

Procedure file



Basic information

INI - Own-initiative procedure	2007/2132(INI)	Procedure completed
Report on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2006		
Subject 1.20.03 Right of petition 8.40.01.06 Committees, interparliamentary delegations		

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	PETI Petitions	PPE-DE ITURGAIZ Carlos	07/06/2007
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Secretariat-General	WALLSTRÖM Margot	

Key events

21/06/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
03/10/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
15/10/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0392/2007	
13/11/2007	Debate in Parliament		
14/11/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/11/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0529/2007	Summary
14/11/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2007/2132(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 227-p7
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	PETI/6/50418

Documentation gateway

Amendments tabled in committee		PE394.083	21/09/2007	EP	
Committee draft report		PE390.591	02/10/2007	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0392/2007	15/10/2007	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0529/2007	14/11/2007	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)6527	18/12/2007	EC	

Report on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2006

The Committee on Petitions unanimously adopted the own-initiative report by Carlos José ITURGAIZ ANGULO (EPP-ED, ES) on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during the parliamentary year 2006.

The report emphasises the significance of the petitions process in ensuring that European citizens' individual concerns about respect for their rights under the Treaty and European legislation receive appropriate responses and solutions. It emphasises the major contribution made by the Committee on Petitions to the work of the European Parliament aimed at reconnecting with the citizens of the EU and reinforcing the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of the EU decision-making process.

The report calls on the Commission to notify decisions on the opening of infringement proceedings as soon as it makes such a decision, and also relevant decisions by the Court of Justice, in particular when Parliament has been petitioned on the issue in question, and observes that the Commission has not followed up on repeated calls by the Committee on Petitions in this area.

The Petitions Committee has been called upon to notify, in writing and within a short time, its decisions relating to petitions that it considers at its meetings, so as to avoid misunderstandings and false interpretations by the mass media and petitioners. The report reiterates the importance of coordination in dealing with issues that are subject to both a petition to Parliament and a complaint to the Commission, given that the right to petition is a fundamental right, safeguarded by the Treaty, that Parliament provides a transparent framework for debates, which is a prerequisite for enhanced public accountability, and that in this context primacy must be accorded to the petitions process.

The report welcomes the decision to conduct a review of the current rules governing the petitions procedure in order to provide clarification regarding the assessment of the admissibility of petitions and to reinforce procedures related to data protection and confidentiality without undermining the essential transparency of the petitions process itself.

The Commission has been criticised for spending unjustified and excessive amounts of time pursuing and concluding infringement proceedings. The report notes its dissatisfaction with the frequent examples of non compliance by Member States with decisions of the Court of Justice. The committee considers that this undermines the credibility of the formulation and coherent application of EC law and that it serves to discredit the objectives of the EU. The Commission needs to make use of the possibility to bring Member States before the Court of Justice so that fines in the form of lump sums and penalty payments may be imposed whenever Member States delay the implementation of judgments of the Court of Justice in infringement proceedings.

MEPs welcome the agreement within the committee which has led to the increase in its membership to 40 full members, and considers that this is likely to ensure that European citizens and people residing in the territory of the EU obtain an even better understanding of their case in committee, thereby enabling Parliament to respond better to petitioners' expectations.

Necessary financial resources are needed to continue the development of the E-petition software system, which functions both as a database and as a management tool providing information about the petitions workflow.

MEPs confirm the need for greater involvement on the part of the Council, as an institution, in the Committee's activities and reiterate their proposal for the Council to designate a senior official to coordinate matters related to petitions, given that many petitions touch upon sensitive political issues concerning the transposition by Member States of Community legislation. The report welcomes the constant dialogue between the Committee on Petitions and the European Ombudsman. It points out that the Committee on Petitions supported the Special Reports on the European Schools and on the transparency of the Council's meetings. It supports the Ombudsman's request for an increase in his budget.

The committee encourages the practice of sending fact-finding missions to various Member States of the EU to investigate issues raised by petitioners as a way to facilitate effective and pragmatic solutions in the interests of the citizen. It stresses the significance of those missions in the efforts to improve communication with citizens and to raise awareness in the Member States about the activities of the European Parliament, in general, and of the Committee on Petitions, in particular.

In this context, the Secretary-General is requested to conduct an urgent review of the 'Citizens Portal' on the website of the European Parliament to enhance the visibility of the portal relating to the right of petition. Its presentation should also be upgraded in order to ensure its comparability and compatibility with the website of the European Ombudsman.

Lastly, the committee regrets the widespread failure by Member States to implement Community environmental norms correctly, and considers that there is a need for improved consistency in the monitoring, notably, of respect for the rules of Community law on the protection of biodiversity and on the assessment of the impact of certain public and private projects and plans on the environment.

Report on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2006

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Carlos José ITURGAIZ ANGULO (EPP-ED, ES) on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions during the parliamentary year 2006, and emphasised the significance of the petitions process in ensuring that European citizens' individual concerns about respect for their rights under the Treaty and Community legislation received appropriate responses and solutions. It felt that petitions offered an instrument with which to gauge what the European public

expected from the EU and the extent to which the EU managed to deliver. Parliament recalled the role of petitions as a tool to enable EU citizens both to signal loopholes in Community legislation and to alert the European institutions about any infringement or misapplication.

It stressed the importance of cooperation with the Commission in finding appropriate solutions to matters of concern which European citizens bring to the attention of the Committee on Petitions. Once again it requested the Commission to notify decisions on the opening of infringement proceedings as soon as it made such a decision, and also relevant decisions by the Court of Justice, in particular when Parliament has been petitioned on the issue in question. It called on the Committee on Petitions to notify, in writing and within a short time, its decisions relating to petitions that it considered at its meetings, so as to avoid misunderstandings and false interpretations by the mass media and petitioners.

Members restated the Petitions Committee's concern at the unjustified and excessive amount of time – often spanning several years – which the Commission took to pursue infringement proceedings and its dissatisfaction with the frequent examples of non-compliance by Member States with decisions of the Court of Justice. This undermined the credibility of the formulation and coherent application of Community law and it served to discredit the objectives of the EU. Parliament reaffirmed the need for the Commission to make use of the possibility of bringing Member States before the Court of Justice under Article 228 of the EC Treaty, so that fines in the form of lump sums and penalty payments might be imposed whenever Member States delayed the implementation of judgments of the Court of Justice in infringement proceedings. Firm action must be taken by the Commission against infringements of Community law, at least in nationally important cases which set a precedent for national jurisprudence. Such action could significantly reduce any subsequent need for citizens to complain to the Commission and petition Parliament on analogous issues.

Parliament welcomed the constant dialogue between the Committee on Petitions and the European Ombudsman. It confirmed the need for greater involvement on the part of the Council, as an institution, in the Committee's activities. The Council should designate a senior official to coordinate matters related to petitions, given that many petitions touch upon sensitive political issues concerning the transposition by Member States of Community legislation. It also emphasised once again the key role of the Member States in correctly implementing Community legislation.

Parliament also welcomed the activity of the Temporary Committee of Inquiry into the Crisis of the Equitable Life Assurance Society and the contribution made by the members of the Committee on Petitions. It encouraged the practice of sending fact-finding missions to various Member States of the EU to investigate issues raised by petitioners as a way to facilitate effective and pragmatic solutions in the interests of the citizen, stressing the significance of those missions in the efforts to improve communication with citizens and to raise awareness in the Member States about the activities of the European Parliament.

Members welcomed the agreement within the Committee which had led to the increase in its membership to 40 full members, and underlined the need to strengthen the Committee's secretariat in order to cover the need for linguistic, legal and political expertise. They reiterated the need to find the necessary financial resources to continue the development of the E-petition software system, which functioned both as a database and as a management tool providing information about the petitions workflow, thus reinforcing the transparency and efficiency of the Committee's activity.

Parliament asked the Secretary-General to conduct an urgent review of the 'Citizens Portal' on the website of the European Parliament with the objective of enhancing the visibility of the portal relating to the right of petition, and upgrading its presentation in order to ensure its comparability and compatibility with the website of the European Ombudsman which, unlike the Committee on Petitions, was concerned specifically with citizens' complaints concerning allegations of maladministration within the EU institutions or bodies. It recalled that, since 1998, Parliament asked for a review of the 1989 Interinstitutional Agreement on strengthening the right of petition. The Council and the Commission must undertake that review with a view to establishing a more effective means of redress and defining a clear framework for essential cooperation between the institutions in the area concerned. Parliament welcomed the decision to conduct a review of the current rules governing the petitions procedure in order to provide clarification regarding the assessment of the admissibility of petitions and to reinforce procedures related to data protection and confidentiality without undermining the essential transparency of the petitions process itself.

It emphasised the importance of protecting the rights of petitioners, as a fundamental element of the petitions process, and welcomed the consensus within the Committee on handling the outstanding Lloyd's petitions, especially as regards conveying full support to Ms X, whose name had become public against her wish.

Lastly, Parliament stressed the importance of protecting the environment and welcomes the Committee's intense interest in the petitions concerning the environment that it considers at its meetings.