



THE RIGHT TO PETITION

Since the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht, every EU citizen and all natural or legal persons residing in the Member States have had the right to submit a petition to the European Parliament, in the form of a complaint or a request on an issue that falls within the European Union's fields of activity. Petitions are examined by Parliament's Committee on Petitions, which takes a decision on their admissibility and is responsible for dealing with them.

LEGAL BASIS

Articles [20](#), [24](#) and [227](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), Article [44](#) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

OBJECTIVES

The right to petition aims to provide EU citizens and residents with a simple means of contacting the EU institutions with complaints or requests for action.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Eligibility and requirements (Article [227](#) of the TFEU)

The right to petition is open to any EU citizen and any natural or legal person resident or having a registered office in a Member State, either individually or in association with others.

In order to be admissible, petitions must concern matters which fall within the EU's fields of activity and which affect the petitioners directly. The latter condition is interpreted very broadly.

B. Procedure

The procedure for dealing with petitions is laid down in Rules 226 to 230 of, and Annex VI (XX) to, [Parliament's Rules of Procedure](#), which confer responsibility on a parliamentary committee, the Committee on Petitions.

1. Formal requirements

Petitions must state the name, nationality and address of each petitioner and be written in one of the official EU languages. They can be tabled either by electronic means through the Parliament's Petitions Web Portal or by post on paper.



2. Material admissibility

Petitions that meet these formal requirements are referred to the Committee on Petitions, which must first decide whether they are admissible. The Committee does this by ascertaining that their subject falls within the EU's fields of activity. Where this is not the case, the petition is declared inadmissible. The petitioner is informed of this and of the reasons for the decision. Petitioners are often encouraged to contact another national, EU or international body. The main reasons why petitions are declared inadmissible are that petitioners confuse EU competences, responsibilities and possibilities for action and redress with those of Member States and other international organisations and bodies (such as the UN and the Council of Europe), including in relation to the applicability of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

3. Examination of petitions

Depending on the circumstances, the Committee on Petitions may take one or more of the following actions:

- Ask the European Commission to conduct a preliminary investigation on a petition and provide information regarding compliance with relevant EU legislation;
- Refer the petition to other Parliament committees for information or further action (a committee might, for example, provide the Committee on Petitions with an opinion, discuss or take account of a petition in its legislative, policy or scrutiny activities);
- If the petition concerns a specific case requiring individual attention, the Committee may contact the appropriate institutions or authorities or intervene through the permanent representation of the Member State concerned to settle the matter;
- Take any other action considered appropriate to try to resolve an issue or deliver a suitable response to the petition.

The Committee also decides whether to place petitions on its meeting agenda. In this case, the petitioner, the Commission and Member State representatives are invited. At this meeting, the petitioners – if they so wish – present their petition, the Commission gives its opinion orally and comments on its written response to the issues raised in the petition, and the representatives of the Member States concerned can be invited to take the floor. Members of the Committee on Petitions then have the opportunity to exchange views on issues raised during the debate and to propose further actions to be taken.

In specific cases, the Committee can decide to hold a hearing or a workshop, conduct a fact-finding visit to the country or region concerned, adopt a mission report containing its observations and recommendations, or prepare and submit a full report or a short motion for a resolution to be voted on by Parliament in plenary. It can also decide to submit oral questions to the Commission and/or the Council and to hold a debate in plenary.

If a petition relates to a matter of general interest revealing incorrect transposition or application of EU law, it can lead the Commission to take action with the Member State in question, including through infringement proceedings.



4. Closure

A petition may be closed by the Committee at various stages of the procedure, such as after a decision on admissibility has been taken by the Committee, after a discussion in a Committee meeting, when no further action can be taken on the petition, when a petition is withdrawn by the petitioner, or when the petitioner does not respond within a given deadline to a request for further information.

5. Transparency

Petitions submitted to Parliament become public documents. Summaries of petitions are published in all the official EU languages on Parliament's [Petitions Web Portal](#) after a decision on admissibility has been taken by the Committee on Petitions, together with other relevant documents.

The petitioners are informed in writing of all Committee decisions concerning their petition and of the reasons for these decisions, and they are provided with relevant information and documentation where appropriate once the decisions become available.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

According to the Treaties, Parliament is the addressee of petitions, and therefore has the responsibility of ensuring that the concerns expressed in those petitions are taken into full account in the EU. To do so in the best possible way, it has given a dedicated committee, the [Committee on Petitions](#), the task of dealing with petitions and coordinating the institution's follow-up activities. As highlighted in its annual reports on the deliberations of the Committee in the preceding year^[1], Parliament has always considered petitions as a key element of participatory democracy. It has also underlined their importance in revealing instances of incorrect transposition and implementation of EU law by Member States. In fact, a number of petitions have led to legislative or political action, EU pilot cases, preliminary rulings or infringement proceedings.

The Committee on Petitions is particularly active in the fields of fundamental rights (including children's rights, discrimination, the rights of minorities, justice, free movement, voting rights and Brexit), the environment and animal welfare, the internal market, social rights, migration, trade agreements and public health. The Committee notably plays a special role in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities within the EU Framework for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and it also organises an annual workshop on disabilities-related issues.

A number of instruments are available for ensuring that issues raised in petitions are addressed and resolved: fact-finding visits, public hearings, workshops, the commissioning of studies, a Petitions Network established in 2016 to ensure greater cooperation with the other committees in relation to petitions, and cooperation and

[1]Annual reports on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions include information on the number of petitions received, their format, status, outcome, country, language, nationality and subject; the web portal; relations with the Commission, Council and Ombudsman; fact-finding visits, public hearings, studies commissioned and further key issues.



dialogue with national parliaments and authorities, as well as with other EU institutions (notably the Commission and the European Ombudsman).

In 2014, Parliament also launched the [Petitions Web Portal](#), which has improved the public profile and transparency of petitions. The portal allows the participation of citizens, natural persons and legal residents in the EU, who can also interact with the EU through the portal, including by supporting an admissible petition^[2]. Parliament's Petitions Web Portal also signposts a number of [alternatives to petitions](#) that are available to European citizens.

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[2]For more information about the Committee on Petitions and its activities, see [Achievements of the Committee on Petitions during the 2014-2019 parliamentary term and challenges for the future.](#)

