Committee on Petitions. Annual report 1996-1997

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The right to petition the European Parliament is a basic right of European citizens and of any natural or legal person residing or having a registered office in a Member State. The rapporteur, Mr Roy PERRY, referred to the growing number of petitions concerning cases revealing serious shortcomings in Community law, frequently raising political and legislative questions as a result. Petitions therefore constitute an effective means for acquiring direct information on the attitude of the public to Community issues, for detecting shortcomings in European legislation and for monitoring cases of non-application or non-transposition of Community law. They also provide an insight into the difficulties encountered by national and Community administrations. Malfunctions in Community law should henceforth serve as a basis for enlarging and/or improving Community legislation. The rapporteur instructed all Parliamentary committees and delegations to examine the petitions forwarded to them and to take account, within their respective areas of responsibility, of the infringements detected and shortcomings of Community law highlighted by these petitions. The Committee on Petitions should also be informed and consulted on any political or legislative initiative resulting from such petitions. The rapporteur also instructed the relevant departments to ensure that regular and frequent publicity is disseminated about the right of petition, the procedure for presenting petitions and the important petitions brought to the attention of the European Parliament. The rapporteur additionally called for a continuation of the close and productive cooperation with the European Ombudsman, who is empowered to receive such complaints. He also undertook to ensure that petitions forwarded to Parliament were dealt with appropriately and as rapidly as possible. To achieve this, the rapporteur called on Parliament to establish with the other institutions, within the framework of interinstitutional agreements, deadlines for answers and investigations to petitions forwarded to them. He proposes in particular that the Commission and the rapporteur should together examine the extent to which computerized data could be made available over Intra and/or the Internet to the EU institutions and the citizens of the Union. He then called on the Commission to establish clear standards of service which European citizens are entitled to expect. Finally, he urged the Commission to guarantee close cooperation with the Committee on the 'Citizens First Initiative'. As far as the Council was concerned, the rapporteur called on its officials to attend the meetings of the Committee on Petitions on a more regular basis.