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on the activities of the Committee on Petitions 2012
(2013/2013(INI))

Committee on Petitions

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the activities of the Committee on Petitions 2012 (2013/2013(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to previous resolutions on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions,
 - having regard to Articles 10 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
 - having regard to Articles 24, 227, 228, 258 and 260 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
 - having regard to Rules 48 and 202(8) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Petitions (A7-0299/2013),
- A. whereas, subject to Protocol 30 of the Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has already acquired legally binding force through the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon¹; whereas pursuant to Article 51 the Charter applies to the institutions and bodies of the EU and the Member States, only when they are implementing Union law; whereas the same Treaty also establishes the legal basis for the EU to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights and to introduce the European Citizens' Initiative;
- B. whereas the Committee on Petitions has a duty to review constantly and, where possible, to enhance its role, notably with regard to the development of democratic principles, such as the increased participation of citizens in the EU decision-making process and the enhancement of transparency and accountability; whereas, in its regular activity, the Committee works closely with Member States, the Commission, the European Ombudsman and other bodies in order to ensure that EU law is fully respected in both letter and spirit;
- C. whereas in 2012 the Committee on Petitions registered 1 986 petitions, mostly referring to the themes of fundamental rights, the environmentthe internal market, and economic and social crisis; whereas 1 406 petitions were declared admissible, and of those 853 were forwarded to the Commission for further investigation pursuant to Articles 258 and 260 of the Treaty, and 580 petitions were declared inadmissible; whereas the subject matters of at least five petitions submitted in 2012 were brought before the Court of Justice pursuant to Articles 258 and 260 of the Treaty; whereas the Judgment of 14 September 2011 in Case T-308/07 made it clear that procedural decisions by Parliament in petition cases are also subject to judicial review; whereas, regarding the statistical analysis contained in this report, the highest number of petitions refer to the EU as a whole (27.3 %), followed by Spanish (15.0 %), German (12.5 %) and Italian (8.6 %) cases;
- D. whereas, in the field of fundamental rights, the Committee devoted much attention in 2012 to the rights of persons with disabilities, the rights of children, consumer rights, property

rights, the rights of free movement without discrimination on any grounds, protecting freedom of expression and privacy, and the right of access to documents and information, as well as the rights to freedom of political association and to join a trade union; whereas the situation of economic crisis has prompted a number of petitions concerning social problems, such as housing, employment and banking sector malpractices towards savers;

- E. whereas petitions submitted by citizens give evidence that there is persisting discrimination against citizens as a result of disability, belonging to a minority or certain ethnic group, gender, age or sexual orientation;
- F. whereas EU initiatives to fight discrimination, such as the 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, must be promptly adopted into national strategies and continuously reviewed and monitored in light of evolving economic and social situations;
- G. whereas, in relation to the protection of the environment, the threat posed by pollution and environmental malpractice can never be overstated, due to the ensuing risks to biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as public health risks, all of which are long-lasting and often life-threatening; whereas regarding biodiversity, some Member States have not yet determined the totality of minimum Natura 2000 protection areas nor fully implemented their effective protection; whereas due account should be taken of the aims of combating pollution and climate change; whereas the Committee devoted much attention in 2012 to the implementation of legislation on waste and water, as well as to the assessment of the impact of projects and activities on the environment and on public health;
- H. whereas we must conserve our natural resources with a view to safeguarding the earth's future; whereas the precautionary principle must be applied in respect of technological innovations such as GMOs and nanotechnology;
- I. whereas on the waste management issue, the fact-finding visit to Italy highlighted the urgent need for all Italian authorities involved to find a sustainable solution for the waste management needs of the province of Rome ensuring respect for citizens' health and dignity; whereas, despite the end of the emergency situation in the city of Naples, many challenges on a comprehensive approach to waste management remain in the Campania region in connection with the waste hierarchy set in Directive 2008/98/EC (the Waste Framework Directive) and the CJEU ruling of March 2010;
- J. whereas, although the Commission can fully check compliance with EU law only when a final decision has been taken by national authorities, it is important – particularly in relation to environmental matters – to verify at an early stage that local, regional and national authorities correctly apply all relevant procedural requirements under EU law, including implementation of the precautionary principle;
- K. whereas the work of the committee has led to water being declared a public good by Parliament; whereas the European Citizens' Initiative 'Right to water' has been the first to reach the threshold of one million signatures from European citizens;
- L. whereas further irreparable losses of biodiversity must be averted, especially inside Natura

2000 designated sites; whereas Member States have undertaken to ensure the protection of special conservation areas under Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409 EEC (the Birds Directive);

- M. whereas in its resolution of 13 December 2012 on a new sustainable and competitive steel industry, based on a petition received¹, Parliament advocated the ‘polluter pays’ principle;
- N. whereas in spite of the Interinstitutional Agreement between Parliament and the Commission, the latter appears reluctant to provide prompt information on the nature of its deliberations, as well as decisions taken, in infringement proceedings related to petitions and concerning the implementation of environmental legislation; whereas this is a major source of concern given the irreversible damage and destruction that could be inflicted on our ecosystems and health; whereas the European institutions ought to supply more information and be more transparent with regard to EU citizens;
- O. whereas 2013 has been designated the European Year of Citizens, and it is precisely the citizens and residents of the EU, individually or in association with others, who are well placed both to assess the effectiveness of European legislation as it is applied, and to signal possible loopholes which impair the proper implementation of legislation and the full exercise of rights; whereas due account should be taken of the contents of the ‘European Consumer Agenda to boost confidence and growth’; whereas a fundamental precondition for this is that information about European legislation should be made available to citizens in a practical fashion;
- P. whereas, for that reason, the Committee on Petitions devoted a great amount of time and effort in 2012 to discussing the meaning of European citizenship, which is closely associated with a complete freedom of movement and residence within the EU, as defined in Part III TFEU, but which also comprises many other rights and is of benefit to citizens who do not leave their home country; whereas petitions give evidence that Union citizens and residents still face widespread and tangible obstacles to exercising their cross-border rights in particular, a situation which has a direct and daily impact on the lives and welfare of thousands of households;
- Q. whereas the petitions process can be complementary to other European instruments available to citizens, such as the option to address complaints to the European Ombudsman or to the Commission; whereas the Committee on Petitions works closely with the European Ombudsman, other Parliament committees, European bodies, agents and networks, and Member States;
- R. whereas the petitions process can, and should, remain complementary to other mechanisms of redress available to citizens, such as lodging complaints with the Commission or the European Ombudsman; whereas SOLVIT, in particular, is an important tool which may be used by EU citizens in order to find speedy solutions to problems caused by the misapplication of internal market law by public authorities; whereas progress must therefore be made in jointly resolving legal cases brought by consumers and their associations; whereas the single web portal ‘Exercise your rights’ contains important information for citizens who wish to lodge complaints on the

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0510.

rightful application of EU law;

- S. whereas the field of action, and the modus operandi, of the right to petition granted to all EU citizens and residents under the terms of the Treaty differs from other remedies available to citizens, such as, for instance, the submission of complaints to the Commission or to the Ombudsman;
- T. whereas it is necessary to increase citizen participation in the EU decision-making process, with a view to reinforcing its legitimacy and accountability;
- U. whereas a new instrument for a participatory democracy, the ‘European Citizens Initiative’, entered into force on 1 April 2012 and registered a total of sixteen initiatives during the course of the year; whereas relevant concerns have been raised by various initiators of European Citizens’ Initiatives on the technical barriers encountered for the actual collection of signatures; whereas the Committee on Petitions will play a primordial role in the organisation of the public hearings for successful initiatives;
- V. whereas it remains evident that there is both a lack of clearly structured and widely publicised information and a lack of awareness amongst EU citizens about their rights; whereas these constitute decisive obstacles to exercising active EU citizenship; whereas, in this connection, the Member States should comply in a more comprehensive manner with their obligation to provide information and cultivate awareness;
- W. whereas European citizens and residents are legitimately entitled to expect that the issues they raise with the Committee on Petitions may find a solution without undue delay within the legal framework of the European Union, and in particular that the Members of the committee will defend the petitioner’s natural environment, health, freedom of movement, dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms; whereas the efficiency of the committee’s work is largely the result of swiftness of operation and thoroughness of its Secretariat, and this could be improved further, in particular by optimising the time taken to process petitions and by systematising the procedure for their assessment; whereas, in view of the ever-increasing number of petitions received annually, more resources and increased committee-meeting time should be devoted for this purpose; whereas there is a need for continuity in processing petitions, despite the changes in legislative periods and the resulting changes in personnel; whereas several petitions have been submitted by victims of the Franco regime and concerning abducted children in Spain;
- X. whereas certain petitions are pending between the Commission, Parliament, the European Court of Justice and national authorities without any solution found, leaving the petitioners on uncertain ground with no sign of a conclusion;
- Y. Whereas there has been a considerable increase in the number of petitions concerned with violations of the principles of fundamental democratic rights and the rule of law protected by the Treaty on European Union in the Member States, which shows that European citizens have increasing faith in the Community institutions to uphold their fundamental rights;
- Z. whereas individuals and local communities, as well as voluntary organisations and businesses, are well placed to assess the effectiveness of European legislation as it applies

to them, and to signal possible loopholes that need to be analysed in order to ensure better, more uniform and comparable implementation of EU law in all the Member States;

* * *

1. Takes note that petitions received in 2012 from European Union citizens and residents focused on alleged breaches of EU law in the fields of fundamental rights, the environment, the internal market and property rights; considers that petitions give evidence that there are still frequent and widespread instances of incomplete transposition or of misapplication of EU law;
2. Notes that fundamental rights remain a key subject of the petitions submitted, notably raising issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities, children's rights, property rights, the right of free movement, including the portability of social security entitlements, without encountering any form of discrimination on any grounds, the protection of freedom of expression and privacy, freedom of association, and the right of access to documents and information; calls on Member States to apply correctly and respect those rights as set out in the Treaty and calls on the Commission to take the necessary measures to oblige non-compliant Member States to close the gap between national laws and the fundamental rights of EU citizens;
3. Considers that an interactive guide to be placed on the internet by the European Parliament, in line with what the European Ombudsman has placed on the Internet, could reduce the number of petitions submitted relating to subject matter which does not fall within the field of activity of the EU;
4. Confirms the key role of the Committee on Petitions in identifying non-judicial remedies for citizens, thereby providing a reality check on the way in which the European Union is seen by the people of Europe, enabling conclusions to be drawn regarding whether European legislation actually delivers the expected results and responds to the expectations people have of the Union;
5. Calls on the Committee on Petitions to examine the effects on the admissibility of petitions of the Equal Rights Trust case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, which gives, even in the case of purely national law, Union citizens a higher level of protection in the event of a national ruling having a bearing on the exercise of their EU-citizenship rights; calls for an investigation of the obstacles which actually exist for Union citizens in obtaining a reliable interpretation of European legislation in cases before national courts by applying for a preliminary ruling from the Court;
6. As part of the efforts to improve the work of the Committee, calls for a procedure involving fact-finding missions which on the one hand ensures the right of all members of a fact-finding mission to present the facts from their point of view, while also guaranteeing all committee members the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process with regard to the conclusions to be drawn by the Committee on Petitions;
7. Is determined to make the petition procedure more efficient, transparent, and impartial, while preserving the participatory rights of the members of the Committee on Petitions, so that the handling of petitions will stand up to judicial review even at a procedural level;

8. Draws attention to persisting discrimination against citizens on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, belonging to a minority group, age or sexual orientation; warns, in particular, that the Roma population across the EU continues to face obstacles to inclusion; calls, therefore, on the Commission to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation in this area, to provide adequate funding for the implementation of national strategies for Roma inclusion, and to monitor actively whether these strategies are being effectively implemented in Member States;
9. Calls on the Commission to come up with a proposal for legislation to solve finally the problems relating to the mutual recognition by Member States of civil status documents and their effects, while at the same time respecting the social policy traditions of the individual Member States in accordance with the subsidiarity principle;
10. Repeats its previous calls to Member States to ensure freedom of movement for all EU citizens and their families, without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or nationality; repeats its call to Member States to implement fully the rights granted under Articles 2 and 3 of Directive 2004/38/EC not only to different-sex spouses, but also to the registered partner, member of the household or partner with whom an EU citizen has a duly attested, stable relationship, including members of same-sex couples, on the basis of the principles of mutual recognition, equality, non-discrimination, dignity and respect for private and family life; calls on the Commission, in that connection, to ensure that the directive is strictly applied and ultimately reviewed accordingly for this purpose, if necessary, and to ensure that Treaty infringement proceedings are brought where necessary against Member States which fail to apply it;
11. Observes that the environment remains another key subject of petitions, giving evidence that public authorities in the Member States repeatedly fail to ensure the preservation of biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystems, and that the highest standards of public health are guaranteed; points, in particular, to the numerous petitions submitted on waste management, on water, on the possible dangers of nuclear energy and genetic engineering, on protected species, and on the assessment of the impact of projects and activities on the environment and on public health, such as shale gas extraction by means of fracking; urges the Commission to strengthen the environmental legislative framework on the environment and combating climate change and, specifically, its correct implementation; regrets that some Member States, despite their efforts, have not been able to find sustainable solutions for problems related to waste management;
12. Urges the Commission to take action to ensure that the Member States understand that water is a public good; takes the view that the precautionary principle must be stringently applied in respect of the use of biotechnology and nanotechnology in products that could seriously affect the health of consumers;
13. Expects that the reviewed Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, revising Directive 2011/92/EU, will not only be strengthened by providing clearer parameters but will, above all, be duly implemented by the Member States,
14. Takes the view that procedures must be developed for urgent petitions whereby fact-finding missions can also be carried out in the long 'white' period with no parliamentary business during the European elections and also – if the nature of the

petition suggests– during the ‘white’ period in summer (e.g. Damùls, where the summer months were the only possible time for a fact-finding mission);

15. Welcomes the end of the emergency situation in Naples city and the new initiatives concerning waste management and expects that the persisting challenges in the Campania region will be duly addressed, namely by means of a comprehensive regional waste management plant in accordance with the EU Waste Framework Directive hierarchy and the CJEU ruling of 2010; still has serious concerns over the waste management approach in the Lazio Region, in particular regarding the follow-up to the close-down of the Malagrotta landfill site;
16. Notes, in addition, that citizens in the European Union continue to face barriers within the internal market, notably while exercising their freedom of movement as individuals, as providers and consumers of goods and services and as workers, such as, for instance, in the case of Romanian and Bulgarian workers who continue to face restrictions on the labour market in some Member States; signals, in particular, that cross-border judicial cooperation and effectiveness remains an area of primary concern; concludes, overall, that strengthened cross-border cooperation and harmonisation provides marked benefits for the protection of citizens’ rights and economic stimulation;
17. Urges the Commission to take action to facilitate consumer access to information and communications technology, ensuring that the requisite security and transparency guarantees are in place, and in particular to make sure that the websites of public sector bodies are accessible;
18. Points to the efforts made by this Committee to convey the request by many citizens for an EU legal framework that offers more thorough protection and improvements in animal welfare, including for pets and stray animals;
19. Stresses the importance of the creation of the Spanish Coastal Law Working Group, which could pave the way for other such initiatives, and which has been closely studying related petitions and the modification of the law; reiterates the importance of direct contact with the Spanish national authorities in this respect and stresses the urgent need for further intensified cooperation to find a better balance between property rights and their social function, and better solutions when the ultimate goal of the protection of the environment requires expropriation; expresses its fears that the new coastal law approved by the Spanish Parliament is not succeeding in resolving the concerns of petitioners, nor are there any plans for the further environmental protection of Spain’s coastal areas;
20. Stresses the need to regulate coastal protection effectively, but notes that the coastal law is not consistent with the objectives sought, since it is affecting historic heritage and traditional communities, impacting negatively on the inhabitants of coastal villages who have always coexisted sustainably with the sea and its ecosystems;
21. Welcomes the Committee’s conclusions from the fact-finding visit to Berlin on youth and family welfare matters, particularly in cross-border custody cases; notes, however, based on the continuing inflow of petitions of this nature, that it is clear the issue of cross-border custody cases is ongoing, and that similar cases have also been brought to the Committee’s attention from other Member States, notably Denmark; further notes that in

Denmark some of these cases have involved foreign nationals living in the country itself and that there have been proven instances of child abduction there (including from outside Denmark);

22. Takes the view that better governance and more efficient redress mechanisms are directly linked with transparency and access to information in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001;
23. Considers it important to enhance cooperation with Member States' parliaments and governments, based on reciprocity and, where necessary, to encourage Member States' authorities to transpose and apply EU legislation with full transparency; stresses the importance of the Commission's cooperation with the Member States and deplors the negligence of some Member States with regard to transposing and enforcing European environmental legislation;
24. Draws attention, in that regard, to the Eurobarometer of public opinion which indicates that only 36 % of EU citizens consider themselves well informed about their rights and only 24 % feel well informed about what they can do if their rights are not respected; stresses, therefore, the urgent need for improved access to information and for a clearer distinction between the functions of the various national and European institutions, so that petitions and complaints can be addressed to the right bodies;
25. Calls specifically on the Commission to make the 'Exercise your rights' web portal more user-friendly and to raise awareness amongst EU citizens of its existence;
26. Is determined to put in place a more practical and visible petitions web portal by the end of 2013, in order to facilitate access to the petitions process and to provide valuable information on petitions, its public dissemination and an interactive approach to the petitions process, as well as on other redress mechanisms; calls for the right of petition to be given greater visibility on the Parliament website homepage;
27. Emphasises that the Committee on Petitions, along with other institutions, bodies and instruments such as the European Citizens' Initiative, the European Ombudsman, the Commission, and the committees of inquiry, play an independent and clearly defined role as points of contact for each individual citizen; further stresses that the Committee on Petitions must continue to be a point of reference for citizens whose rights are allegedly being infringed;
28. Welcomes the constructive cooperation between the Committee and the European Ombudsman, as for instance in the case of the Ombudsman's Special Report on Vienna Airport, regarding the appropriate application of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive; supports the activities of the Ombudsman concerning instances of maladministration in the activities of EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies; expects this task to be continued on the grounds of full independence, as has been the case until now;
29. Points out that not all EU citizens have a national ombudsman with extensive powers, which means that not all EU citizens have the same access to redress; believes that with a national ombudsman in each Member State, the European Network of Ombudsmen would

provide considerable support for the European Ombudsman;

30. Welcomes the continued cooperation with the Commission with regard to the examination of petitions in the field of the application of EU law by Member States; stresses, nevertheless, that the Committee expects to be kept well and promptly informed about developments concerning infringement proceedings; asks the Commission to give equal consideration to petitions and complaints as regards the functioning of infringement procedures; calls, in addition, upon the Commission also to provide the Committee with details and a statistical analysis of all complaints it investigates; stresses that, for the right of petition to be fully respected, a thorough analysis and answer from the Commission is fundamental when requested, providing an assessment not only of the formal or procedural issues but also on the essential content of the matter;
31. Emphasises that access to information held by the EU institutions, as specified by Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, is the primary interest of citizens aiming to understand better the decision-making process particularly when it concerns projects with an impact on the environment; takes the view that greater access to information on investigations and infringement files could be provided by the Commission without jeopardising the purpose of the investigations and that an overriding public interest might well justify access to these files, particularly in cases where fundamental rights, human or animal health and the protection of the environment against irreversible damage may be at stake, or where proceedings are under way regarding discrimination against a minority or violations of human dignity, as long as protection of trade secrets and sensitive information relating to court cases, competition cases and personnel files are safeguarded;
32. Asks for a precautionary and preventive approach by the Commission when assessing projects with a potential negative environmental or public health impact, in early cooperation with the Member States concerned; notes the possibility of injunction measures to be established during deliberations in cases where irreversible damage is anticipated;
33. Takes note, in particular, of the important contribution of the SOLVIT network in uncovering and resolving issues related to the implementation of internal market legislation; encourages the enhancement of this EU tool by ensuring that Member States provide adequate staffing to the SOLVIT National Centres; adds that collective action is needed to resolve disputes brought by consumers and their associations;
34. Underlines that, as confirmed by the Legal Service in its Opinion of 29 February 2012, the fields of activity of the European Union institutions, as contained in the Treaty, are wider than the mere sum of the competences exercised by the Union; takes into account the view of Parliament's Legal Service that Parliament is entitled to adopt internal administrative decisions which aim to establish a procedure for the processing of submissions from citizens; regrets in this respect the failure of the appropriate Parliament service to follow through on Parliament's Resolution of 21 November 2012 on the activities of the Committee on Petitions 2011¹, with regard to submissions from citizens on issues which fall outside the EU's area of competence; takes note, finally, of the legal ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union (Case T-280/09), specifying that a petition must

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0455.

be drafted in a sufficiently clear and precise manner so as to be properly understood, in light of the conditions set out in Article 227 TFEU;

35. Urges Member States to transpose and apply EU legislation in full transparency and, with that objective in mind, considers it indispensable to improve the Commission's early cooperation with Member States' parliaments and governments, on a reciprocal basis;
36. Deplores the bureaucratic obstacles placed before European Citizens' Initiatives due to a lack of IT support; regrets, above all, that such a tool for citizens is being used so disparately in the various administrations, due to varying operating procedures in the Member States;
37. Welcomes the Year of European Citizenship in 2013; calls on all institutions and bodies both of the European Union and of the Member States to enhance and advertise more widely their service to European citizens and residents during this year, in light of the principles contained in the Treaties and the facts revealed in this report;
38. Notes that the petitions mechanism is not merely a service, but a right for all European citizens and residents; pledges to make the petition procedure more efficient, transparent, and impartial, while preserving the participatory rights of the Members of the Committee on Petitions, so that the handling of petitions stands up to judicial review even at a procedural level;
39. Emphasises the essential role of fact-finding visits in the petitions procedure, not just as a participatory parliamentary right, but also as an obligation in relation to petitioners; reaffirms, as already stated in this Committee's previous report, the need for more precise, written, procedural rules in relation to the preparation, implementation and evaluation of visits, ensuring on the one hand that all members of a fact-finding visit have the right to present the facts from their point of view while, on the other hand, guaranteeing all Committee Members the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process concerning the conclusions and recommendations to be drawn by the Committee on Petitions;
40. Calls on Parliament's Conference of Presidents to reinforce this Committee's investigatory role;
41. Considers the organisation of public hearings a useful way of studying issues raised by petitioners in depth; wishes to bring attention, for instance, to the public hearing held on the exploration and exploitation of unconventional energy sources, which took note of the concerns raised in this respect by EU citizens through their petitions; recognises Member States' right to choose their energy mix and the need for better EU-wide coordination when realising the threefold objectives of EU energy policy as a whole, namely competitiveness, sustainability and security of supply;
42. Looks forward to organising public hearings for successful European Citizens' Initiatives, alongside the legislative Committee responsible in accordance with Rule 197A of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure; reaffirms its belief that this new tool will strengthen the democratic institutions of the Union and will give meaning to the notion of European citizenship;

43. Is nevertheless concerned about the red tape and technical obstacles which have emerged during the first months of the practical application of the European Citizens' Initiative; calls, therefore, on the Commission to consider seriously bringing forward the date of the review prescribed in Article 22 of Regulation (EU) No 211/2011;
44. Stresses the need for regular review of the state of play with the European Citizens' Initiatives, with the aim of improving the procedure and enabling effective solutions to be found as swiftly as possible to any obstacles at every stage of the procedure;
45. Believes that the role and responsibilities of the Petitions Committee would be best performed, and its visibility, efficiency, accountability and transparency best enhanced, by improving its means for bringing issues of importance to European citizens to plenary, and upgrading its abilities to call witnesses, conduct investigations and organise hearings;
46. Resolves to examine the extent to which amendments to the Rules of Procedure would be appropriate for the implementation of the above formal requirements concerning fact-finding visits and plenary resolutions under Article 202 of its Rules of Procedure;
47. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of the Committee on Petitions to the Council, the Commission and the European Ombudsman, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States, their committees on petitions and their ombudsmen or similar competent bodies.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The right to petition

The right of European Union citizens and residents to petition the European Parliament, as individuals or on behalf of associations, is a long-standing right conferred by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Art. 227) and by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Art. 44). The right to petition is an essential democratic tool, as it provides a reality check for Members of the European Parliament on the issues that concern citizens, and also demonstrates that the European Parliament is prepared to directly intervene in order to promote and protect the rights of citizens.

The Members of the Committee on Petitions check admissibility, analyse content, and take action on each petition submitted. Action often includes direct dialogue with other Committees of the European Parliament and with other EU institutions, particularly the European Commission, who are asked to investigate or to give their opinion. The Committee may also consult national administrations or permanent representations, organise fact-finding visits, and elaborate own-initiative reports. The objective of Members is to reply to petitioners with conclusions, recommendations, or referrals to other institutions or bodies.

In 2012, the Committee on Petitions registered a total of 1986 petitions. This represents a marked increase from the 1414 petitions registered in 2011. Detailed figures on registration, adoption, countries concerned, nationality of the petitioners, language and format of submission, as well as main themes of the petitions, are provided in the Statistical Annex of this report.

The meaning of *Citizenship*

All through the year 2012, the Members of the Committee on Petitions (PETI) have devoted a great amount of time and effort to discussing the meaning of citizenship and the obstacles that European Union citizens still face to exercising their rights.

Most notably, the Committee on Petitions welcomed the implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) on 1 April 2012. The ECI constitutes the first instrument of transnational participatory democracy and will give citizens the possibility to become actively involved in the framing of European policies and legislation. PETI will play a primordial role in the process as the independent organiser of public hearings on the subjects of successful ECIs, alongside the legislative Committee responsible. In May, Members held an exchange of views with Vice-President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič, during which he announced the symbolic registration of the first ECI, dedicated to policies for Europe's Youth - Fraternity 2020.

The Committee on Petitions tabled a key debate in the March plenary session in Brussels, during which the European Parliament adopted its own-initiative report 'EU Citizenship Report 2010' (Rapporteur: Adina-Ioana Vălean). The report, which received opinions from the committees on Culture, Internal Market and Consumer Protection, and Constitutional Affairs, emphasised issues related to the freedom of movement of EU citizens and to the protection of fundamental rights, highlighting the barriers encountered by same-sex partners

and by the Roma population in the exercise of their rights. The report hopes to contribute to raising awareness and promoting discussion on the meaning of citizenship in the European Union.

Early in the year, PETI also contributed to the work of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs with Opinions for two key reports. On the designation of 2013 as the European Year of the Citizen, PETI called for measures to be taken to provide Union citizens with information about its work and the work of the European Ombudsman in order to enable them to make better use of, and defend their rights under Union law (Rapporteur: Nikolaos Salavrakos). On the Rights and Citizenship Programme proposed for 2014-2020, PETI urged for the explicit inclusion of references to the rights of persons with disabilities and to the need for judicious, accessible and transparent allocation of funds within the framework of the Programme, two issues which have been the subject of numerous petitions (Rapporteur: Adina-Ioana Vălean).

In order to continue deliberating on the meaning of citizenship in the European Union, PETI decided to hold a joint hearing with the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and with the European Commission on February 19th, 2013.

o *The impact of the economic crisis on the meaning of citizenship*

Along 2012, the economic crisis continued to profoundly impact most regions across the European Union, rapidly deteriorating the welfare of hundreds of thousands of households. This reality has raised scepticism amongst European Union citizens on the health of democratic institutions both at the Member State and European levels, including on the way decisions are made within the European Parliament.

In September, the Committee on Petitions held a long discussion on a petition which addresses precisely this issue. The petition, signed by over 10,000 citizens, argues in favour of the formation of a federal economic government in the European Union; a fiscal union which would be democratically accountable to the European Parliament and which would entail structural reforms aimed at raising competitiveness and employment. Petitioners also argued in favour of a Constitutional Convention following the 2014 European Parliament Elections

During the debate, members of PETI shared the view that the current economic crisis violates the rights of citizens, not only their economic rights but also social and political rights conferred by the Treaty and by the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Undoubtedly, the erosion of democracy is widely felt across the Union and a broader public debate is urgently needed.

As a result, PETI decided to propose the organisation of a public hearing on citizens' rights and the economic crisis in 2013. The hearing, held jointly with the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, will involve citizens from all Member States and discuss ways and tools for greater democratic accountability and engagement.

o *The imperative of good administration and proper implementation of EU law*

The right to good administration is a fundamental right which ensures that citizens' questions, problems and other affairs be handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time. In recent years, numerous petitions provide evidence that citizens are increasingly directly

confronted with the Union's administration and that instances of arbitrariness, legal uncertainty, and lack of transparency risk diminishing the confidence that European Union citizens give European institutions. As a result, in April PETI adopted an Opinion for the Committee on Legal Affairs in which it expressed concern that the right to good administration is not sufficiently protected. The Opinion welcomed the proposal for a new Law of Administrative Procedure while emphasising the need for specific provisions on infringement procedures and on conflicts of interest (Rapporteur: Margrete Auken).

Proper implementation of European Union law is also an essential condition for the legitimacy of democratic governance and to ensure that citizens will fully enjoy their rights. In an separate Opinion for the Committee on Legal Affairs, members of PETI pointed out that civil society organisations continue to use the petitions mechanism to report on, and complain about, non-compliance with EU law by Member State authorities on different levels. In particular, PETI members alerted that citizens remain largely uninformed about infringement proceedings, and that they often feel misled about the applicability of EU law in instances of late transposition and about the actual scope of application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. PETI thus urged substantive and tangible progress towards increased transparency through greater access to information on complaints, infringement files and other enforcement mechanisms (Rapporteur: Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg).

Upholding Fundamental Rights

As in previous years, Fundamental Rights remains a main subject of petitions submitted to the Committee on Petitions. A total of 500 petitions submitted in 2012 denounced, to some extent, violations of fundamental rights and thus called for a more effective protection of the European values enshrined in the Charter and in the Treaties. This represents 25,1% of petitions in 2012, compared with 21% in 2011, 20,4% in 2010, and 22,3% in 2009.

EU and its institutions have a duty to respect, guarantee, protect and promote the fundamental rights of European citizens. The Committee on Petitions has a core role in this duty, as it is specifically entrusted with seeking non-judicial remedies on behalf of petitioners, in order to assist citizens in the exercise of their fundamental rights and in the proper application of the values and principles contained in the Charter and the Treaties.

In this area, the Committee on Petitions contributed with an Opinion for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union (2010-2011) (Rapporteur: Adina-Ioana Vălean). The opinion drew attention to persisting discrimination against citizens as a result of their religion or belief, disability, belonging to a minority group, age or sexual orientation. It also deplored restrictions on the freedom of the media which frequently obstruct media pluralism; recalled that citizens have the right to move and reside freely within the European Union ;and underlined that the portability of social security benefits, pensions, health care and recognition of professional qualifications and civil status documents and of their effects are important rights.

o The rights of persons with disabilities

On 5 December 2012, the Committee on Petitions actively participated in the 3rd European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities. Numerous petitions bear witness to the difficulties encountered by persons with disabilities and to the fact that they do not enjoy the fundamental

freedoms and rights laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Members of PETI thus take very seriously their responsibility to establish a framework for the implementation of the Convention and systematically refer to it in the course of the Committee's work.

During the event, PETI members alerted that gaps in the implementation of the existing principle of equal treatment of people with disabilities are regularly brought to the attention of the Committee by the citizens concerned. This reality creates barriers that prevents them from enjoying the rights of EU citizens, such as normal use of the education system, access to employment, insurance, financing or public transport facilities.

Members of PETI reminded participants that already in 2009 the Committee received a petition bearing more than 1 million signatures which called for extensive protection in all European Union policies for people with disabilities. Another more recent petition denounced the misuse of EU Structural Funds by some Member States, a practice which hinders the objectives of the Disabilities Strategy. PETI urged the European Commission to make disability an *ex ante* conditionality for every project funded by the EU.

o Protecting freedom of expression and privacy

One of the most controversial topics in the European Parliament during the first half of 2012 was the debate over the multinational Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). In February, PETI Chair Erminia Mazzoni and Rapporteur for the ACTA treaty in the European Parliament David Martin, who is a member of the lead Committee on International Trade, formally received a petition with over two-and-a-half million signatures. Petitioners expressed opposition to ACTA on the grounds that it would violate the fundamental rights of citizens with regards to freedom of expression and privacy. On the day of the petition's handover, statements to the press were widely broadcast and distributed.

In June, a debate ensued during the monthly meeting of PETI. Petitioners were present and warned members of parliament that the year 2012 marked a breaking point in institutional responsiveness and accountability of the European Union. Members of the Committee on International Trade, including Rapporteur David Martin, were lamented that the European Commission had not tried to reconsider the substance of ACTA based on the widespread criticism and concerns voiced by citizens. PETI members concluded that there was a clear majority in favour of rejecting ACTA and agreed to relay such position to the relevant legislative committees in the European Parliament.

All five legislative committees involved (Development, Civil Liberties, Justice and Home affairs, Legal Affairs, and International Trade) rejected the agreement in their own meetings. During the plenary session of July, the European Parliament in full voted overwhelmingly to reject ACTA, with 478 votes against and only 39 in favour (146 abstentions).

o Accessing documents and information

In November, the Committee on Petitions dealt with a petition concerning the fundamental right of access to documents, which is protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The specific case concerns an octogenarian Spanish citizen whose father was arrested and executed during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and who explained to PETI members

that the national courts and administration are denying her access to documents she alleges exist.

Although the European Commission lamented that the case is outside the competence of the European Union, PETI pointed to the Charter as well as to the European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2011 on public access to documents, which already stressed that citizens' right to information is generally not complied with by the Member States' authorities, and urged more transparency at the Member State level. At the end of the debate, PETI decided to contact national authorities at the local, regional and national level, urging them to facilitate the petitioner's inquiries and to ensure that Spain sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (CETS no.:205).

o Respecting choice in the right to Freedom of association

The Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights both cover a citizen's right to freedom of association. Occasionally, however, the Committee on Petitions is confronted with petitions which ask for respect for negative freedoms. In 2012, PETI continued work on a long-standing petition which serves as an example of this.

In 2008, a Swedish Christian union of business owners indicated that its members were being threatened and intimidated because they declined for religious reasons to subscribe to collective agreements concluded by Swedish trade unions. They have argued that freedom of non-association is an individual right equal in weight to the freedom of association, and consequently have demanded for respect of their right to negative freedom of association. Whereas the European Commission maintains that the issue raised is an internal situation in Sweden with no connection to EU law, PETI members remain concerned about a potential violation of fundamental rights of citizens, and thus in 2012 continued to give course to the petition, submitting a question for oral answer to the Commission and pledging to discuss the substance in early 2013.

This petition serves as a reminder that the work of the Committee on Petitions is very much unlike the work of the Commission and the judiciary. Particularly with regards to protecting fundamental rights, and in order to give tangible meaning to the notion of citizenship, PETI members have first and foremost the duty to investigate petitioners' claims, and to ensure that deliberations and interpretations of EU law at the institutional level do not become obdurate, stagnant, or detached from the everyday lives of citizens.

o Property rights

In early 2012, the Committee on Petitions established an Informal Working Group, comprised of members from all political groups, to discuss the long-standing issue of the respect of property rights in Spain and, specifically, this country's Coastal Law.

Between March and November, six meetings took place during which members considered the contents of the 79 petitions received on this matter and which raise a wide range of issues, most notably the situation of legal uncertainty faced by property owners in the face of a law they allege has been implemented retroactively and, in many cases raised by petitioners, arbitrarily.

In April, the Working Group held an exchange of views with two representatives of Spain's Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente. As the General Director of Coastal Affairs had announced to the Working Group, the Government introduced amendments to the Coastal Law in October. By the end of 2012, the Draft Law was undergoing the amendments stage in the national legislative process.

Dialogue with the Spanish authorities has overall proved positive. In order to continue the exchange of views and to ensure that the fundamental rights of petitioners are respected, by the end of the year the Working Group decided to follow-up their work by conducting a fact-finding visit to Madrid in early 2013 [21-22 March], during which a PETI delegation will meet petitioners, authorities, and other representatives of civil society.

The imperative of protecting the Environment and Public Health

The Committee on Petitions firmly believes that it is the responsibility of public authorities, from the local to the European level, to ensure that biodiversity and our eco-systems are preserved and enhanced, not only in the areas designated for special protection but also everywhere else.

Undoubtedly, the protection of the environment cannot be disassociated from the protection of public health. Pollution and environmental malpractice expose citizens to dangerous health risks, long-lasting and often life-threatening. The Committee on Petitions takes the right of citizens to enjoy a healthy environment very seriously, and therefore it necessarily considers the risks to health to be inherent in the proper assessment of the environmental impact of projects and activities.

It is therefore a reality that daily lives and livelihoods of European citizens are deeply dependent on the health of our environment, and it is undeniable that the responsibility to ensure high standards of protection falls onto public authorities at the Member State level. These realities are reflected in the fact that a vast majority of petitions submitted to the Committee on Petitions concern the environment. In 2012, a total of 279 petitions were submitted on this broad topic, representing 14,1% of all petitions. This compares with 18,4% in 2011, 14,9% in 2010, and 11,9% in 2009. Many petitions referred specifically to Pollution (57), Waste (37), Protection and preservation (31), Impact Assessments (23) and Water (24).

On 5 December, Chair of PETI Erminia Mazzoni spoke at a Conference of the Committee of Regions which discussed the 7th Environment Action Programme and ways for better implementation of EU Environmental law. On behalf of PETI, the Chairwoman primordially emphasised the right of citizens, under the Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment, to be consulted on a wide range of projects which would potentially impact the environment. All too often, PETI receives petitions of citizens who denounce that no public consultation has taken place for major public and private works. Secondly, Chair Mazzoni urged the European Commission to conduct more and more thorough monitoring of waste management plans across Europe, as many petitions refer to the systematic violation of waste-related directives. Lastly, the Chairwoman reminded the Commission of the Interinstitutional Agreement whereby details of the reasons and status of infringement procedures must be communicated to the Parliament in good time and in an exhaustive manner.

Through 2012, PETI Members have unequivocally taken the view that better environmental

governance and more efficient redress mechanisms are directly linked with transparency and access to information. PETI's Opinion on improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures, which contributed to the work of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, emphasised that high standards of information and transparency are essential to ensuring that EU environmental policy meets with citizens' consent (Rapporteur: Giles Chichester).

o Waste management practices in Italy - PETI's Fact-Finding Visit in 2012

Waste management has been a recurrent and rising subject of petitions in recent years, increasing from 18 petitions in 2009 to 37 in 2012. PETI had already devoted much time and resources to the issue in 2011, work which culminated with the adoption by the full European Parliament, in February 2012, of its own-initiative report 'Issues raised by petitioners in relation to the application of the Waste Management Directive, and related directives, in the Member States of the European Union' (Rapporteur: Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo).

Pervasively deficient waste management practices in Italy, nevertheless, prompted the Committee on Petitions to continue investigating petitions in this area through 2012. Early in the year, Members debated new petitions on waste management and illegal landfills in the regions of Campania and Lazio. Petitioners and representatives of the Italian authorities were present to the debates, during which the European Commission expressed dissatisfaction with progress made in Italy since a ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in 2007 ordered Italy to act in conformity with the Waste Management Directive. In October 2012, the European Commission decided to refer Italy back to the CJEU, seeking fines, because of the failure of the Italian authorities to implement this previous judgement.

As a result, PETI decided to conduct a Fact-Finding Visit to the regions of Campania and Lazio. The delegation travelled on 29-31 October 2012 and was composed of three Members (Judith Merkies as the leader of the delegation, Margrete Auken, and Erminia Mazzoni, Chairwoman of PETI), as well as seven accompanying members of the Member State concerned (Roberta Angelilli, Alfredo Antoniozzi, Clemente Mastella, Roberto Gualtieri, Guido Milana, David-Maria Sassoli, and Niccolò Rinaldi). The delegation visited the sites of Malagrotta, Monti dell'Ortaccio, Riano Pian dell'Olmo, and A.M.A. Via Salaria, nearby Rome, and met with petitioners and public authorities both in Rome and in Naples.

At their return, the delegation expressed disapproval of the policies pursued in the Lazio region regarding waste management, in particular the excessive reliance placed upon landfills. The delegation also expressed deep concern at the apparent inability of the regional and provincial authorities to work in a more transparent and coherent manner with municipalities and civil society, towards establishing a workable waste strategy, based upon waste reduction, waste sorting and recycling, and including composting and bio-mechanical waste treatment. Nevertheless, members recognised that the approach of the current Minister of the Environment is positive and constructive and deserves support from the European Commission, and the European Parliament.

The delegation also concluded that the role and authority of the special Commissioner in Lazio is ill-adapted to the real problems faced by the population, given the astonishing levels of long-term mismanagement, and given that emergency powers are counter-productive and in flagrant violation of many aspects of EU waste legislation. Furthermore, members observed

that privatisation has contributed to the downward spiral of waste management with disastrous consequences for the local population and that this has benefitted none more than organised criminal gangs under the general terminology of the mafia.

Amongst other recommendations, the delegation urged Italian authorities to engage in a constructive dialogue with petitioners and civil society, recalling the right of citizens to be publicly consulted. The delegation called on the European Commission to release the necessary funding which is required to support the efforts of the Naples Municipal authorities, while undertaking regular auditing of the expenditure incurred and publishing such annual audits in a transparent register open for inspection to the public. The delegation also recommended that the military withdraw from every aspect of waste policy and that powers given to the Special Commissioner, by using the instrument of Emergency Legislation, be revoked immediately.

- o *Assessing the impact of projects and activities on the environment and on public health*

In 2012, the Committee on Petitions once again treated numerous petitions presented by citizens affected or concerned by the impact of certain projects or activities on the environment and on their health. At least 23 petitions submitted in 2012 fall specifically into this category.

For example, Members welcomed back to the March Committee Meeting an Irish farmer who submitted a petition back in 2006. PETI visited the farm in 2007 and, ever since, Members have supported the petitioner in his attempt to get recognition and obtain an apology for the devastating impact that toxic emissions from a nearby factory had on the health of the farmer and his family. The Irish authorities and the former President of the Irish Farmer's Union were also present at the debate, which concluded with the decision by PETI Members to seek an independent assessment on the data and information available so far.

Petitioners from Tarranto, Italy, are similarly concerned about the impact of excessive industrial pollution on the health and welfare of the local population. Their petition concerns extremely elevated levels of dioxin emissions from a steel plant, which place over 20,000 families at risk of chronic illness. The European Commissioner of Industry and Entrepreneurship, Antonio Tajani, and the Chair of the EP Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, Amalia Sartori, were present at the discussion of the petition in the month of October. The petition prompted PETI Members to table a Motion for a European Parliament resolution on a new sustainable and competitive steel industry to Plenary.

Authorisations for quarrying activities have generally proved to be unwelcome by nearby inhabitants, who tend to be concerned from the onset about the impact of this sector on the environment. Furthermore, PETI notes that petitions concerning this issue often complain of Environmental Impact Assessments which they consider inaccurate and biased, if existing at all, and also often point to a systematic failure to consult the local population and to ensure access to information. In 2012, PETI treated several petitions related to quarrying activities, amongst others, in Angoulême, France, and in Oencia, Spain.

Another petition that brought substantive debate in November touched upon a permit awarded to a French energy company for the storing of 120,000 tonnes of CO₂ in Jurançon, France.

Petitioners alerted that the designated site is located in a seismic area and at the heart of a wine-growing region. According to the petitioners, similar projects in Germany, the Netherlands and the United States have been suspended as a result of the significant risks to the environment and to human health. Members of PETI insisted that the European Commission investigate this case further.

Within the energy sector, the exploration and exploitation of shale oil and gas through the technique of hydraulic fracturing generates severe concern and rejection across the European Union. Petitions have been submitted in recent years by citizens in France, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Germany and Spain. Petitioners believe that the current EU legal framework applying to hydraulic fracturing is inadequate and contains worrying gaps and loopholes. Most notably, petitioners point to the reality that major pieces of EU environmental legislation, such as the Water Framework Directive and the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, have not been amended to appropriately cover and account for the impacts and risks posed by this new technique. In addition, petitioners maintain that the exploration and exploitation of shale oil and gas goes against the energy transition toward a decarbonised society, which they perceive as the only viable option to mitigate climate change. Petitioners asked the Committee on Petitions to urge an imminent moratorium on the exploration and exploitation of shale oil and gas, and later on to urge legislation prohibiting it.

In view of the urgent nature of this topic and of the many citizens and Member States involved, PETI organised a Workshop on Shale Gas on 9 October 2012, in conjunction with the EP Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs. Rapporteurs from the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, and from the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy were present, alongside petitioners, experts in the field, representatives of the sector, and Member State officials. PETI provided a platform for all participants to compare, contrast and confront their views, and welcomed the ensuing report prepared by the Policy Department.

It should be finally noted that the Committee on Petitions considered, in the second half of the year, two petitions submitted by Irish citizens which will be followed-up by a Fact-Finding Visit in 2013. One is a long-standing petition, submitted in 2006, which refers to the toxic sludge accumulated in the Shannon Estuary as a result of the operation of a nearby aluminium plant. Petitioners alert that the sludge is gravely and irreparably polluting groundwater and the river Shannon. The other petition refers to a high-density building project which is due to be built in an acknowledged flood risk area. As a result, local residents fear that their homes will be threatened by the floods. Ahead of deciding dates for the Fact-Finding Visit in 2013, PETI members decided to ask the Permanent representation of Ireland and the Oireachtas Committee on Investigations, Oversight and Petitions for opinion on these issues.

o *Implementing water legislation*

Early in the year, the Committee on Petitions contributed to the work of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety with an Opinion on the implementation of EU water legislation (Rapporteur: Nikolaos Chountis). The Opinion considers that water is a shared resource of humankind and a public good which therefore should not be a source of profit. Furthermore, PETI members share the view that water should constitute a fundamental and universal right, and that the sustainable use of water is an environmental and health

necessity that plays a fundamental role in the climate regulation cycle.

The prompt and correct implementation of the Water Framework Directive is thus a major concern of PETI Members, particularly as citizens recurrently provide evidence of widespread ineffective implementation and enforcement. Already in January, as a result of a petition from the United Kingdom, PETI decided to contact the Scottish Executive and the District Council concerned to ask for clarification on the lack of implementation of the Drinking Water Directive and the Water Framework Directive. In May, PETI heard petitioners from Spain denounce allegedly unauthorised water extraction from illegal wells near Jaén, which may severely impact a Natura2000 site.

The Opinion of PETI called, specifically, for the European Commission to end subsidies which undermine incentives for efficient water management, and to instead free up funds for targeted subsidies – in particular for poor and rural populations – aimed at affordable access for all. Simultaneously, PETI urged the Commission and the Member States to improve monitoring and reporting of chemical pollutants in water, and asked the Commission to develop a road map for higher efficiency of water resource management and a ‘Blueprint to safeguard EU water’. Strategies should be based on a thorough review of the WFD implementation, the EU Water Scarcity and Drought Policy, and the EU adaptation policy as related to water management.

Finally, the Committee on Petitions decided to conduct a Fact-Finding Visit to the Spanish region of Galicia in 2013, in order to investigate a number of petitions which denounce high levels of water pollution in various coastal areas, notably in several estuaries of high biodiversity and including a Natura2000 site.

Citizens in the Internal Market

o Moving across borders

Petitions give evidence that citizens in the European Union continue to face barriers to exercising their freedom of movement as individuals, workers, and also as providers and consumers of goods and services. Petitions submitted in 2012 in relation to the Internal Market amounted to 143, representing around 7,2% of all petitions. This compares with 8,2% in both 2011 and 2010, and 7,4% in 2009.

A number of petitions related to the Internal Market refer specifically to the free movement of persons (37% of all Internal Market petitions), the free movement of goods and services (12%), or the recognition of qualifications (22%). As an example, PETI members head a petition from Spain who complained that the various different tolling systems in the EU create obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods and services. The European Commission informed the petitioners and PETI that it continuously monitors this issue with a view to promoting the harmonisation of road charging policies.

In March, a PETI opinion for the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, on 20 main concerns of European citizens and businesses with the functioning of the Single Market, underscored that Member States repeatedly fail to correctly transpose or implement EU law in this area, and urged the Commission to take timely and appropriate action when this happens (Rapporteur: Simon Busuttill).

The Committee on Petitions also receives complaints of ineffective cross-border judicial cooperation. In a case heard in November, a Portuguese national indicated that he worked for 16 years for a Dutch company on a North Sea platform and that his employers failed to register him with the social security authorities, thereby depriving him of his own entitlements. The European Commission observed that this case was at the base of an infringement procedure and that a ruling of the European Court of Justice has led to sanctions in favour of the petitioner

o *Protecting the rights of consumers*

Improving and protecting consumer rights is of paramount importance to the daily lives of citizens. Petitions submitted in 2012 in relation to this issue amounted to 101, representing around 5,1% of all petitions. This compares with 3,9% in 2011, 5,1% in 2010, and 5% in 2009.

Citizens expect certainty in the quality and safety of the products and services they purchase in the European Union, but all too often there are instances of misleading labelling, discriminatory selling practices, sub-standard safety, delays and misinformation in customer servicing, and outright business malpractice. In July, for example, PETI members discussed a group of five petitions submitted by Italian citizens who denounce the fact that vehicle liability insurance premiums are considerably higher in some regions of Italy than in others. PETI members worry that this practice is discriminatory and constitutes a breach of consumer protection, and therefore remain in dialogue with the national authorities and the European Commission, to further investigate the substance of the petitions.

Moreover, petitions submitted give evidence that strengthened cross-border cooperation and harmonisation markedly benefits the protection of consumer rights. In November, PETI welcomed suggestions made by a petitioner who complained about the way airlines deal with lost luggage and the fact that, apparently, more and more luggage is being lost in EU airports. Baggage-related issues have prompted a Public Consultation on a possible revision of EU Regulation on the issue. PETI members therefore urged the Commission to keep promoting passenger' awareness of the applicable rules, and to monitor the actions of Member States in order to ensure that such rules are being applied.

The welfare of animals in the European Union

In 2012, the Committee on Petitions devoted significant attention to the welfare of animals. Early in the year, PETI contributed to the work of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural development with an Opinion for the Report on the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015 (Rapporteur: Victor Boştinaru).

The Opinion drew attention to the ever-increasing number of petitions from European citizens of all Member States who asked for the regulations on animal protection and welfare to be tightened up in order to fill the existing loopholes. PETI not only referred to the on-going spectacles that cause stress or injury, and/or kill animals, such as bullfights, but also to the large number of stray dogs and cats, which are evidently not covered under the European Animal Welfare Framework Law.

In June, having regard to the large number of petitions from EU citizens requesting the

establishment of an EU legal framework for the protection of pets and stray animals, PETI tabled a motion for a resolution to plenary on the establishment of an EU legal framework for the protection of pets and stray animals, which was adopted by Parliament in July. The resolution calls on the European Union and the Member States to ratify the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals, and on the Commission to put forward an EU legal framework for the protection of pets and stray animals.

Reaching Out

The Committee on Petitions could not stress more emphatically that there is a need to increase the visibility of the petitions process amongst the citizens of the European Union. Through its work, PETI Members not only consider the subject matter of petitions but also contribute to raising awareness about the rights that European Union citizens and residents enjoy. In this regard, it is noteworthy that, according to the Flash Eurobarometer 365 on "European Union Citizenship," in 2012 just over a third of citizens (36%) considered themselves well-informed about their rights. The Eurobarometer additionally revealed that almost nine out of ten (89%) citizens was aware of the right to make a complaint to the European Commission, European Parliament or European Ombudsman.

For the purpose of increasing visibility, in 2012, PETI has continued to actively correspond with citizens and petitioners through various participative means, focusing efforts on several key aspects:

- o *Welcoming petitioners to the meetings of the Committee*

In 2012, as in the previous three years, petitioners were present in every monthly meeting of the Committee. Attendance of petitioners to the meetings of the Committee is not required, but it surely adds dynamism to the discussion. The presence of public authorities of the member state concerned, as well as of other interested parties, is equally welcome. It is noteworthy that PETI is the only Committee which systematically provides a platform for citizens to voice their concerns directly to Members of the European Parliament and which enables a multiparty dialogue between the EU institutions, the national authorities and petitioners, in a space of total transparency.

- o *Organising Fact-Finding Visits*

Delegations of PETI Members to the areas concerned by petitions occur roughly one to four times per year and are a critical component of the work of the Committee. The decision to send a delegation typically responds to the need to gather facts about petitions which have been discussed in committee meetings. Visits then require many weeks of preparation, in order to ensure that PETI members and staff are able to visit the affected sites and to meet with petitioners, national authorities, and also other representatives of civil society. Visits are short and intense, and are followed-up by further discussions in committee meetings and by a working document presenting conclusions and recommendations.

In 2012, the Committee on Petitions sent a two-day delegation to the regions of Campania and Lazio, in Italy, to look into waste management issues (see specific section on Environment - Waste petitions).

Looking forward to 2013, PETI decided on delegations to Galicia, Spain, where it will visit a number of Rías and consider issues related to water pollution; Madrid, Spain, in order to further dialogue with Spanish authorities on the Coastal Law; Greece, where it will study petitions on waste management; Poland, a visit postponed from 2012 to consider a number of projects for open-cast mines in Lower Silesia; and finally Ireland, where PETI will also look into water pollution issues around Cork and Kilkenny, on invitation of the Oireachtas Petitions Committee.

o *Improving electronic access to information*

The website of the Committee on Petitions contains a great deal of information about the right to petition and the process of admissibility and consideration. It also allows citizens to submit petitions via the website, by filling in a brief and straightforward form. In 2012, 70% of petitions were submitted online whereas the rest were received by post. This represents an increase from 58% in 2011 and from 63% in both 2010 and 2009.

In order to improve citizens' access to the petitions process, PETI continues to work on the design and launch of a new web portal. This new website will provide new information and, most importantly, will enable new features such as information on existing petitions and the possibility to add signatures to them. The value to citizens will not only be participative, but also educational, as the web portal will provide a transparent picture of the issues that concern citizens and the work that PETI does to address them.

o *Publishing the PETI Journal and the Annual Report*

Six editions of the PETI-Journal newsletter have been published and distributed to over 1,500 stakeholders. The PETI Journal is circulated during committee meetings and other events, remains available on the website of the Committee, and is also released through social media such as Facebook. Roughly half of the recipients are Members or staff of the European Parliament, whereas the rest are staff of other EU institutions, petitioners and other interested parties of the general public.

The Committee on Petition's Annual Report of 2011 was the first one to be published in a user-friendly format for its distribution amongst the general public. It reached over 18,000 citizens, a significant figure. The Committee hopes that this Annual Report of 2012 reaches and engages an ever-increasing number of citizens.

o *Introducing interactivity*

Web-streaming of committee meetings is extremely important for the Committee on Petitions. A great number of petitions are signed by multiple petitioners who can often not travel to Brussels to be present at the meetings. Therefore, web-streaming allows a large number of citizens to follow the discussion 'live' on the internet. PETI will continue to promote awareness of, and attendance to, the web-streaming of its meetings and events, as a way to reach as many interested parties as possible.

In order to increase visibility and interactivity, PETI also disseminates and reacts to information through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Posts are followed, liked, syndicated, and commented by an audience of around 2500 users, mainly members of the

general public, and have a global reach of over 1,5 million.

Finally, PETI does its utmost to have a presence at the annual Open Day. On Saturday, 12 May 2012, members and staff of the Secretariat welcomed hundreds of visitors who came to the information desk of DG IPOL to learn about the work of the European Parliament and about the right to petition.

- o *Working with the EP Information Offices in the Member States*

The role of the European Parliament Information Offices in the Member States is crucial as decentralised sources of access to all of Parliament's services for civil society and official bodies. Particularly during Fact-Finding Visits, PETI coordinates with the relevant Information Offices in order to disseminate information to citizens and to set up conferences with the press. Conversely, citizens occasionally submit petitions through their national EP Information Office, which forwards the submissions to PETI.

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Table 1. Registration and Adoption of Petitions (2009 - 2012), with shares of total figures

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
TOTAL SUBMISSIONS	1924	-	1746	-	2091	-	2322	-
<i>whereof not registered*</i>	0	0,0%	91	5,2%	677	32,4%	337	14,5%
<i>whereof registered as petitions</i>	1924	100,0%	1655	94,8%	1414	67,6%	1986	85,5%
TOTAL PETITIONS REGISTERED	1924	-	1655	-	1414	-	1986	-
DECLARED INADMISSIBLE	816	42,4%	667	40,3%	416	29,4%	580	29,2%
DECLARED ADMISSIBLE	1108	57,6%	988	59,7%	998	70,6%	1406	70,8%
TOTAL DECLARED ADMISSIBLE	1108	-	988	-	998	-	1406	-
<i>whereof closed with reply directly</i>	424	38,3%	405	41,0%	315	31,6%	510	36,2%
<i>referred to EC for opinion</i>	710	64,1%	607	61,4%	649	65,0%	853	60,7%
<i>referred to other for opinion</i>	29	2,6%	26	2,6%	26	2,6%	59	4,2%
<i>referred to other for information</i>	211	19,0%	184	18,6%	162	16,2%	297	21,1%

**Submissions that do not correspond to Article 227 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (ex Article 194 TEC) are not registered as petitions.*

Table 2. Petitions by Submission Format (2009 - 2012), with shares of total registered

Submission Format	2009		2010		2011		2012	
Electronic	1204	63%	1046	63%	815	58%	1387	70%
Paper	720	37%	609	37%	599	42%	599	30%
TOTAL REGISTERED	1924	-	1655	-	1414	-	1986	-

Table 3. Petitions by Theme (2009 - 2012), with shares of total registered

Table 3.a. Main Themes in 2012

Theme (sorted by share in 2012)	2009		2010		2011		2012	
Fundamental Rights	430	22,3%	338	20,4%	297	21,0%	500	25,1%
Disability	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	1	0,1%	10	0,5%
Justice	159	8,3%	125	7,6%	131	9,3%	242	12,2%
Property	106	5,5%	61	3,7%	51	3,6%	47	2,4%
Environment	229	11,9%	246	14,9%	260	18,4%	279	14,1%
Impact Assessments	40	2,1%	43	2,6%	26	1,8%	23	1,2%
Pollution	53	2,8%	48	2,9%	49	3,5%	57	2,9%
Protection and Preservation	48	2,5%	62	3,7%	38	2,7%	31	1,6%
Waste	18	0,9%	25	1,5%	25	1,8%	37	1,9%
Water	11	0,6%	14	0,8%	19	1,3%	24	1,2%
Internal Market	142	7,4%	135	8,2%	116	8,2%	143	7,2%
Free movement of goods and services	17	0,9%	22	1,3%	19	1,3%	17	0,9%
Free movement of persons	71	3,7%	52	3,1%	33	2,3%	53	2,7%
Recognition of qualifications	20	1,0%	23	1,4%	24	1,7%	31	1,6%
Health	104	5,4%	83	5,0%	74	5,2%	110	5,5%
Consumers' Rights	96	5,0%	84	5,1%	55	3,9%	101	5,1%
Animal Welfare	37	1,9%	34	2,1%	36	2,5%	60	3,0%
TOTAL REGISTERED	1924	-	1655	-	1414	-	1986	-

Table 3. Petitions by Theme (2009 - 2012), with shares of total registered (cont'd)

Table 3.b. Other Themes in 2012

Theme (sorted alphabetically)	2009		2010		2011		2012	
Agriculture	22	1,1%	21	1,3%	21	1,5%	31	1,6%
Asylum	6	0,3%	12	0,7%	6	0,4%	12	0,6%
Competition	25	1,3%	20	1,2%	14	1,0%	27	1,4%
Constitutional Affairs	26	1,4%	27	1,6%	26	1,8%	63	3,2%
Culture and Heritage	35	1,8%	26	1,6%	21	1,5%	25	1,3%
Economic and Monetary Affairs	27	1,4%	26	1,6%	53	3,7%	75	3,8%
Education	47	2,4%	46	2,8%	53	3,7%	48	2,4%
Employment	105	5,5%	62	3,7%	45	3,2%	74	3,7%
Energy	30	1,6%	24	1,5%	43	3,0%	48	2,4%
Enlargement	5	0,3%	1	0,1%	1	0,1%	0	0,0%
Equal Opportunities and Gender	14	0,7%	12	0,7%	6	0,4%	6	0,3%
External Relations	38	2,0%	18	1,1%	16	1,1%	26	1,3%
Financial Services	26	1,4%	19	1,1%	24	1,7%	45	2,3%
Fishery and Maritime Affairs	11	0,6%	5	0,3%	9	0,6%	6	0,3%
Food Safety	3	0,2%	9	0,5%	7	0,5%	12	0,6%
Fraud and Corruption	22	1,1%	32	1,9%	25	1,8%	66	3,3%
Immigration	38	2,0%	37	2,2%	45	3,2%	33	1,7%
Industry and Enterprise	45	2,3%	33	2,0%	21	1,5%	48	2,4%
Information Society and Media	33	1,7%	26	1,6%	27	1,9%	27	1,4%
Institutions	36	1,9%	30	1,8%	17	1,2%	64	3,2%
Pension	51	2,7%	68	4,1%	30	2,1%	51	2,6%
Personal Matter	216	11,2%	191	11,5%	97	6,9%	150	7,6%
Regional Policy	13	0,7%	10	0,6%	8	0,6%	7	0,4%
Research and Innovation	9	0,5%	3	0,2%	1	0,1%	6	0,3%
Restitution	27	1,4%	9	0,5%	1	0,1%	3	0,2%
Security	10	0,5%	8	0,5%	10	0,7%	21	1,1%
Social Affairs	93	4,8%	77	4,7%	78	5,5%	89	4,5%
Taxation	61	3,2%	63	3,8%	48	3,4%	67	3,4%
Trade	9	0,5%	8	0,5%	6	0,4%	18	0,9%
Transport	101	5,2%	101	6,1%	69	4,9%	91	4,6%
Urban Development	77	4,0%	35	2,1%	28	2,0%	11	0,6%
Voting Rights and Elections	23	1,2%	4	0,2%	7	0,5%	8	0,4%
TOTAL REGISTERED	1924	-	1655	-	1414	-	1986	-

Table 4. Petitions by Concerned Country (2009 - 2012), with shares of total registered

Member State (sorted alphabetically)	2009		2010		2011		2012	
Austria	34	1,8%	36	2,2%	18	1,3%	19	1,0%
Belgium	30	1,6%	28	1,7%	12	0,8%	21	1,1%
Bulgaria	56	2,9%	36	2,2%	52	3,7%	55	2,8%
Cyprus	13	0,7%	18	1,1%	10	0,7%	14	0,7%
Czech Republic	13	0,7%	15	0,9%	15	1,1%	18	0,9%
Denmark	14	0,7%	25	1,5%	14	1,0%	21	1,1%
Estonia	4	0,2%	7	0,4%	3	0,2%	4	0,2%
"European Union"	404	21,0%	285	17,2%	311	22,0%	542	27,3%
Finland	20	1,0%	26	1,6%	11	0,8%	18	0,9%
France	73	3,8%	62	3,7%	64	4,5%	77	3,9%
Germany	299	15,5%	273	16,5%	183	12,9%	249	12,5%
Greece	74	3,8%	71	4,3%	48	3,4%	79	4,0%
Hungary	25	1,3%	36	2,2%	23	1,6%	62	3,1%
Ireland	37	1,9%	27	1,6%	22	1,6%	28	1,4%
Italy	177	9,2%	183	11,1%	138	9,8%	170	8,6%
Latvia	11	0,6%	7	0,4%	3	0,2%	8	0,4%
Lithuania	14	0,7%	7	0,4%	8	0,6%	19	1,0%
Luxembourg	4	0,2%	3	0,2%	4	0,3%	7	0,4%
Malta	9	0,5%	13	0,8%	9	0,6%	21	1,1%
Netherlands	35	1,8%	12	0,7%	20	1,4%	25	1,3%
Poland	100	5,2%	66	4,0%	104	7,4%	80	4,0%
Portugal	37	1,9%	26	1,6%	30	2,1%	31	1,6%
Romania	143	7,4%	102	6,2%	106	7,5%	146	7,4%
Slovakia	19	1,0%	7	0,4%	8	0,6%	18	0,9%
Slovenia	12	0,6%	6	0,4%	7	0,5%	6	0,3%
Spain	279	14,5%	288	17,4%	216	15,3%	298	15,0%
Sweden	17	0,9%	16	1,0%	13	0,9%	17	0,9%
United Kingdom	83	4,3%	66	4,0%	60	4,2%	73	3,7%
Non-EU Member States aggregate	95	4,9%	84	5,1%	74	5,2%	70	3,5%
TOTAL REGISTERED*	1924	-	1655	-	1414		1986	-

**Note that the Total Registered is not the sum of petitions by concerned country.*

Table 5. Petitions by Nationality of the Petitioner (2009 - 2012), with shares of total registered

Member State (sorted alphabetically)	2009		2010		2011		2012	
Austria	38	2,0%	25	1,5%	24	1,7%	29	1,5%
Belgium	27	1,4%	29	1,8%	22	1,6%	33	1,7%
Bulgaria	54	2,8%	40	2,4%	49	3,5%	57	2,9%
Cyprus	8	0,4%	8	0,5%	4	0,3%	7	0,4%
Czech Republic	6	0,3%	9	0,5%	10	0,7%	14	0,7%
Denmark	13	0,7%	17	1,0%	11	0,8%	11	0,6%
Estonia	3	0,2%	2	0,1%	3	0,2%	2	0,1%
Finland	26	1,4%	25	1,5%	12	0,8%	15	0,8%
France	79	4,1%	78	4,7%	78	5,5%	92	4,6%
Germany	496	25,8%	409	24,7%	315	22,3%	475	23,9%
Greece	78	4,1%	69	4,2%	49	3,5%	74	3,7%
Hungary	17	0,9%	31	1,9%	26	1,8%	62	3,1%
Ireland	31	1,6%	27	1,6%	16	1,1%	34	1,7%
Italy	219	11,4%	215	13,0%	166	11,7%	241	12,1%
Latvia	11	0,6%	8	0,5%	3	0,2%	8	0,4%
Lithuania	8	0,4%	12	0,7%	6	0,4%	21	1,1%
Luxembourg	2	0,1%	0	0,0%	4	0,3%	7	0,4%
Malta	11	0,6%	11	0,7%	6	0,4%	7	0,4%
Netherlands	44	2,3%	18	1,1%	23	1,6%	31	1,6%
Poland	129	6,7%	94	5,7%	125	8,8%	99	5,0%
Portugal	32	1,7%	25	1,5%	24	1,7%	33	1,7%
Romania	152	7,9%	101	6,1%	102	7,2%	140	7,1%
Slovakia	14	0,7%	4	0,2%	7	0,5%	11	0,6%
Slovenia	10	0,5%	4	0,2%	7	0,5%	7	0,4%
Spain	237	12,3%	261	15,8%	204	14,4%	311	15,7%
Sweden	13	0,7%	11	0,7%	12	0,8%	17	0,9%
United Kingdom	122	6,3%	91	5,5%	80	5,7%	105	5,3%
Non-EU Member States aggregate	44	2,3%	31	1,9%	26	1,8%	43	2,2%
TOTAL REGISTERED	1924	-	1655	-	1414	-	1986	-

**Note that it is the nationality of the 'main' petitioner.*

Table 6. Petitions by Language of Submission (2009 - 2012), with shares of total registered

Member State (sorted by 2012 share)	2009		2010		2011		2012	
German	548	28,5%	430	26,0%	348	24,6%	498	25,1%
English	343	17,8%	295	17,8%	263	18,6%	360	18,1%
Spanish	237	12,3%	260	15,7%	200	14,1%	303	15,3%
Italian	203	10,6%	199	12,0%	145	10,3%	224	11,2%
French	107	5,6%	100	6,0%	91	6,4%	123	6,2%
Romanian	110	5,7%	72	4,4%	74	5,2%	105	5,3%
Polish	116	6,0%	86	5,2%	112	7,9%	86	4,3%
Greek	61	3,2%	58	3,5%	41	2,9%	68	3,4%
Hungarian	16	0,8%	23	1,4%	16	1,1%	53	2,7%
Bulgarian	37	1,9%	25	1,5%	38	2,7%	37	1,9%
Dutch	46	2,4%	23	1,4%	22	1,6%	28	1,4%
Portuguese	27	1,4%	19	1,1%	17	1,2%	28	1,4%
Lithuanian	7	0,4%	5	0,3%	2	0,1%	15	0,8%
Finnish	19	1,0%	21	1,3%	6	0,4%	11	0,6%
Slovak	11	0,6%	4	0,2%	6	0,4%	10	0,5%
Swedish	8	0,4%	5	0,3%	10	0,7%	10	0,5%
Czech	4	0,2%	5	0,3%	1	0,1%	7	0,4%
Latvian	7	0,4%	6	0,4%	1	0,1%	5	0,3%
Danish	9	0,5%	13	0,8%	8	0,6%	4	0,2%
Slovenian	4	0,2%	3	0,2%	7	0,5%	4	0,2%
Catalan	0	0,0%	1	0,1%	0	0,0%	4	0,2%
Estonian	1	0,1%	1	0,1%	2	0,1%	2	0,1%
mixed-language text	1	0,1%	1	0,1%	3	0,2%	1	0,1%
Maltese	2	0,1%	1	0,1%	1	0,1%	0	0,0%
TOTAL REGISTERED	1924	-	1655	-	1414	-	1986	-

Table 7. Petitions by Year of Registration (1997 - 2012) and Current Status*, with shares of total registered

Year of Registration	Total Registered	Open		Closed	
		Count	Share (%)	Count	Share (%)
2012	1986	894	45,0%	1092	55,0%
2011	1414	299	21,1%	1115	78,9%
2010	1655	176	13,5%	1480	86,5%
2009	1924	141	9,3%	1783	90,7%
2008	1886	109	7,5%	1777	92,5%
2007	1506	102	8,0%	1506	92,0%
2006	1021	44	4,4%	977	95,6%
2005	1016	28	2,8%	988	97,0%
2004	2002	15	1,6%	987	98,4%
2003	1315	6	0,5%	1309	99,5%
2002	1601	4	0,3%	1597	99,7%
2001	1132	0	0,0%	1132	100,0%
2000	908	1	0,1%	907	99,9%
1999	934	1	0,1%	933	99,9%
1998	1127	2	0,2%	1125	99,8%
1997	1306	1	0,1%	1305	99,9%

**as of 01.07.2013*

Table 8. Public Attendance to Committee Meetings and Reimbursements (2009 - 2012)

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total attendees	245	243	242	234
of which, main petitioners	86	89	148	62
Petitioners reimbursed	24	12	10	22
Cost of reimbursements	€10.665	€5.710	€6.513	€13.447

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	17.9.2013
Result of final vote	+: 26 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Marta Andreasen, Margrete Auken, Heinz K. Becker, Victor Boştinaru, Philippe Boulland, Michael Cashman, Giles Chichester, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Iñaki Irazabalbeitia Fernández, Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo, Peter Jahr, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Erminia Mazzoni, Edward McMillan-Scott, Roberta Metsola, Jaroslav Paška, Nicole Sinclair, Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa, Angelika Werthmann, Rainer Wieland, Tatjana Ždanoka
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Birgit Collin-Langen, Vicente Miguel Garcés Ramón, Norica Nicolai, Ioannis A. Tsoukalas