



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

2011/2182(INI)

25.1.2012

OPINION

of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

for the Committee on Petitions

on the EU Citizenship Report 2010: Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights
(2011/2182(INI))

Rapporteur: Louis Grech

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection calls on the Committee on Petitions, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas the EU Citizenship Report COM(2010)603 and the Single Market Act Communication COM(2010)608 are complementary initiatives which place citizens at the heart of the Single Market and help to overcome the present fragmentation of the EU;
- B. whereas the current economic downspin and the re-emergence of protectionist economic attitudes in Member States have threatened some of the most visible achievements of the European Integration process; whereas the Commission proposal to make 2013 the 'European Year for Citizens' should address the EU's socio-economic problems and should work towards a market that is at the service of citizens;
- C. recalling the spirit of its Resolution of 20 May 2010¹ on delivering a single market to consumers and citizens, and endorsing the Monti report, which champions a citizen-based approach whereby citizens' and consumers' concerns are fully integrated in the Single Market's development, empowering EU citizens and giving new political impetus to the concept of EU citizenship;
- D. having regard to the outcome of the first Single Market Forum, which was held in Kraków on 3 and 4 October 2011, and in particular to the Kraków Declaration, which highlighted the obstacles that citizens face in their day-to-day lives and the steps that need to be taken in order to remove those obstacles;
 - 1. Emphasises in particular the importance of removing obstacles to the free movement of Europe's citizens, especially by ensuring that citizens enjoy their EU rights pertaining to various aspects of their life in any Member State to which they travel; this is particularly important with respect to the free movement of workers and professionals, and thus to the completion of the internal market;
 - 2. Stresses that mobility of EU citizens could be enhanced by facilitating and providing better information on the use of their social rights in other Member States; warmly welcomes the Commission's initiative of developing a new system of electronic exchange of social security data, and calls for enhanced cooperation between the national social security systems;
 - 3. Calls on the Commission to put into effect Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, particularly as regards island and mountain regions, whose inhabitants do not have the same access to health, work and education as citizens living in big towns and cities; urges the Commission to make greater efforts to ensure that broadband is introduced in island and mountain regions and to implement all the policies required, in terms of access to rights, to avert the depopulation of these regions;

¹ P7_TA(2010)0186.

4. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to updating Directive 2005/36/EC in order to enable faster and less bureaucratic recognition of professional qualifications; stresses that it is necessary for professional qualifications to be broadly recognised, as citizens are becoming increasingly more mobile, and also to guarantee portability rights of mobile workers, promote informal training leading to a skills passport, and implementing the 'youth on the move' card; agrees that a voluntary European professional card could serve as a tool to better facilitate the mobility of Europeans and serve as an example for a Europe of citizens;
5. Recalls the importance of portability of pensions across EU Member States, the lack of which remains a significant obstacle which discourages citizens from exercising their right to free movement;
6. Notes the awareness on the part of the Commission that citizens have insufficient access to information and therefore prompts the Commission to adapt communication to the needs of ordinary citizens to the fullest extent possible, for instance by making all public consultations by the Commission available in all EU official languages; strongly reaffirms its position regarding the importance of one-stop-shops, commends the Commission for its work on the Your Europe Portal and encourages completion of the development of this innovative tool, particularly by stepping up solutions for adequately resourced physical one-stop-shops at national level by ensuring that they are located within the representations of the European Commission in the various EU Member States;
7. Recognises that administrative hurdles remain a major barrier within the European Union; calls on the Commission to find more effective solutions by constantly identifying and addressing the barriers and bottlenecks for citizens dealing with cross-border administrative procedures, whether directly or through the local administrative authority;
8. Recognises the language difficulties faced by citizens in dealing with national courts, institutions and administrations when moving freely within the European Union; calls on the Commission to offer tangible and expedient solutions to help citizens overcome this significant obstacle, without placing a heavy burden on the Member State authorities;
9. Calls on the Commission to adopt a comprehensive, consolidated framework integrating all passenger rights into one single piece of legislation, taking into account the different needs of passengers depending on the mode of transportation, and commends the Commission's plans to revise Regulation (EC) 261/2004; requests the Commission to pursue effective actions in this field;
10. Points out that complex tax rules applicable to cross-border situations alongside double taxation discourage citizens from moving across borders; backs the Commission's efforts to eliminate these tax barriers and considers that special attention should be given to the registration of motor vehicles previously registered in another Member State so as to reduce cumbersome re-registration formalities and paperwork and avoid instances of dual payment of registration tax; calls on the Commission to ensure that a legislative proposal is presented to this effect in 2012;
11. Welcomes the Commission's proposals to facilitate better access to cross-border healthcare so as to guarantee peace of mind and quality care to citizens located outside

their Member State; urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure a swift and effective implementation of Directive 2011/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2011 on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, taking due account of the principles of universality, access to good quality care, equity and solidarity¹; calls further on the Commission and the Member States to continue working towards the target of widespread deployment of telemedicine and e-health services by 2020 and, furthermore, supports the pilot projects aimed at granting EU citizens secure online access to their patient data and ensuring interoperability of patient records, thus providing patients with continuity of care;

12. Notes that one of the main causes of frustration for citizens receiving health care abroad is that they are not sufficiently aware of their rights and the means available for enforcing them; calls on the Commission and the Member States to inform EU citizens better about these rights, including the practical aspects of their exercise, in particular with regard to reimbursement of costs;
13. Notes the recent Commission publications on 'Consumer Empowerment' and 'The 20 main concerns', which highlight the information, legislative and implementation gaps which persist within the Single Market, as well as the lack of knowledge among consumers and businesses with regard to their rights and obligations, which prevents them from reaping the benefits of the Single Market; undertakes, and calls on the Commission and Member States, to enhance communication with citizens on the rights they derive from the Single Market;
14. Believes that, having identified the problems related to the Single Market, the Commission should move into the next logical phase of consolidating and finding ways to implement effectively the Single Market in order to regain the support of European citizens; welcomes the Commission's work on the 'The 20 main concerns', which stemmed from the resolution of 20 May 2010², as a useful first step; calls on the Commission to bring forward the 'Top 20 main Solutions', as proposed at the Krakow Single Market Forum, to each of these sources of frustration;
15. Calls on the Commission to look upon the development of the digital single market as a priority, so that consumers have full access to more competitive offers of goods and services;
16. Considers that access to banking services for EU citizens who establish themselves in another EU Member State should be further facilitated; urges the Commission to take the necessary legislative measures to ensure access for all EU citizens to a basic payment account; stresses the need to improve the transparency of banking fees;
17. Recalls that the 2011 Single Market Forum succeeded as an audit of the progress of the Single Market and helped to bring citizens' concerns to the fore; urges the Commission to

¹ Directive 2011/24/EU provides rules for facilitating access to safe, high-quality cross-border healthcare and promotes cooperation on healthcare between Member States. Under Article 4 of the Directive, cross-border healthcare is to be provided taking into account the principles of universality, access to good quality care, equity and solidarity.

² P7_TA(2010)0186 (Grech Report).

maintain this momentum and to assess continuously the state of play of the single market by holding regular Single Market Fora and supplementing these with annual visits to assess and promote the single market in the individual Member States;

18. Welcomes the Commission's work and commitment to the implementation of the Single Market Act; urges the Commission to ensure effective implementation of the main priorities, whilst developing a second set of initiatives for future implementation;
19. Recalls the importance of effective redress mechanism as a means of ensuring that consumers can pursue their rights; emphasises the fact that, over the years, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) systems and the SOLVIT network have proved to be simple, fast and cost-effective in solving problems affecting citizens, such as those linked to recognition of professional qualifications, portability of pension funds of mobile workers and free movement and residence of EU citizens, notes, nevertheless, that Europe's ADR landscape remains largely fragmented and the SOLVIT network largely underused; stresses that citizens should be better informed about these redress mechanisms and problem-solving tools with a view to the facilitation of consumer redress in cross-border purchases of goods and services; welcomes the Commission's legislative proposals on the use of ADR and Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) and underlines the importance of their effective adoption, as well as of promoting wider use of mediation; urges the Commission to ensure that a legally binding framework is prepared in the field of collective redress;
20. Takes the view that a new citizen-based ADR system built on existing advisory bodies and administrative structures would go a long way in providing affordable, expedient and accessible out-of-court settlement procedures for consumers;
21. Encourages the Commission to adopt without delay an Action Plan to further reinforce and strengthen the role of SOLVIT, Your Europe Advice and the European Consumers' Centres, among others assistance services, in order to make them more visible to citizens and businesses;
22. Encourages the Commission to consider adopting a user-friendly, regularly updated and easily accessible Citizens' Rights Charter, as called for in Parliament's aforementioned Resolution of 20 May 2010¹, outlining citizens' rights, obligations and cross-border issues within the Single Market; takes the view that this Charter should be readily available and serve as a handbook for all citizens moving, working, shopping and selling across borders, and provide more practical information and solutions to the day-to-day problems encountered by European citizens, such as gaining access to medical care, registration of cars, opening a bank account, online purchasing of products and so forth;
23. Demands further action from the Member States in coordination with the Commission to overcome hurdles preventing citizens from having access to online services; notes, in this regard, the Commission proposal on a European Contract Law;
24. Reminds the European Commission of its duty to investigate infringements of EU law, particularly with respect to infringements of citizens' EU rights; stresses that the burden of proof regarding such infringements of EU law must not be placed on citizens, who do not

¹ P7_TA(2010)0186 (Grech Report)

have the resources to furnish such information;

25. Emphasises that even with the recent improvements revealed by the Internal Market Scoreboards of December 2010, Member States are still failing fully to meet their objectives of correct and timely transposition of European legislation into national law; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure proper implementation and transposition of single market legislation through more systematic, independent monitoring in order to guarantee a level playing field throughout the Union;

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	25.1.2012
Result of final vote	+: 36 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Adam Bielan, Cristian Silviu Buşoi, Sergio Gaetano Cofferati, Lara Comi, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Cornelis de Jong, Evelyne Gebhardt, Louis Grech, Vicente Miguel Garcés Ramón, Małgorzata Handzlik, Iliana Ivanova, Philippe Juvin, Sandra Kalniete, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Edvard Kožušník, Kurt Lechner, Toine Manders, Hans-Peter Mayer, Phil Prendergast, Mitro Repo, Robert Rochefort, Zuzana Roithová, Heide Rühle, Christel Schaldemose, Andreas Schwab, Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein, Bernadette Vergnaud, Barbara Weiler
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Simon Busuttil, Frank Engel, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Anna Hedh, Liem Hoang Ngoc, Emma McClarkin, Olle Schmidt, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides