Deliberations of the Committee on Petitions in 2021

2022/2024(INI) - 10/11/2022 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Petitions adopted an own-initiative report by Loránt VINCZE (EPP, RO) on the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations during 2021.

Pursuant to Rule 227 (7) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the Committee on Petitions will report annually on the outcome of its deliberations. The report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the work carried out by the committee in 2021 and includes a statistical analysis of the petitions received and processed as well as a stocktaking of other parliamentary activities such as the adoption of reports and opinions, the organisation of hearings and the committee's relations with other EU institutions.

Statistical aspects

In 2021, Parliament received **1 392 petitions**, which represents around half of the number received in 2013 (2 891) and 2014 (2 715). The number of petitions submitted in 2021 also represents a decrease of 11.5 % compared to the 1 573 petitions submitted in 2020 and a slight increase of 2.5 % compared to the 1 357 petitions submitted in 2019. The number of users supporting one or more petitions on Parliament's Petitions Web Portal was 209 272, which represents a very considerable increase from the 48 882 users recorded in 2020.

There were considerable differences in the number of petitions submitted to the Committee on Petitions from the 27 Member States, with most of the petitions concerning Spain (17 %), followed by Germany (9.7 %), Italy (9.2 %), Greece (5.9 %), Romania (4.1 %), Poland (4 %) and France (2.6 %).

Processing of petitions

Members called on the Committee on Petitions to review its working methods to ensure that **all petitions are dealt with according to a consistent and transparent set of criteria** to guarantee a timely and effective process. The treatment of petitions should be geographically balanced and Parliament should promote the role and work of its Petitions Committee and **make all EU citizens aware** of the possibility of petitioning Parliament.

The report called for awareness-raising campaigns, both at EU and national level, to help increase citizens' knowledge about their right to petition, as well as the scope of the Union's responsibilities and the competences of the Committee on Petitions with a view to reducing the number of inadmissible petitions.

Members stressed the need for **enhanced cooperation** between EU institutions, bodies, offices or agencies and national, regional and local authorities in the Member States in investigations relating to the impact and implementation of EU legislation. They called for the establishment of a one-stop-shop interinstitutional IT tool between the Commission and Parliament to share publicly all the available information on all follow-up actions taken on petitions.

The proper treatment of petitions would require more structured ways of working together and enhanced cooperation between the Committee on Petitions and the Commission through prompt and detailed responses from the Commission. The Commission should provide the Committee on Petitions with regular

updates on **developments and the state of infringement proceedings** launched on the basis of petitions received and ensure that the Committee on Petitions has access to relevant Commission documents on infringements and EU Pilot procedures.

Main issues of concern

In addition to fundamental rights and environmental issues, **health** was one of the main concerns of petitioners in 2021, as issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic were at the centre of the Petitions Committee's work. Members were very concerned that the Commission did not disclose all the details of the contracts signed with pharmaceutical companies on COVID-19 vaccines.

The report draws attention to the large number of petitions **alleging violations of the Charter of Fundamental Rights**, as well as the large number of petitions that have been debated on various aspects of the protection of the rights of rainbow families in the EU, in particular the different positions on freedom of movement and mutual recognition rights of LGBTIQ+ families in the EU. Petitions on national minority rights also remained on the agenda of the Petitions Committee.

Members noted that **environmental issues** remained a key concern for petitioners in 2021. They regretted that environmental rules are not always properly enforced in Member States and urged the Commission and Member States to ensure proper implementation of EU environmental legislation. They stressed the importance of meeting the expectations of EU citizens in the field of environmental protection, and in particular of taking action in the field of water policy to reduce pollution and limit dangerous residues of chemical substances.

The report also highlighted the important contribution of the Committee on Petitions in defending the **rights of people with disabilities**. It welcomed the protective role that the Petitions Committee has played within the EU in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Web portal

The Petitions Web Portal is an essential tool for ensuring a smooth, efficient and transparent petitions process. In this regard, Members welcomed the improvements to data protection and security features which have made the portal more user-friendly and secure for citizens.

Efforts must be continued to **make the portal more accessible** and known to citizens, including to persons with disabilities.

Lastly, the report welcomed Parliament's constructive cooperation with the European Ombudsman and its involvement in the European Network of Ombudsmen.