Annual report under Rule 216(7) on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions (2018)

2018/2280(INI) - 24/01/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Petitions adopted an own-initiative report by Cecilia WIKSTRÖM (ALDE, SE) on the outcome of the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions in 2018.

Cooperation with the European Commission and Member States

Members emphasised the essential role played by the Committee on Petitions in defending and promoting the rights of citizens and residents of the Union and recalled the responsibility of the Commission and the authorities of the Member States to cooperate with the Committee on Petitions. This cooperation is essential to address the needs of the petitioners in line with the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Members called for the EU institutions and Member States to promote the citizens' right to petition and to raise public awareness of the EU competences and possible remedies that the European Parliament can provide while processing petitions.

Continuous public debate about the Union's fields of activity

The report called for more intensive and structured biannual dialogue between the Committee on Petitions and Members of Committees on Petitions in the national parliaments on petitions dealing with issues of major concern to European citizens that would further raise awareness of EU policies. It stressed the need to strengthen the political and technical dialogue with the relevant committees of the national parliaments.

Hearings

Members highlighted four public hearings in 2018 on various topics, namely: (i) citizens' rights after Brexit; (ii) the revision of the Regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative; (iii) the impact of endocrine disruptors on public health; (iv) the rights of persons with disabilities.

The report highlighted the work of the Committee on Petitions on disability issues and its role in protecting rights within the EU framework on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Members called on the petitions network to put forward proposals for specific public hearings and topics for European Parliament studies and resolutions, which reflect the connection between ongoing legislative work and Parliament's political scrutiny powers and the petitions dealing with issues of major concern to European citizens.

Relations with the Ombudsman

Members stressed Parliament's fruitful cooperation with the European Ombudsman, as well as its involvement in the European Network of Ombudsmen. They appreciated in particular the Ombudsman's regular contributions to the work of the committee throughout the year. They believed that the Union's institutions, bodies and agencies must ensure consistent and effective follow-up to the recommendations of the Ombudsman.

Web portal

The report underlined the importance of the Petitions web portal for the overall smooth and efficient processing of petitions. One of the priorities for the next period is to improve communication with the petitioners through their accounts, in order to ease the administrative burden and speed up petition processing times.

Members reiterated the need to continue the technical development of the portal, to align it to the standards of Parliament's website and to increase its visibility both on the EP platform and among citizens, in particular to persons with disabilities.