EU Citizenship Report 2020: empowering citizens and protecting their rights

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The Committee on Petitions adopted an own-initiative report by Yana TOOM (RENEW Europe, EE) on the EU citizenship report 2020: empowering citizens and protecting their rights.

Members took note of the Commission's report on EU citizenship 2020 and welcomed the Commission's continued commitment to respecting the rights of EU citizens. Regretting, however, that only 2 of the 18 actions proposed by the Commission are of a legislative nature, they stressed the need for a comprehensive assessment of EU citizens' rights and for well-defined and concrete commitments, actions and legislative initiatives for the next three years.

The final objective of reporting on EU citizenship would be to take concrete initiatives aiming to consolidate citizen-specific rights and freedoms under an **EU statute of citizenship**, similar to the European Pillar of Social Rights, including the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Charter, the social rights set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the values established in Article 2 TEU.

Freedom of movement

Freedom of movement has suffered greatly from the unprecedented health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the national emergency measures taken in this context, as evidenced by a large number of petitions received by Parliament. Members called on the Commission to monitor COVID-19-related measures and their effects on EU citizenship rights and on Member States to **phase out national emergency measures** as soon as they are no longer necessary.

The Commission is also invited to monitor the proper implementation of the provisions of Part II of the UK Withdrawal Agreement concerning citizens' rights, in order to protect the rights of citizens who have exercised their freedom of movement before the end of the transition period.

Freedom of movement, the cornerstone of EU citizenship, is still not a reality for many people. Members believe that concrete steps must be taken to ensure that all **citizens and long-term residents** are treated equally, in accordance with their rights under the EU treaties.

The Commission and the Member States are invited to:

- promote further cooperation in cases where workers receive social benefits and pay social contributions in more than one Member State, by improving the exchange of information between the social security authorities of different countries so that all contributions can be properly taken into account when calculating pension rights;

- adopt coordination and cooperation measures to effectively tackle double taxation of car registration, discriminatory taxation and double taxation at cross-border level, and to better take into account the realities of cross-border worker mobility.

EU citizenship

Members suggested the introduction of common rules, applicable in all Member States, for granting EU citizenship. They called for ensuring that EU citizens of unrepresented Member States receive assistance

and asked the Commission and Member States to grant the **right to consular protection** to persons who are issued a travel document by a Member State, even if they are not citizens of that State.

Cross-border and seasonal workers

Members called on the Commission and Member States to address the vulnerabilities of cross-border and seasonal migrant workers in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and to ensure that all workers in the EU are granted **high levels of social protection and fair and properly paid jobs**, including by ensuring the effective application and enforcement of EU law on labour mobility and the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

The Commission and Member States are also invited to create a European disability card to ensure the free movement of people with disabilities.

Electoral rights

The report stressed the urgent need to: (i) remove all obstacles and difficulties that hinder the exercise of the right to vote by mobile EU citizens, including people with disabilities; (ii) increase and facilitate the provision of information on European and municipal elections and voting procedures (possibly through a single EU-wide information platform); (iii) encourage Member States, in particular at local level, to facilitate the exercise of voting rights by mobile EU citizens; and (iv) implement remote voting options, including electronic voting, to increase and facilitate democratic participation.

Information and citizen participation

Over 60 % of the respondents participating in the public consultation on the European Citizenship Report 2020 thought that not enough is being done to inform citizens about their EU citizens rights.

The Commission and the Member States are called on to:

- **better inform EU citizens about their rights and duties**, in formats accessible to people with different types of disabilities, and to ensure entitlement to those rights is respected equally in their country of origin and in any other Member State;

- put in place the appropriate instruments to ensure that EU citizens and residents are fully informed about their **right to submit petitions** to Parliament and their right of recourse to the European Ombudsman.

Members called for the establishment of an **online one-stop-shop** centralising all EU participatory instruments and providing information, advice and support on engaging with the EU.

Strongly convinced that the **conference on the future of Europe** is an opportunity for bottom-up participation in the EU democratic process, Members called on all participants in the conference to ensure a genuine follow-up on its outcome.