EU Citizenship Report 2020: empowering citizens and protecting their rights

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The European Parliament adopted by 357 votes to 119, with 207 abstentions, a resolution on the EU citizenship report 2020: empowering citizens and protecting their rights.

While welcoming the Commission's continued commitment to respecting the rights of EU citizens and its renewed focus on respect for the rule of law in the Member States, Members 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 stressed that all national emergency measures should be proportionate to their initial aim of containing the COVID-19 outbreak and that they should be phased out 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.

Long-term residents who are citizens of another Member State and family members of Union citizens who are third-country nationals still face legal, administrative or practical obstacles when moving to another Member State, in particular as regards residence procedures, family or pension law, coordination between social security schemes, access to health services, sickness insurance, education and tax systems, and recognition of professional qualifications.

The Commission and the Member States are invited to:

- take the necessary enforcement action against discriminatory administrative practices in the Member States and include clear definitions of certain concepts in the Freedom of Movement Directive, such as ‘comprehensive sickness insurance’ and ‘sufficient resources’;

- 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.

- introduce systems for monitoring cases concerning children involved in **cross-border custody** that are non-discriminatory and that fully respect the fundamental rights of the child;

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

Cross-border and seasonal workers, disabled people

Recalling that minimum wages can play an important role in ensuring that the European Pillar of Social Rights is implemented, 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. All workers in the EU should enjoy high levels of social protection and equitable and well-paid jobs, with the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

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, 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 resolution 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.