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

2018/2280(INI) - 13/02/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 456 votes to 49, with 91 abstentions, a resolution on the outcome of the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions in 2018.

The right of petition should be a key element for a participatory democracy in which the right of every citizen to play a direct part in the democratic life of the Union is effectively protected. This right should enhance the responsiveness of the European Parliament towards the citizens and residents of the European Union.

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.

Parliament 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

Parliament stressed the need for a continuous public debate about the Union's fields of activity, its limits and its future in order to ensure that citizens are well informed about the levels at which decisions are taken and to prevent the 'blame Brussels' phenomenon used by some irresponsible Member States.

The resolution 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. They drew attention to the participation of a delegation of members of the Committee on Petitions in a visit to Lima (Peru) on 15 and 16 February 2018 in the context of democracy support offered by the European Parliament and its Democracy Support and Election Coordination Unit (DEG).

The resolution 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. They also called on the Commission and the Council to respond to its resolutions based on petitions in a followup plenary debate not later than six months after their adoption in order to provide timely and effective answers to specific concerns on the part of 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 resolution 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.

They also suggested promoting SOLVIT which allows citizens and businesses to express their concerns about possible breaches of EU law by public authorities in other Member States.