned: the main subjects of concern raised in petitions in 2016 pertained to the internal market (in particular the provision of services and the free movement of people), fundamental rights (especially the rights of the child and of persons with disabilities), social affairs (working conditions), environmental issues (waste management, pollution and environmental protection) and the specific issue of Brexit (loss of acquired rights and the mandate of the referendum).

Parliament took note the anxiety of petitioners concerned about their **future rights following the referendum in the United Kingdom on withdrawal from the European Union** which was evident in a large number of petitions concerning the United Kingdom. Members recalled that Parliament's [resolution of 5 April 2017](#) underlined that the withdrawal agreement can only be concluded with its consent and its requirement for the fair treatment of EU-27 citizens living in the United Kingdom and of United Kingdom citizens living in the EU-27. The Commission was asked to ensure that citizens are not used as bargaining chips or see their rights eroded as a result of the negotiations.

Members pointed to the important ongoing work carried out by the Committee on Petitions in connection with petitions **pertaining to issues on disabilities**. They emphasised the need to improve the political participation of persons with disabilities, in particular in preparation for the next European elections.

There were numerous petitions on the practices of child welfare authorities and the **protection of children's rights**, particularly with cross-border implications. Parliament noted notes that a large number of issues raised in petitions, such as those related to the procedures and practices specifically followed by the relevant authorities in the Member States in child-related decisions with cross-border implications, need to be examined thoroughly.

Relations with the Commission: Members reminded the Commission that requests for assistance from the Committee on Petitions should be followed up properly, and reiterated their call on the Commission to **improve the quality of its replies, in substance as well as depth**. Furthermore, they considered the fact that national courts have primary responsibility for ensuring the proper implementation of EU legislation in the Member States should by no means preclude a more proactive role by the Commission, particularly in cases related to **protection of the environment and public health** where the precautionary principle should prevail.

Parliament went on to remind the Commission that the Committee on Petitions is committed to responding to citizens' expectations in a timely and responsible manner, while ensuring the democratic scrutiny and proper application of EU law. In this respect, it was concerned by the considerable increase – by 21 % – in open infringement cases compared to the previous year. The Commission was asked again to share information on the state of play of ongoing infringement procedures. Members also insisted that the Commission identify the means of enhancing cooperation with Member States' authorities when it comes to responding to inquiries regarding the implementation of, and compliance with, EU law. They stressed that transparency and access of citizens to documents of the Union institutions should be the rule in order to ensure the highest level of protection of citizens' democratic rights.

Lastly, the resolution emphasised Parliament's strong collaboration with the European Ombudsman, and the Ombudsman's crucial role in helping to improve decision-making processes and administration at EU level.