Deliberations of the Committee on Petitions in 2021

2022/2024(INI) - 15/12/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 408 votes to 44, with 31 abstentions, a resolution on the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations during 2021.

Members stressed the fundamental role of the Committee on Petitions in protecting and promoting the rights of EU citizens and residents by ensuring that petitioners' concerns and complaints are examined in a timely, effective, appropriate and non-discriminatory manner, and that the petitioners are informed about the actions taken and progress made on their petitions, and that they are resolved through an open, democratic and transparent petitions process.

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 Commission is invited to review its strategic approach to the handling of petitions in order to adopt clear rules and establish an administrative procedure for dealing with admissible 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 resolution 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 as described in numerous petitions raising complaints about air pollution, large carnivores' conservation status and their impact on human activities, illegal logging, attacks on environmental activists, illicit plastic waste disposal, the deterioration of natural ecosystems, nuclear safety and the alteration of biodiversity.

The resolution 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.

Parliament welcomed the debate in several meetings on the petitions of some European Citizens' Initiatives (ECIs) that have not been successful. The Commission is invited to better cooperate with citizens and to give appropriate follow-up to successful ECIs, including through legislative proposals.

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