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# REPORT

on the EU Citizenship Report 2013. EU citizens: your rights, your future  
(2013/2186(INI))

Committee on Petitions

Rapporteur: Nikolaos Salavrakos

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the EU Citizenship Report 2013. EU citizens: your rights, your future (2013/2186(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission Report of 27 October 2010 entitled ‘EU Citizenship Report 2010: Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens’ rights’ (COM(2010)0603),
  - having regard to the results of the Commission’s public consultation on EU citizenship, held from 9 May to 27 September 2012,
  - having regard to its resolution of 29 March 2012 on the EU Citizenship Report 2010: Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens’ rights<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the hearing jointly organised by the Committee on Petitions, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the European Commission on 19 February 2013, ‘Making the most of EU citizenship’, and the hearing of 24 September 2013, ‘The impact of the crisis on Europe’s citizens and the reinforcement of democratic involvement in the governance of the Union’,
  - having regard to the Commission Report of 8 May 2013 entitled ‘EU Citizenship Report 2013 - EU citizens: your rights, your future’ (COM(2013)0269),
  - having regard to its previous resolutions on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions,
  - having regard to the right of petition enshrined in Article 227 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
  - having regard to Part Two of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union entitled ‘Non-discrimination and citizenship of the Union’ and Title V of the Charter of Fundamental Rights,
  - having regard to Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union,
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Petitions and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0107/2014),
- A. whereas the Lisbon Treaty enhanced the concept of EU citizenship and its derived rights;
- B. whereas the right to petition the European Parliament is one of the pillars of European citizenship, creating an interface between citizens and the European institutions, with the aim of bringing the EU closer to its citizens, and turning the EU into an increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 257 E, 6.9.2013, p. 74.

meaningful and credible concept for them;

- C. whereas the rights inherent to citizenship of the Union are incorporated in the treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
- D. whereas all Member States have committed to respect the commonly agreed EU rules on the right of every citizen of the Union to move and reside freely within its territory, non-discrimination and the common values of the European Union, notably the respect for fundamental rights, with special attention to the rights of people belonging to minorities; whereas special attention should be paid to national citizenship and the rights of minorities deriving from it; whereas infringements by any Member State of fundamental rights concerning citizenship issues must be stamped out in order to avoid double standards and/or discrimination; whereas the Roma minority still faces widespread discrimination, and progress in the implementation of the National Strategies for Roma Inclusion is still limited;
- E. whereas free movement of people is one of the key elements of EU citizenship and can contribute to reducing the mismatch between jobs and skills in the internal market; whereas according to a Flash Eurobarometer from February 2013 more than two-thirds of respondents rightly agree that free movement of people within the EU brings overall benefits to the economy of their own country; whereas the Schengen criteria should be of a technical nature and should not be used to limit the access to the free movement of citizens;
- F. whereas discrimination on grounds of nationality is still present in some EU countries;
- G. whereas the issue of obtaining and forfeiting national citizenship has been raised in petitions, especially from the standpoint of its effects on European citizenship; whereas many petitioners, including many belonging to minorities in a Member State, have expressed their wish to see more coordinated citizenship laws in Europe;
- H. whereas various complaints have been received with regard to the exercise of the right to vote in European and municipal elections, and also with regard to disenfranchisement in relation to national elections after a period of time spent abroad;
- I. whereas public confidence in the European Union has fallen and European citizens are living through a difficult period caused by a severe economic and social crisis;
- J. whereas the 2014 elections will be the first to be held after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which significantly widens the powers of the European Parliament; whereas the European elections represent an opportunity to strengthen public trust in the political system, create a European public sphere and strengthen the voice and the role of citizens, which is one of the most important preconditions for strengthening democracy in the Member States and the EU; whereas the democratic and transparent functioning of the European Parliament is one of the main assets in promoting European values and integration;
- K. whereas the European Union, through its Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, champions a Europe of rights and democratic values, of freedom, solidarity and security,

and guarantees EU citizens better protection;

- L. whereas citizens are directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament and have a democratic right to stand and vote in the European elections, even when residing in a Member State other than their own; whereas the right of EU citizens resident in a Member State other than their own to vote in European and local elections is not sufficiently facilitated and promoted in all Member States;
  - M. whereas the European Union created a new right for European citizens to organise and support a European Citizens' Initiative by submitting their policy proposals to the European Institutions, and this has been used by millions of European citizens since 1 April 2012;
1. Welcomes the Commission's EU Citizenship Report 2013 (COM(2013)269) announcing twelve new actions in six areas aimed at strengthening EU citizens' rights;
  2. Welcomes the fact that a large majority of the 25 measures announced in the Commission's EU Citizenship Report 2010 have in the meantime been completed by the Commission and other EU institutions;
  3. Stresses that citizens need to be able to make informed decisions about exercising their Treaty rights and should therefore have access to all the necessary information, focusing not only on abstract rights, but also on practical, readily accessible information about economic, social, administrative, legal and cultural issues; calls on national, regional and local authorities to promote a better understanding of EU citizenship and to explain its practical benefits for individuals;
  4. Welcomes the Commission's initiatives aimed at improving citizens' awareness of their rights through Europe Direct and Your Europe and urges Member States to step up their efforts to spread knowledge of the SOLVIT network to citizens and companies; proposes, in this respect, that more information on European citizenship be provided on the occasion of the celebration of Europe Day on 9 May;
  5. Urges the Commission to ensure that its public consultations are available in all official EU languages so that no discrimination occurs on the basis of language; points to the Parliament's, and in particular to the Committee on Petitions', activities on social media platforms as an excellent way of creating interaction and dialogue with citizens;
  6. Encourages Member States to give more space to political education on EU affairs in their school curricula, to adapt teachers' training accordingly and, in this respect, to provide the necessary know-how and resources; emphasises that accessible education plays a vital role in the formation of future citizens by enabling them to acquire a solid basis of general knowledge, promoting individual empowerment, solidarity and mutual understanding and strengthening social cohesion; notes in this respect that education is essential as a means of enabling individuals to participate fully in democratic, social and cultural life and therefore considers that substantial cuts should not be made in the funds allocated to education;
  7. Believes that it is particularly important to encourage recognition of volunteers'

commitment, to validate the skills and expertise acquired in this way and to remove obstacles relating to free movement;

8. Underlines the importance of the organised civil society in strengthening an active European citizenship; considers it crucial therefore to further facilitate the cross-border work of these organisations in reducing bureaucratic burdens and providing adequate funding; reiterates its call<sup>1</sup> for the establishment of the European Association Statute, as this may facilitate the construction of projects between citizens of different EU Member States within a transnational organisation; highlights the need to create a structured framework for European civil dialogue which would give practical substance to participatory citizenship;
9. Regrets the existing opt-outs from parts of the EU treaties by some Member States which undermine, and generate de facto differences in, the rights of citizens that are intended to be equal under the EU Treaties;
10. Stresses the vital role played by the Member States in correctly implementing European legislation; believes that progress still remains to be made and that enhanced cooperation between the EU institutions and local and national authorities is needed; considers that increased cooperation would be an effective means of informally resolving problems, in particular impediments of an administrative nature; in this respect, applauds the Commission's intention of supporting, from 2013 and via its town twinning scheme in the Europe for Citizens programme, exchanges of best practice between municipalities and projects aimed at enhancing knowledge about, and correct implementation of, citizens' rights; believes that a practical toolkit on EU citizens' rights tailored to local and regional authorities would further improve correct implementation;
11. Regrets that the options for redress open to parents and children in the event of separation or divorce are not the same in each Member State, with the result that hundreds of parents in Europe have contacted the Committee on Petitions to urge it to be more active in this area despite its only having very limited competence;
12. Expects that the new petitions web portal, which will be available at the beginning of 2014, will turn the petitioning process into an appealing, transparent and user-friendly instrument, also for people with disabilities; calls on the Commission and the other institutions to properly acknowledge the petitioning process on their websites;
13. Welcomes the fact that, by November 2013, three very different European citizens' initiatives (ECIs) had met the required threshold; welcomes the planned hearings with the organisers of successful ECIs before the European elections; calls on Member States to promote the right to organise and support ECIs and to implement the regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative (EU 211/2011) in an inclusive way, by ensuring that they are ready to validate signatures both of their own citizens residing abroad and of citizens from other Member States residing on their territory;
14. Calls on all those Member States which do not as yet have a national ombudsman, at

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<sup>1</sup> Declaration of the European Parliament of 10 March 2011 on establishing European statutes for mutual societies, associations and foundations (P7\_TA(2011)0101).

present Italy and Germany, to meet the expectations of all EU citizens by appointing one;

15. Calls on the Commission to regularly monitor the way in which the administrative formalities related to entry and residence of EU citizens and their relatives are processed in the Member States; calls on the Commission to play an active role in ensuring that procedures implemented by Member States fully comply with the values and human rights recognised in the EU Treaties; emphasises that one of the main pillars of the Single Market is labour mobility; highlights the very positive benefits of the EU migrant workforce to the economy of the Member States; calls in this respect on the Commission to closely monitor the situation and take appropriate measures to remove potential obstacles, such as excessive bureaucracy, imposed at the national level in the way of this fundamental freedom;
16. Acknowledges that, according to the settled case law of the European Court of Justice<sup>1</sup>, the conditions for obtaining and forfeiting citizenship of the Member States are regulated exclusively under the national law of the individual Member States; calls, however, for closer coordination and a more structured exchange of best practices between Member States with respect to their citizenship laws in order to ensure fundamental rights and particularly legal certainty for citizens; calls for comprehensive common guidelines clarifying the relation between national and European citizenship;
17. Calls on those Member States that disenfranchise their own nationals who choose to live in another Member State for an extended period of time to put an end to this practice and revise their legislation accordingly to provide full citizenship rights during the whole process; recommends that the Member States take all steps to effectively help and assist citizens who wish to vote or stand as candidates in states other than their own; stresses the need for EU citizens to exercise their right to vote in the national elections of their country of origin from the Member State in which they reside;
18. Calls on the Member States to protect and enhance the meaning of EU citizenship by discouraging any forms of discrimination on grounds of nationality; deplores any populist rhetoric that aims to create discriminatory practices based only on grounds of nationality;
19. Calls on European political parties and their national affiliates to organise transparent electoral campaigns ahead of the 2014 European elections and to effectively tackle the problems of falling voter participation rates and the widening gap between citizens and the EU institutions; considers the nomination of Europe-wide candidates for the post of Commission President by European political parties as an important step towards building a genuine European public space, and is convinced that the prospect of a Europeanisation of the electoral campaign can be better achieved through pan-European activities and networks of local and national media, especially public media in the fields of radio, TV and the internet;
20. Stresses the importance of informing citizens that they are entitled to vote in municipal and European elections if they live outside their home country and of promoting this right by different means; urges the Commission not to wait until May 2014 to launch its handbook presenting those EU rights ‘in clear and simple language’;

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<sup>1</sup> Most recently in its judgment of 2 March 2010, C-135/08, Rottmann.

21. Calls on all Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies to further improve transparency and make access to documents easy and user-friendly, as this enables citizens to participate more closely in the decision-making process; calls on the Union's institutions, and particularly the European Commission, to improve the efficiency of their procedures so that legitimate requests by EU citizens are met as quickly as possible; calls on all Union institutions, and particularly Parliament, to ensure transparency and accountability in equal measure;
22. Welcomes the recent adoption of the two main EU programmes to fund activities in the field of EU citizenship from 2014 to 2020: the 'Rights and Citizenship' and the 'Europe for Citizens' programmes; considers it highly regrettable that the financial envelope for the latter especially, which supports projects on active European citizenship, has been drastically cut by Member States' governments as compared to the 2007-2013 period;
23. Expresses its serious concern about petitions revealing the delicate situation of certain residents who, due to their status, cannot entirely benefit from their rights to free movement or from full voting rights in local elections; calls on the European Commission and Member States concerned to facilitate the regularisation of their status in such cases;
24. Is deeply concerned about the obstacles citizens still face when exercising their individual rights in the internal market and believes that the current economic insecurity in Europe also needs to be tackled by removing these obstacles; welcomes therefore the new initiatives announced by the Commission to strengthen citizens in their role as consumers and workers across Europe;
25. Highlights the importance of improving the exchange of information about traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities in other EU countries through the EURES network; is alarmed at the unemployment rate, notably as this affects young people; welcomes the Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships<sup>1</sup> and calls on Member States to respect the principles set out in the guidelines;
26. Calls on the Member States to better inform EU citizens as to their rights and duties and to facilitate entitlement to these rights being respected equally both in their country of origin and in any other Member State;
27. Draws attention to the grievances of some petitioners, mostly expatriate EU citizens, who reported having encountered problems in relation to the acquisition, transfer and ownership of immovable property in various countries;
28. Acknowledges the problems faced by people with disabilities who exercise their right to free movement and calls for the introduction of an EU disability card, valid throughout Europe, for disabled persons;
29. Calls on the Member States to put in place coordination and cooperation measures in order to efficiently tackle the issues of double car registration taxes, tax discrimination and double taxation in a cross-border context and to take better account of the realities of

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2013) 857 final

cross-border worker mobility; considers that double taxation issues are insufficiently addressed through existing bilateral tax conventions or unilateral action by a Member State and would need concerted, timely action at the Union level;

30. Regrets the existence of cross-border hurdles in civil or social matters, such as family law or pensions, that prevent many citizens from enjoying full EU citizenship;
31. Recalls that EU citizens in the territory of a third country in which the Member State of which they are nationals is not represented are entitled to protection by the diplomatic or consular authorities of any Member State, on the same conditions as the nationals of that Member State, and emphasises the importance of such a provision as a point of principle;
32. Calls on Member States to set up as quickly as possible in each Member State a one-stop-shop to coordinate projects with a cross-border impact, for instance those with a social impact such as emergency services, with particular reference to projects that have an environmental impact, such as wind farms, where on occasion no consultation is held with residents on both sides of the border and no impact study is conducted;
33. Calls on the Commission to conduct a thorough assessment of the benefits and challenges of the European Year of Citizens 2013 (EYC); regrets that, due to underfunding and lack of political ambition, the EYC had a poor media profile and failed to generate a broad, publicly visible debate on European citizenship which could have contributed to improved or newly defined instruments;
34. Calls on the Commission to bring forward proposals for recognising the contribution voluntary work makes to citizenship;
35. Calls on the Commission to publish and distribute an explanation of citizens' rights before and after the Lisbon Treaty so as to restore citizens' trust;
36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Ombudsman and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

24.1.2014

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION**

for the Committee on Petitions

on the EU Citizenship Report 2013. EU citizens: your rights, your future  
(2013/2186(INI))

Rapporteur: Morten Løkkegaard

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Petitions, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the Commission's initiatives aimed at improving citizens' awareness of their rights through Europe Direct and Your Europe; notes at the same time that more needs to be done to inform citizens about their rights, notably through social media platforms; highlights the important contribution that Member States and national politicians can make to raising awareness;
2. Stresses that cross-border regions are the places where the advantages and disadvantages of European integration are most evident;
3. Stresses the need to foster citizens' participation in the democratic life of the EU and to facilitate and support various expressions of, and efforts to mobilise, active citizenship;
4. Strongly urges the Member States to step up their efforts to spread knowledge of the SOLVIT network among citizens and companies;
5. Recalls that Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare entered into application in October 2013; urges the Commission, in this connection, to monitor the proper implementation of that directive and to ensure that patients are comprehensively informed of their new cross-border healthcare rights;
6. Encourages the Commission to address the problems faced by graduates when applying for traineeships or jobs in another Member State, by developing a quality framework to protect trainees' rights and guarantee them fair pay; urges the Commission also to explore new means of improving the exchange of information about traineeships and job opportunities in other Member States, notably through the EURES network;

7. Feels that the limitations and shortcomings of Directive 96/71/EC on the posting of workers are leading to numerous abuses that harm employees covered by this directive, and that the lack of clear information, checks and cooperation between administrations is preventing posted workers from fully asserting their rights; calls on the Council to unblock the ongoing reform of this directive in order to improve protection for posted workers and to combat abuses and social dumping;
8. Underlines the importance of supporting pan-European networks composed of local and national media in the fields of radio, television and the internet; finds it highly worrying, therefore, that the Commission has unexpectedly, and without consulting Parliament, decided to cancel a call for proposals relating to pan-European networks in the field of the internet;
9. Highlights the need to create a structured framework for European civil dialogue which would give practical substance to participatory citizenship and enhance cooperation with local, national and European authorities and other stakeholders;
10. Welcomes the Commission's intention of supporting from 2013, via its town twinning scheme, exchanges of best practice between municipalities and projects aimed at enhancing knowledge of citizens' rights, but considers it highly regrettable that under the next multiannual financial framework the financial envelope for the Europe for Citizens programme, from which such projects can be funded, has been drastically cut;
11. Underlines the importance of organised civil society in strengthening active European citizenship, e.g. by involving its members in debates on EU issues of direct concern to them or in charity and volunteering activities abroad; considers it crucial, therefore, further to facilitate the cross-border work of these organisations in reducing bureaucratic burdens and providing adequate funding;
12. Raises citizens' most pressing concerns at the European level with regard to minimum income, social care, political and economic transparency, involvement in cultural life and the need to combat inequalities through gender mainstreaming; stresses that all citizens should be involved in the life of their community, including the most disadvantaged groups in society;
13. Urges the Member States to give more space in their school curricula to political education on EU affairs; considers that teachers play a vital role in bringing EU affairs into schools and encourages the Member States, therefore, to equip them with the know-how and resources they need to fulfil this role;
14. Shares the Commission's view as to the need to enhance EU citizens' awareness of their EU citizenship rights, and in particular their electoral rights, and specifically to inform them that they are entitled to vote in municipal and European elections even if they live outside their home country, but urges the Commission not to wait until May 2014 to launch its handbook presenting those EU rights 'in clear and simple language';
15. Urges the Commission to ensure that the right of every EU citizen to address the EU institutions in any official EU language is fully respected and applied in such a way that the Commission's public consultations are available in all official EU languages, so as to

ensure that all consultations are treated equally and that no discrimination occurs on the basis of language;

16. Points to Parliament's activities on social media platforms as an excellent way of creating interaction and dialogue with citizens.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	21.1.2014
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 27 -: 0 0: 1
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Zoltán Bagó, Malika Benarab-Attou, Piotr Borys, Jean-Marie Cavada, Silvia Costa, Lorenzo Fontana, Mary Honeyball, Cătălin Sorin Ivan, Petra Kammerevert, Morten Løkkegaard, Emma McClarkin, Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Martina Michels, Marek Henryk Migalski, Katarína Neveďalová, Doris Pack, Chrysoula Paliadeli, Monika Panayotova, Marietje Schaake, Marco Scurria, László Tőkés, Helga Trüpel, Gianni Vattimo, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Sabine Verheyen
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Ivo Belet, Nadja Hirsch, Seán Kelly, Georgios Papanikolaou, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	11.2.2014
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 21 -: 0 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Margrete Auken, Heinz K. Becker, Victor Boștinăru, Philippe Boulland, Nikolaos Chountis, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Ágnes Hankiss, Iñaki Irazabalbeitia Fernández, Carlos José Iturgaiz Angulo, Peter Jahr, Erminia Mazzoni, Chrysoula Paliadelis, Nikolaos Salavrakos, Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa, Angelika Werthmann, Rainer Wieland, Zbigniew Zaleski
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Marino Baldini, Sandrine Bélier, Vicente Miguel Garcés Ramón, Axel Voss