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DRAFT REPORT

on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions in 2023
(2025/2027(INI))

Committee on Petitions

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the deliberations of the Committee on Petitions in 2023 (2025/2027(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations,
 - having regard to Articles 10 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
 - having regard to Articles 24 and 227 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) on the right of EU citizens and residents to bring their concerns to the attention of Parliament,
 - having regard to Article 228 TFEU on the role and functions of the European Ombudsman,
 - having regard to Article 44 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union concerning the right to petition the European Parliament,
 - having regard to the provisions of the TFEU relating to the infringement procedure and, in particular, to Articles 258 and 260 thereof,
 - having regard to Rules 56 and 233(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Petitions (A10-0000/2023),
- A. whereas the purpose of the annual report on the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations is to present an analysis of the petitions received in 2023 and of relations with other institutions, as well as to present an accurate picture of the objectives achieved in 2023;
- B. whereas in 2023, Parliament received 1 452 petitions, which represents an increase of 16.2 % compared to the 1 217 petitions submitted in 2022 and of 4.0 % compared to the 1 392 petitions registered in 2021;
- C. whereas in 2023, the number of users supporting one or more petitions on Parliament's Petitions Web Portal was 26 331, which represents a considerable increase compared to the 22 441 users recorded in 2022 (both numbers are considerably lower than the 209 272 supporters recorded in 2021); whereas the number of clicks in support of petitions also increased slightly in 2023, reaching a total of 29 287 (compared with 27 927 in 2022 and 21 7876 in 2021);
- D. whereas however, the overall number of petitions remains modest in relation to the total population of the EU, revealing that efforts still need to be stepped up to increase citizens' awareness of their right to petition and the possible usefulness of petitions as a means of drawing the attention of the institutions and the Member States to matters that

affect and concern citizens directly; whereas in exercising the right to petition, citizens expect the EU institutions to provide added value in finding a solution to their problems;

- E. whereas the criteria for the admissibility of petitions are laid down in Article 227 TFEU and Rule 232(1) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, which require that petitions must be submitted by an EU citizen or by a natural or legal person who is resident or has a registered office in a Member State and is directly affected by matters falling within the EU's fields of activity;
- F. whereas of the 1 452 petitions submitted in 2023, 429 were declared inadmissible and 13 were withdrawn; whereas the high percentage (29.55 %) of inadmissible petitions in 2023 confirms that there is still a widespread lack of clarity about the scope of the EU's areas of responsibility; whereas in order to reduce the number of inadmissible petitions, efforts still need to be made to clarify further the scope of the EU's fields of activity;
- G. whereas the right to petition Parliament is a fundamental right of EU citizens, offering both citizens and residents an open, democratic and transparent mechanism to address their elected representatives directly; whereas this essential tool empowers citizens to actively and effectively participate in the life of the Union; whereas through petitions, EU citizens can complain about failures to implement EU law and help detect breaches of EU law;
- H. whereas Parliament is the only EU institution directly elected by EU citizens; whereas it has long been at the forefront of the development of the petitions process internationally and has the most open and transparent petitions process in Europe, allowing petitioners to participate fully in its activities;
- I. whereas the information submitted by petitioners in their petitions and during committee meetings, along with the Commission's assessments and the replies from the Member States and other bodies, also provide valuable input for the work of other parliamentary committees, given that admissible petitions are forwarded to the relevant committee for an opinion or for information; whereas, therefore, petitions can also play a role in the legislative process, providing concrete feedback on the impact of EU policies and enabling policies to address the emerging needs;
- J. whereas the activities of the Committee on Petitions are based on the input provided by petitioners, enabling Parliament to enhance its responsiveness to complaints and concerns relating to the respect for fundamental EU rights and compliance with EU legislation in the Member States; whereas petitions are therefore a useful source of information on instances of misapplication or breaches of EU law, allowing for the assessment and application of EU law and its impact on the rights of EU citizens and residents;
- K. whereas each petition is considered and examined carefully, efficiently and transparently; whereas all petitioners have the right to receive a reply informing them about the decision on admissibility and follow-up actions taken by the committee within a reasonable period of time, in their own language or in the language used in the petition;

- L. whereas the Committee on Petitions attaches the utmost importance to the examination and public discussion of petitions at its meetings; whereas petitioners have the right to present their petitions and frequently take the floor in the discussion, thereby actively contributing to the work of the committee; whereas in 2023, the Committee on Petitions held 10 committee meetings, at which 191 petitions were discussed with 114 petitioners present and actively participating by taking the floor;
- M. whereas the main subjects of concern raised in petitions submitted in 2023 related to the environment, fundamental rights, personal matters and justice;
- N. whereas when adopting its meeting agenda, the Committee on Petitions pays attention to petitions and topics with a high degree of relevance for discussion at EU level and to the need to maintain a balanced geographical coverage of topics according to the petitions received;
- O. whereas 82.4 % of the petitions received in 2023 were submitted via Parliament's Petitions Web Portal, which is a slight increase compared to 2022 (79.05 %), thus reconfirming it as by far the most used channel for citizens to submit petitions to Parliament;
- P. whereas in February 2023, the Petitions Web Portal was revamped and relaunched to align it with current expectations and make it easier for residents of the Member States to exercise their right to submit petitions to Parliament; whereas the updated Petitions Portal 2.0 integrated seamlessly with Parliament's web publishing tool, enabling faster and simpler content updates and new features (including seven 'Quick Start Guides' that provide clear, step-by-step instructions for submitting, tracking and supporting petitions); whereas a new search engine powered by elastic search technology enhanced user experience by delivering more accurate results efficiently with the result of a new portal prioritising a truly citizen-centred approach; whereas during 2023 all petitions were prepared and published in a timely manner, within a few days of their adoption, and all internal and external requests for support on the use and content of the Petitions Portal were replied to successfully, in a timely manner and in all languages;
- Q. whereas in 2023, the Committee on Petitions held four fact-finding visits;
- R. whereas under Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Committee on Petitions is also responsible for relations with the European Ombudsman, who investigates complaints about maladministration within the institutions and bodies of the EU; whereas the previous European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, presented her annual report for 2022 to the Committee on Petitions at its meeting of 27 June 2023;
- S. whereas the Committee on Petitions is a member of the European Network of Ombudsmen, which also includes the European Ombudsman, national and regional ombudsmen and similar bodies in the Member States, the candidate countries and other European Economic Area countries, and which aims to promote the exchange of information about EU law and policy, and to share best practice;
- 1. Emphasises the fundamental role of the Committee on Petitions in protecting and promoting the rights of EU citizens and residents by ensuring that petitioners' concerns and complaints are examined in a timely, effective and appropriate manner and that

petitioners are informed about the actions taken and progress made on their petitions; recalls that all petitions are treated through an open, democratic and transparent petition process;

2. Reiterates the importance of a continuous public debate on the EU's fields of activity in order to ensure that citizens are properly informed about the scope of the Union's competences and the different levels of decision-making; reiterates its call, in this regard, for broader awareness-raising campaigns, through the active involvement of communications services, to help increase citizens' knowledge about their right to petition, as well as the scope of the EU's responsibilities and the competences of the Committee on Petitions, with a view to reducing the number of inadmissible petitions;
3. Recalls the European dimension of the Committee on Petitions, which can be addressed by citizens from all 27 Member States on issues that fall within the scope of the EU Treaties and EU law; believes that the Committee has a special responsibility to uphold this European dimension and to demonstrate the added value of European unity and integration to citizens;
4. Points out that petitions constitute a unique opportunity for Parliament and the other EU institutions to directly connect with EU citizens and maintain a regular dialogue with them, particularly in cases where they are affected by the misapplication or breach of EU law; stresses the need for enhanced cooperation between the EU institutions and national, regional and local authorities on inquiries regarding the implementation of, and compliance with, EU law; believes that such cooperation is crucial to address and resolve citizens' concerns over the application of EU law and that it contributes to strengthening the democratic legitimacy and accountability of the Union; calls, therefore, for the participation of Member States' representatives in committee meetings and for timely and detailed responses to requests for clarification or information sent by the Committee on Petitions to national authorities;
5. Recalls that petitions contribute considerably to the exercise of the Commission's role as the guardian of the Treaties by providing citizens with an additional tool to report alleged breaches of EU law; stresses that constructive cooperation between the Committee on Petitions and the Commission through timely and detailed answers from the Commission, which are based on thorough examinations of the issues raised in petitions, is essential to ensure the successful treatment of petitions;
6. Reiterates its call on the Commission to regularly update the Committee on Petitions on developments in infringement proceedings and to ensure that the Committee on Petitions gets access to the relevant info on infringement procedures which were launched based on petitions received, and on EU Pilot procedures; is of the opinion that increased transparency and regular feedback on the handling of ongoing infringement procedures by the Commission would be beneficial for the Committee's follow-up of open petitions; welcomes the recent initiative of the Commission to include petitions in the search system of the infringement register of the Commission;
7. Calls on the Commission to assess whether national authorities are taking the necessary measures to respond to citizens' concerns as expressed in their petitions where cases of failure to comply with EU law occur and to launch infringement procedures where

necessary; believes that early action by the Commission in cases of breaches of EU law is crucial to prevent such breaches from becoming systemic in nature;

8. Considers that more active cooperation between Member States and the Committee on petitions would be necessary to unblock those petitions requiring prompt responses and reactions from the national authorities;
9. Recalls that the e-Petition database is an essential internal tool that allows the members of the Committee on Petitions to access all necessary information in order to follow up on the state of play of each petition and to be able to make informed decisions on the treatment of the petitions; notes that the e-Petition database also plays an important role in communication with petitioners;
10. Recalls the Commission's commitment to create an interinstitutional IT tool, together with Parliament, with which to share information and documents on all follow-up actions taken on petitions, such as infringement procedures, legislative proposals or replies by national authorities, thus enhancing the transparency and efficiency of the treatment of petitions, which, in a wider context, would contribute to increasing citizens' trust in the EU institutions and the European project;
11. Recalls that cooperation with other committees in Parliament is essential for the comprehensive treatment of petitions; notes that in 2023, 34 requests for opinion (corresponding to 31 petitions) and 223 requests for information were sent to other committees; notes that of the 34 opinions requested, only 25 answers were received by the end of 2023 (in 14 cases an opinion was provided while in 10 cases the committee decided not to draft an opinion and on four occasions no official decision has been communicated); recalls that petitioners are informed of decisions to request opinions from other committees for the treatment of their petitions; underlines that parliamentary committees should step up their efforts to actively contribute to the examination of petitions by providing their expertise so as to enable Parliament to respond more swiftly and comprehensively to citizens' concerns;
12. Believes that the petitions network is a useful tool for facilitating the follow-up of petitions in parliamentary and legislative work; trusts that regular meetings of the petitions network are crucial in order to ensure more visibility for the Committee on Petition's activities and a better understanding of its work and mission, as well as to strengthen cooperation with the other parliamentary committees;
13. Underlines that the Committee on Petitions expressed its position on important issues raised in petitions by adopting its report on the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations during 2022¹;
14. Underlines a slight decrease in the number of petitions submitted on external relations issues compared to 2022; notes that this could be explained by the new geopolitical context in 2023 and in particular a decrease in the number of petitions on the war in Ukraine and a significant increase in petitions dealing with the new conflicts in the Middle East; notes that the Committee on Petitions took account of citizen's concerns

¹ Adopted by Parliament as its resolution of 23 November 2023 on the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations during 2022, OJ C, C/2024/4220, 24.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4220/oj>.

about sanctions, security, conflict resolution, visa policy, progress of EU candidate countries, among other issues, putting on its agenda a number of petitions dealing in particular with questions related to the situation of refugees, in particular of children and on the situation of Venezuelan refugees in the EU;

15. Takes note that health, which was one of the main areas of concern for petitioners in 2022, appeared to continue to play an important role in 2023; notes, in particular, that the Committee on Petitions examined and discussed petitions on the ban on chemicals and heavy metals in children's toys, on support for healthy and environmentally friendly food systems and lifestyles and on the implementation of EU regulations on added sugars in foods intended for infants and young children;
16. Draws attention to the significant number of petitions submitted and discussed in relation to citizens' concerns over the reintroduction of border checks between some Member States raising the problematic aspect of limitation of the free movement of persons within the EU and other aspects such as the strengths and the weaknesses of the extension of the Schengen area, as well as the costs of Non-Schengen; notes, in this regard, the adoption by the Committee on Petitions of a short motion for a resolution on the accession to the Schengen area on 27 June 2023 and the organisation of the public hearing on Schengen Borders, which were issues raised by petitioners on 18 July 2023 in association with the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs;
17. Underlines the work of the Committee on Petitions in connection with petitions relating to common rules on a single standard for hand luggage dimensions, highlighting citizens' concerns about the inconvenience and discomfort caused by inconsistent rules on airline carry-on luggage and the resulting hidden costs; emphasises its call for compliance with a relevant European Court of Justice ruling in the context of the revision of EU air services legislation; points, in this regard, to the short motion for a resolution on standardised dimensions for carry-on luggage adopted by the Committee on Petitions on 20 September 2023 followed by the adoption of a resolution by single vote of the European Parliament on 4 October 2023; welcomes the fact that in November 2023 the Commission put forward a review of the passenger rights framework and a series of proposals designed to improve the experience of passengers and travellers, including the requirement of a limited number of common sizes and weights to reduce the confusion;
18. Notes that environmental issues remained an area of serious concern for petitioners in 2023 with more than 21 % of petitions dedicated to environmental issues; regrets that some of these petitions allege incorrect implementation of EU legislation by the Member States, with some Member States already facing infringement procedures for the breach of EU environmental laws; notes that numerous petitions describe complaints about air quality, noise pollution, waste management/treatment, the deterioration of natural ecosystems and violation of the Habitats Directive in different Member States; highlights the public hearing on the state of implementation of the Habitats Directive organised on 24 May 2023; notes the work the Committee on Petitions continued to carry out in 2023 on the impact of climate change in different fields, not only in the environmental area, but also in the use of land, putting a number of petitions received on these topics on the agenda; points to the workshop on the impact of climate change on social security and the most vulnerable groups organised on 22 March 2023 and also

to the presentation of the study on compensation for victims of climate change disasters on 18 July 2023;

19. Draws attention to the workshop organised by the Committee on Petitions on 25 January 2023 on transparency of pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products, which discussed transparency from the perspectives of patients and consumers, producers of medicinal products, and academic research; notes that the discussions focused on research and development costs of companies and information available on the prices paid for medicines, underlining the importance of transparency on these issues;
20. Stresses the importance of delivering on EU citizens' expectations regarding the protection of the environment and urges the Commission, together with the Member States, to ensure the correct implementation of EU legislation in the environmental field;
21. Stresses the important contribution made by the Committee on Petitions to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, as revealed by its treatment of a number of petitions on this sensitive topic; recalls the annual workshop of 29 November 2023 on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the Committee on Petitions held; recalls that its first part focused on how persons with disabilities dealt with the recent crises (energy costs, war, high inflation) and how EU measures helped to overcome these obstacles while the second part addressed the issue of how the European institutions have built inclusive communication with citizens with disabilities; also highlights, in this context, the adoption by the Committee of an opinion in the form of a letter on establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities on 29 November 2023;
22. Underlines the specific protection role played by the Committee on Petitions within the EU in the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; points to the committee's important ongoing work in connection with petitions concerning issues on disabilities; notes a slight decrease in the number of petitions on disability in 2023 in comparison with previous years, especially 2022, but stresses nevertheless that it almost doubled compared to 2021; notes that discrimination and access to public transport and employment remain among the main challenges faced by persons with disabilities; points out that the Committee on Petitions paid special attention to the request for the European Disability Statute to recognise the rights of people with autism; welcomes the adoption of a short motion for a resolution on harmonising the rights of autistic people, emphasising the need to improve the access to diagnosis, healthcare, education, employment, accessibility and provision of reasonable accommodation, legal capacity, and lifelong support in the community, culture and sport;
23. Recalls the fact that relations with the European Ombudsman represent one of the responsibilities conferred on the Committee on Petitions by Parliament's Rules of Procedure; welcomes Parliament's constructive cooperation with the European Ombudsman, with whom the Committee on Petitions shares the objectives of ensuring the transparency, professionalism and integrity of the EU institutions vis-à-vis European citizens, as well as its involvement in the European Network of Ombudsmen;

24. Acknowledges the European Ombudsman's regular contributions to the work of the Committee on Petitions throughout the year; firmly believes that the Union's institutions, bodies and agencies must ensure consistent and effective follow-up to the recommendations of the Ombudsman;
25. Stresses that European citizens' initiatives (ECIs) represent an important instrument for active citizenship and public participation; welcomes the discussion in some meetings of some unsuccessful ECIs which were sometimes subsequently reformulated as petitions, giving citizens the opportunity to present their ideas and hold a constructive debate, while contributing to their participation in the EU's democratic processes; takes note of the significant number of new ECIs registered by the Commission in 2023, which shows that citizens are seizing the opportunity to use participatory instruments to have a say in policy and lawmaking processes; calls on the Commission to better engage with citizens and give adequate follow-up to successful ECIs; welcomes the important effort put in place to organise, in association with other committees, four public hearings on successful ECIs, which allowed the organisers to present the initiative's objectives and engage with Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission;
26. Underlines that the Petitions Web Portal is an essential tool for ensuring a smooth, efficient and transparent petitions process; welcomes, in this regard, the improvements to data protection and security features which have made the portal more user-friendly and secure for citizens; stresses that efforts to make the portal more accessible must be continued, including making it more accessible for sign-language users and persons with disabilities; notes that the Petitions Web Portal has been one of the European Parliament's most visited websites, thus serving as a first point of contact with Parliament for many EU citizens;
27. Welcomes the adoption of the short motion for a resolution on the creation of a European Capital of Local Trade² at the plenary session of January 2023; underlines that this achievement is an excellent result for the Committee on Petitions, noting that this project is successfully included as a preparatory action in the 2024 budget, with a total budget of EUR 3 million; recalls that the project to create a European Capital of Small Retail (ECSR) was officially presented by the Commission in Barcelona in December 2023;
28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of the Committee on Petitions to the Council, the Commission, the European Ombudsman, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States, their petitions committees and their national ombudsmen or similar competent bodies.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0006.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Pursuant to Rule 233(7) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, the Committee on Petitions shall report annually on the outcome of its deliberations. The report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the work carried out by the committee in 2023 and includes a statistical analysis of the petitions received and processed as well as a stocktaking of other parliamentary activities such as the adoption of reports and opinions, the organisation of hearings and the committee's relations with other EU institutions. It is worth recalling that the core work of the Committee on Petitions generates from the right to petition the European Parliament exercised by EU citizens and residents under Article 227 TFEU and is not directly linked to the work programme of the Commission.

In 2023, following the decision taken in 2022, all the measures put in place in the European Parliament in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic aiming at ensuring Parliament's core functions were confirmed. All committee meetings in 2023 took place in Parliament's premises, with the participation of MEPs, as well as of Commission's representatives, in person. Petitioners have had the possibility to participate remotely or in person.

Statistical analysis of petitions received in 2023 compared to 2022

According to the statistics, the European Parliament received 1 452 petitions in 2023, which represents an increase by 16.0 % compared to the 1217 petitions submitted in 2022 and by 4.0 % compared to the 1392 petitions registered in 2021. The number of petitions on COVID-19 has significantly decreased compared to the two previous years: 12 petitions on 2023 compared to 45 petitions in 2022 and 242 petitions in 2021.

Users of the Petitions Web Portal have the possibility to support petitions. In 2023, 26331 users acted as supporters as compared to 2022, 22441 and 209272 in 2021. It follows, that in 2023 the number of users supporting petitions in the web portal slightly increased in comparison with the previous year. The number of supports increased in 2023, reaching 29287 compared to 27927 in 2022 but incomparably lower compared to the 217876 in 2021;

In 2023, 11 petitions were co-signed by more than one citizen. Of the 11 petitions signed by more than one citizen, only 1 was signed by more than 100 citizens; of those 11 petitions, only 1 was signed by more than 500 citizens and none by more than 5000 citizens;

Format of petitions

In 2023, 82.4 % of petitions were submitted via the Petitions Web Portal, while almost 17.6 % of petitions were submitted by post. The figures in the two tables reveal that in 2023 the proportion of petitions submitted via the Petitions Web Portal slightly increased in comparison with 2022, the Petitions Web Portal remaining by far the most used channel for submitting citizens' petitions to the European Parliament.

2023			2022		
Petition Format	Number of petitions	%	Petition format	Number of petitions	%
Petition Portal	1186	82.4	Petitions Portal	962	79.05
Letter	254	17.6	Letter	255	20.95

The following table shows the status of petitions from 2003 to 2023. It can be noted that in 2023, a very large majority (2/3) of petitions were closed within a year after being received and examined by the committee. As a result of the comparison with the data on the status of petitions included in the annual reports from 2010 to 2022, it can be concluded that a significantly majority of petitions are closed within a year after being received and examined. Except for the year 2023 and partially for year 2016, less than 11% of the petitions received each year since 2003 and very small percentages (from 0.2% to 1.5%) of petitions from 2004 to 2014 remain open. Most of these open petitions relate to environmental issues and ongoing infringement proceedings before the Court of Justice of the European Union or to issues that members of the committee want to follow closely. An important number of petitions on the beach concessions in Italy (in total 450) have been submitted from 2012 to 2023, with a high number in 2016 and 2023 and are still open with a relevant impact on the statistics.

Status of petitions					
Year	Number of petitions	Open petitions		Closed petitions	
2023	1 452	334	23.2%	1 106	76.8%
2022	1 210	142	11.7%	1 068	88.3%
2021	1 388	154	11.1%	1 234	88.9%
2020	1 570	141	9.0%	1 429	91.0%
2019	1 355	113	8.3%	1 242	91.7%
2018	1 219	110	9.0%	1 109	91.0%
2017	1 270	57	4.5%	1 213	95.5%
2016	1 568	249	15.9%	1 319	84.1%
2015	1 431	64	4.5%	1 367	95.5%
2014	2 715	38	1.4%	2 677	98.6%
2013	2 891	33	1.1%	2 858	98.9%
2012	1 986	26	1.3%	1 960	98.7%
2011	1 414	14	1.0%	1 400	99.0%
2010	1 656	14	0.8%	1 642	99.2%
2009	1 924	5	0.3%	1 919	99.7%
2008	1 886	12	0.6%	1 874	99.4%
2007	1 506	15	1.0%	1 491	99.0%
2006	1 021	2	0.2%	1 019	99.8%
2005	1 016	2	0.2%	1 014	99.8%
2004	1 002	2	0.2%	1 000	99.8%
2003	1 315	0	0.0%	1 315	100.0%

Outcome of petitions¹

2023			2022		
Outcome of petitions	Number	%	Outcome of petitions	Number	%
Admissible and Closed	677	46.65	Admissible and Closed	527	43.48
Admissible and Open	334	23.00	Admissible and Open	327	26.98
Inadmissible	429	29.55	Inadmissible	357	29.46
Withdrawn	13	0.8	Withdrawn	5	0.08
Sent to EC for opinion	572	55.21	Sent to EC for opinion	482	37.57
Sent for opinion to other bodies	12	1.16	Sent for opinion to other bodies	12	0.94
Sent for information to other bodies	452	43.63	Sent for information to other bodies	789	61.5

The tables show that the petitions declared inadmissible in 2023 vs 2022 is significantly higher in terms of number but as percentage, the petitions declared inadmissible in 2023 remained stable as compared to 2022.

The percentage of admissible petitions (46.65%), which were closed immediately by providing information to the petitioner in 2023, is slightly higher as compared to 2022. The percentage of petitions that have been kept open in 2023 (23.00%) have slightly decreased compared to 2022 (26.98%).

It is also to be noted that in 2023, more than the half (55.21 %) of the admissible petitions were sent to the Commission for opinion.

Finally, the percentage of petitions sent to other bodies for opinion remained the same in 2023 as compared to 2022.

Number of petitions by country

The following two tables illustrate in numbers and in percentage terms changes of petitions by country from 2022 to 2023. A large number of petitions submitted in both years concern the EU. It means that these petitions either raise EU-wide issues or call for common measures to be implemented throughout the EU. Petitions concerning the EU may also relate to one or more Member States and are therefore registered under both the EU and the concerned Member State(s). This explains why the sum of the petitions concerning the EU and of those only related to Member States exceeds the total number of petitions submitted in 2022 and

¹ The statistics on the outcome of petitions are continuously evolving, especially when it comes to the number of open and closed petitions. The data for 2023 has been downloaded on 7 January 2025.

2023.

Additionally, it is worth stressing that the six countries mostly concerned by petitions remained the same in both years although the order of the most concerned countries has changed in 2023 compared to 2022, (Italy in 2023 takes the second seat occupied by Germany in 2022 and Greece takes the sixth seat in 2023 occupied by Poland in 2022). The majority of petitions submitted in 2023 concern Spain, with a relevant increase in terms of numbers in comparison with 2022. It is interesting to note the very significant increase in the number of petitions concerning Italy (from 101 to 202) and Portugal (from 17 to 38), and an opposite flow of the number of petitions related to Greece, with a decrease from 71 to 53. A relevant aspect to underline is that the number of petitions related to France, increased (from 39 to 53) in comparison with 2022.

By contrast, petitions concerning non-EU countries decreased significantly in 2023 compared to petitions submitted in 2022 (from 226 to 176).

As regards the countries featuring at the bottom of the list, Slovakia, Cyprus and Luxembourg, are the least concerned countries in 2023, while in 2022 it was the case for Czechia, Estonia and Slovakia.

2023			2022		
Concerned Country	Petitions	%	Concerned Country	Petitions	%
European Union	660	45.8	European Union	566	46.7
Spain	267	18.5	Spain	199	16.4
Italy	202	14.0	Germany	139	11.5
Germany	120	8.3	Italy	101	8.3
Romania	65	4.5	Greece	71	5.9
France	53	3.7	Romania	59	4.9
Greece	53	3.7	Poland	54	4.5
Poland	53	3.7	France	39	3.2
Portugal	38	2.6	Hungary	20	1.7
Hungary	24	1.7	Ireland	19	1.6
Other EU countries	193	13.3	Other EU countries	143	11.9
Non-EU countries	176	12.2	Non-EU countries	226	18.6

Languages of petitions

In 2023 and in 2022, petitions were submitted in 22 of the official languages of the European Union. English and Spanish were the most used languages in both 2022 and 2023, with Spanish re-confirmed as the second most used language, after English. Italian gained a position and became the third most used language in 2023, to the detriment of German which is the fourth in 2023. The tables illustrate that English continued to account for more than ¼ of the total of petitions submitted and that English, Spanish, Italian and German languages account for more than ¾ of the petitions received in 2023 and 2022 (77.5% and 76.2% respectively). Slovak, Estonian and Croatian were the least used languages in 2023 while in 2022 it was the case of Slovenian, Czech and Croatian.

2023		
Petition Language	Number of petitions	%
English	382	26.5
Spanish	301	20.9
Italian	224	15.6
German	209	14.5
French	74	5.1
Polish	49	3.4
Greek	47	3.3
Romanian	44	3.1
Others	110	7.6
Total	1440	100

2022		
Petition Language	Number of petitions	%
English	325	26.7
Spanish	251	20.6
German	215	17.6
Italian	138	11.3
French	58	4.8
Polish	56	4.6
Greek	43	3.5
Romanian	42	3.5
Others	89	7.3
Total	1217	100

Nationality of petitioners

As regards nationality, while petitions submitted by Spanish citizens represented the highest number in 2023 confirming not only the first place of the 2022 but also registering an important increase (from 266 to 330), Italian citizens exceeded German petitioners and became the second nationality in submitting petitions in 2023 with a significant increase (from 159 to 254).

In addition, the tables below show a slight rise in the number of petitions submitted by Portuguese nationals in 2023 in comparison with the previous year. By contrast, the number of petitions by Hungarian citizens sensibly decreased in 2023, from 33 submitted in 2022 to 21 in 2023.

Two additional observations: in 2023, the number of petitions submitted by other EU nationalities increased significantly compared to 2022, from 170 to 209, and petitions submitted by non-EU nationalities slightly decreased, accounting for 3% of the total.

2023		
Prime petitioner nationality	Number of petitions	%
Spain	330	22.9
Italy	254	17.6
Germany	246	17.1
Romania	93	6.5
France	71	4.9
Poland	64	4.4
Greece	62	4.3
Portugal	39	2.7
Belgium	29	2.0

2022		
Prime petitioner nationality	Number of petitions	%
Spain	266	21.9
Germany	251	20.7
Italy	159	13.1
Romania	78	6.4
Poland	73	6.0
France	60	5.0
Greece	60	5.0
Hungary	33	2.7
Portugal	26	2.1

Other EU nationalities	209	14.6
Non-EU nationalities	43	3.0

Other EU nationalities	170	13.9
Non-EU nationalities	49	4.0

Main subjects of petitions

The tables below include the top ten petition themes. From the tables, it appears that the main themes did not differ from one year to another. While in 2022 environment, fundamental rights and justice were the top three petition themes, in 2023 environment, internal market as well as fundamental rights ranked the highest.

In 2023 the number of petitions raising concerns over the internal market had a significant increase compared to 2022 (194 vs 84), which represent more than the double. This could be explained by the high number of petitions related to the beach concessions in Italy submitted in 2023.

As regard petitions on health, their number in 2023 (119) remained stable compared to the 115 petitions registered under the same theme in 2022. In the field of the external relations, a slight decrease can be noted, explained by a decrease of the number of petitions on the Ukraine's war and a significant increase of petitions dealing with the new conflict in the Middle East.

As far as fundamental rights theme is concerned, the number of petitions on this topic is stable in 2023 compared to 2022. This might be due to the fact that in 2023, an important number of petitions (40) registered under the theme of fundamental rights raised concerns over the respect of the rule of law in Spain.

2023

2022

Top 10 Petition themes	Number of petitions	%
Environment	308	21.5
Internal Market	194	13.4
Fundamental Rights	193	13.4
Personal Matter	179	12.4
Justice	167	11.6
Health	119	8.3
External Relations	96	6.7
Consumer's Right	93	6.5
Transport	93	6.5
Constitutional Affairs	68	4.7

Top 10 Petition themes	Number of petitions	%
Environment	258	21.2
Fundamental Rights	211	17.4
Justice	189	15.6
External Relations	126	10.4
Personal Matter	126	10.4
Health	115	9.5
Employment	73	6.0
Consumer's right	66	5.4
Institutions	63	5.2
Energy	61	5.0

Petitions Web Portal

In 2023, the Petitions Web Portal, launched in late 2014, was further improved to make it more user-friendly, more secure and more accessible to petitioners.

The Petitions Web Portal was revamped and relaunched in February 2023 to align with modern expectations and make it easier for EU27 residents to exercise their right to submit petitions to the European Parliament. The updated PETI Portal 2.0 integrated seamlessly with the EP's web publishing tool, enabling faster and simpler content updates. Its responsive design ensured compatibility with all devices and screen sizes. New features included four 'Quick Start Guides' - available in all 24 EU official languages - that provide clear, step-by-step instructions for submitting, tracking and supporting petitions. Additionally, a new search engine powered by elastic search technology enhanced user experience by delivering more accurate results efficiently. The new portal prioritises a truly citizen-centred approach.

In April 2023, the PETI Portal 2.0 was presented to an extended Steering Committee (comprising group advisers and DG IPOL Strategy and Innovation representatives). Updates on releases, petition statistics and a communication strategy to boost the portal's visibility were also discussed. Moreover, the portal was actively promoted through various media channels, including Europarl, Twitter, the Director-General's newsletter and events such as the Open Doors Day.

The automatic notification system has been extended and improved to inform petitioners and supporters by email – if they have opted in – when a reply from the European Commission ("Communication to Members" or "CM") has been published and translated into the petition's original language and the other languages of the Committee.

The PETI Portal team ensured that all petitions were published within days of their adoption and promptly responded to numerous petitioner queries – across all EU languages – received through the chatbot and Smart Helpdesk.

Relations with the Commission

The Commission remains the natural partner of the Committee on Petitions in processing petitions as the responsible EU institution for ensuring the implementation of and compliance with EU law. The committee and the Commission have a well-established and consistently maintained level of cooperation. The main contact point in the Commission is the Secretariat-General, which coordinates the distribution of petitions to the relevant Commission's services and transmits the Commission's replies to the secretariat of the committee. The Commission's services participate in the meetings of the Committee of Petitions when petitions are discussed in committee on the basis of the Commission's written reply or of other documents received. While the Commission has stepped up its efforts to provide timely responses to requests for information made by the Committee on Petitions, the committee believes that the Commission should be more actively involved in the work of the Committee on Petitions in order to ensure that petitioners receive a precise response to their requests and complaints regarding the implementation of EU law.

Additionally, the committee reiterated its calls for regular updates on developments in infringement proceedings and EU pilot procedures, which relate to open petitions. Finally, the

committee remains critical as regards the Commission's new enforcement policy based on in its 2016 communication entitled 'EU Law: Better Results through Better Application' (C(2016)8600), which aims to direct citizens to the national level when complaints or petitions do not raise issues of wider principle or systematic failure to comply with EU law. In this regard, the committee considers that the Commission should check whether national authorities take the necessary steps to respond to citizens' concerns as expressed in their petitions.

Pursuing to the Annex IV of the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission on the Timetable for the Commission's Work Programme and as part of the annual cycle of the structured dialogue, the Committee on Petition welcomed the remote participation of Vice-President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight Maroš Šefčovič at its meeting on 28 February 2023. The exchanges of views focused on the state of implementation of the Commission Work Programme as well as on the cooperation between the Petitions Committee and the European Commission on improving relations in the handling of petitions.

It is also worth noting the Commission's intervention in the Committee on Petitions' events throughout the year. In particular the intervention of representatives of the Commission during the presentation of the following studies: study on 'The boundaries of the Commission's discretionary powers when handling petitions and potential infringements of EU law' (Implementation & Enforcement of EU Law) on 26 April 2023; study on "Cross-Border Legal Recognition of Parenthood in the EU" (DG JUST) on 17 July 2023; study on "Compensation for Victims of climate change disasters" (DG CLIMA) on 18 July 2023; study on "Homelessness in the European Union" (DG EMPL) on 30 November 2023.

Representatives of the Commission also participated in several PETI hearings in 2023: public hearing on "The impact of climate change on social security and the most vulnerable groups" organised on 22 March (DG EMPL), hearing on "The state of implementation of the Habitats Directive" on 24 May 2023 (DG ENV.E - implementation and relations with Member States) with a focus on the infringement actions brought in the context of the Habitat Directive; hearing in association with Committee on Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on "Schengen Borders - issues raised by petitioners" (DG HOME - Unit of Schengen and External Borders) with a focus on "Historical overview: establishment of the Schengen agreement, its progressive extension and the transfer of the Schengen acquis to the EU competence" on 18 July 2023; hearing on "A reflection on the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions and the petitions' systems of third countries" on 24 October 2023.

Finally, on 29 November 2023, in the annual workshop on the rights of persons with disabilities focusing on "Coping with the cost-of-living crisis and Inclusive communication", Helena DALLI, the former European Commissioner for Equality intervened via a recorded video statement followed by representatives of DG Communication.

ECI

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is a European Union (EU) mechanism aimed at increasing direct democracy by enabling "EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies". The initiative enables one million citizens of the European Union, who are nationals of at least seven member states, to call directly on the European

Commission to propose a legal act in an area where the member states have conferred powers onto the EU level. If at the end of the procedure, the ECI initiative reaches the threshold, organisers are invited to a hearing organised by the committee for petitions, to present their initiative, and afterwards, Parliament may decide to debate further and adopt a resolution on plenary on the topic.

On 24 January 2023, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) jointly with the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and with the association of the PETI Committee, held a public hearing on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "Save bees and farmers! Towards a bee-friendly agriculture for a healthy environment". The initiative requests the phasing out of synthetic pesticides by 2035, a broader support to farmers and the development of the agriculture by prioritising small scale, diverse and sustainable farming, supporting a rapid increase in agro-ecological and organic practice, and enabling independent farmer-based training and research into pesticide. The former Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevicius and the former Commissioner for agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski presented their points of view on the different topics, showing the need for legislators to work together with all the stakeholder groups.

On 27 March 2023, the Committee on Fisheries (PECH) organised, in association with the Committee on Petitions and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), a public hearing on the ECI "Stop Finning – Stop the Trade". The initiative requests to the Commission to propose legal measures to end the trade of shark and ray fins in the EU, including the import, export and transit of fins, other than if naturally attached to the animal's body, notably by extending the scope of Regulation (EU) No 605/2013. Former Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevicius intervened stressing that ECI raises important issues that are relevant to the EU's policy of protecting the marine environment, protecting and conserving fisheries resources and ensuring sustainable fishing in the EU and globally.

On 25 May 2023, Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) organised in association with the Committee on Petitions and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI), a public hearing on the ECI "Save cruelty-free cosmetics – Commit to a Europe without animal testing". The initiative requests three main objectives: protect and strengthen the cosmetics animal testing ban, transform EU chemicals regulation, ensuring human health and the environment by managing chemicals without the addition of new animal testing requirements and modernise science in the EU.

On 12 October 2023, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) and the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) organised, in association with the Committee on Petitions, a public hearing on the ECI "Fur-Free Europe". The initiative calls on the EU to ban the rearing and killing of animals for the purpose of fur production. It also asked for a ban on the placing on the Union market of both fur from animals farmed for their fur, as well as products containing such fur. Former Commissioner for Health and Food safety Stella Kyriakides recalled that after a deep technical analysis, the Commission will eventually evaluate the necessity and justification of the bans requested by the ECI' organisers in pursuing objectives of environmental and public health, of animal health and welfare objectives, in ensuring that consumer concerns can be addressed in practice, as well as in ensuring a smooth operation of the internal market.

Article 230 of the Rules of Procedures of the European Parliament allows the Committee on Petitions, if it considers appropriate, to examine proposed citizens' initiatives which have been registered in accordance with Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 211/2011, but which cannot be submitted to the Commission in accordance with Article 9 of that Regulation, since not all the relevant procedures and conditions laid down have been complied with. On that basis, the Committee held on 27 April 2023 a debate on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "Ensuring Common Commercial Policy conformity with EU Treaties and compliance with international law" with the participation of the organisers and a representative of the Commission and members of the committee. The ECI representatives' main objective was to invite the Commission to propose a legal acts based on the Common Commercial Policy to prevent EU legal entities from both importing products originating in illegal settlements in occupied territories and exporting to such territories, in order to preserve the integrity of the internal market and to not aid or assist the maintenance of such unlawful situations. Although the ECI ended without reaching the threshold of 1 million signatures, the Committee on Petitions could shed light on it and decide to send the petition to the Committee on International Trade for opinion and to ask the European Commission for an update on this topic.

In accordance with the same article, the Committee held on 24 October 2023 a debate on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "Good Clothes, Fair Pay", with the participation of the organisers and a representative of the Commission and members of the committee. The ECI representatives' main objectives were to invite the Commission to propose legislation, requiring undertakings active in the garment and footwear sector to conduct due diligence in respect of living wages in their supply chain achieving the following objectives: (a) complement and build on the 'EU's Sustainable Corporate Governance framework', and the 'EU Adequate Minimum Wage Directive'; (b) require undertakings to identify, prevent and mitigate adverse impacts on the human right to a living wage and freedom of association and collective bargaining rights; (c) reduce poverty in the Union and worldwide, paying particular attention to the circumstances of women, migrants and workers with precarious contracts and the need to combat child labour; (d) prohibit unfair trading practices which cause, or contribute to, actual and potential harms to workers in the garment and footwear sector and promote fair purchasing practices; (e) provide a right to information for consumers regarding undertakings in the garment and footwear sector; (f) improve transparency and accountability of undertakings in the garment and footwear sector. Although the ECI ended without reaching the threshold of 1 million signatures, the Committee on Petitions could shed light on it and decide to send the petition to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for opinion and to ask the European Commission for an update on this topic.

Relations with the Council

Members of the Council's Secretariat may attend the meetings of the Committee on Petitions. Regrettably, in 2023, the committee did not observe Council's participation in the debates. Nevertheless, the committee notes the participation by some local or regional authorities in the discussion on petitions in committee meetings, which in 2023 concerned mainly Spanish-related topics. Also on 30 November 2023, the committee acknowledges the participation of the Head of the Diversity and Inclusion Office of the Council of the EU at the annual workshop on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Relations with the European Ombudsman

The Committee on Petitions continued its constructive, long-standing working relations with the office of the European Ombudsman, contributing to the increase of the democratic accountability of the EU institutions.

On 27 June 2023, the committee heard the presentation of the European Ombudsman's Annual Report 2022, delivered by Ms Emily O'Reilly. The report documented the Ombudsman's work on transparency and accountability (e.g. access to information and documents), culture and service, respect of fundamental rights, the proper use of discretion (including in infringement procedures), recruitment, good management of personnel issues, respect of procedural rights, sound financial management, ethics and public participation in EU decision-making. In 2022, the Ombudsman opened 348 inquiries, of which four were on her own initiative, while closing 330 inquiries. The largest percentage of inquiries concerned the European Commission (57.1%), followed by the European Personnel Selection Office (6.3%), the European Parliament (5.5%) and the European External Action Service (4.6%). The remaining enquires concerned other EU institutions, agencies and bodies with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) totalling 4.3% and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency 2%.

It is also worth noting the intervention by inquiries Officer in the Ombudsman's Strategic Inquiries Team at the committee's annual workshop on the rights of persons with disabilities which took place on 29 November 2023.

Relations with the European Court of Auditors

Over recent years, the Committee on Petitions has built constructive working relations with the European Court of Auditors (ECA) and has actively contributed to its annual work programmes.

Relations with other EU bodies

On 22 March 2023 in the frame of the workshop organised by the Committee on Petition on "The impact of climate change on social security and the most vulnerable groups", the Head of Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation of the European Environment Agency spoke on "Social preparedness for current and future climate risks".

On 24 May 2023 in the frame of the workshop organised by the Committee on Petition on "The state of implementation of the Habitats Directive", a nature and biodiversity expert at the European Environment Agency intervened in the session "How to promote full compliance by Member States of the Habitats Directive?".

On 20 September 2023, the Committee on Petitions organised an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting with a focus on the Cooperation with the Committees on Petitions in national Parliaments - Exchanging best practices and reflecting on new approaches and in the Panel 1 on "The right to petitions, Parliaments rules, procedures and practices" several Members of National Parliaments took the floor, in particular a Member of Spanish Senate, a member of Belgian Federal Parliament. In the second Panel titled "Best Practices And New Approaches To The Right To Petition National Parliaments' Point Of View" some National

Members intervened, among others, one Member of Italian Chamber, one Member of German Bundestag, one member of the French Senate and one Member of the Polish Sejm.

On 24 October 2023, the Committee on Petitions organised a public hearing on “A reflection on the European Parliament’s Committee on Petitions and the petitions’ systems of third countries” and in this frame several Members of the extra EU National Parliaments intervened. In particular, two representatives of the House of Commons of Canada presented “An analysis of the legal, institutional and procedural framework governing the petitions’ system in Canada”, followed by a member of Federal Senate of Brazil who analysed ‘the legal, institutional and procedural framework governing the petitions’ system in Brazil’. In the second panel of the hearing, one member of the Norwegian Parliament analysed ‘The legal, institutional and procedural framework governing the petitions’ system in Norway”.

On 29 November 2023, a representative of the Fundamental Rights Agency took the floor in the first panel of the annual workshop on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Fact-finding visits

In 2023, the Committee on Petitions organised four fact-finding visits.

The committee organised a fact-finding visit to Romania (Bucharest, Sfântu Gheorghe and Suceava), from 15 to 18 May 2023, on the management and the protection of the brown bear population as raised in Petitions Nos 1188/2019, 1214/2019, 0685/2020, 0534/2021, 0410/2022 and the illegal logging in the country, petitions Nos. 1248/2019, 0408/2020, 0722/2020 and 1056/2021. The aim of the mission was to collect as much information as possible on the two subjects of interest, to establish facts and to seek solutions. In this regard, the delegation met various interlocutors, such as national and regional authorities, petitioners, NGOs, environmental activists, as well as representatives of academia and. Following rich exchanges, Members acquired first-hand information and knowledge about the challenges related to the management and the protection of the brown bear population and to the illegal logging and the fight against it in Romania.

From 13 June to 15 June 2023, two Members of the Committee on Petitions participated in a joint ad hoc EMPL, LIBE and PETI delegation to the 16th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD COSP), which took place at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. Members participating in the delegation took part in several official sessions of the Conference, side events (including one organised by the EP), as well as in a series of bilateral meetings with UN officials, European and non-European governmental and non-governmental organisations, working for the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities. The main purpose of the delegation was to build on the well-established contacts of the previous year and to highlight and guarantee Parliament’s oversight in the implementation and monitoring of the UN CRPD, within the “Team Europe” cooperation.

A fact-finding visit was organised to the region of Donegal (Ireland) from 30 October to 1 November 2023 on the use of defective mica blocks in construction in Ireland, an alleged non-compliance with the EU Construction Products Regulation (CPR) and on the protection of homeowners as raised on Petitions Nos. 0789/2021, 0790/2021, 0799/2021, 0800/2021, 0801/2021, 0813/2021, 0814/2021 and 0837/2021. During the mission, the delegation was made aware of the large scale and complexity of the challenges related to the use of defective

building blocks in construction in Ireland, with significant health, financial and social consequences.

Between 18 and 20 December 2023, the Committee on Petitions conducted a fact-finding visit to Catalonia (Spain) with the aim of assessing in situ the language immersion model in Catalonia, its impact on families moving to and residing in the region as well as on multilingualism and non-discrimination and the principle of the Rule of Law as raised on petitions Nos. 0858/2017, 0650/2022 and 0826/2022. The objective of this fact-finding visit was to investigate the claims made in the petitions, establish facts, seek solutions and establish a dialogue with regional authorities to obtain a better insight into various aspects concerning the language immersion model in Catalonia. The mission has enabled the Committee to gain a better understanding of the model's impact on families moving to and residing in the region as well as on multilingualism, non-discrimination and compliance with international and EU law.

Public Hearings

In 2023, the Committee on Petitions organised four public hearings, partly jointly with other parliamentary committees. The public hearings covered a wide range of subject raised in petitions.

On 28 February 2023, the Committee on Petitions hosted a public hearing on the “language immersion model in Catalonia, Spain”. The hearing was organised as follow up on several petitions (Nos. 0858/2017 and 0650/2022) on the impact of full immersion in Catalan at schools and covered four main themes: the compatibility between European regulations and case law and the linguistic model in Catalonia, the impact of linguistic immersion in Catalonia on the school performance of students whose mother tongue is Spanish, the Catalan linguistic-cultural model and the linguistic immersion in Catalonia, respect for secular bilingualism in Catalonia and compatibility with the linguistic conjunction model.

On 24 May 2023, the Committee on Petitions held, in association with the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, a public hearing entitled “The state of implementation of the Habitats Directive”. Following a significant number of petitions received alleging the breach of the Habitats Directive, the hearing aimed to take a closer look at how the Habitats Directive has been implemented and enforced in the Member States. It was organised in two sessions, and the experts invited, focused, in particular, on the following topics: implementation and infringement overview, implementation challenges and the infringement procedure as an efficient tool for the enforcement of the Habitats Directive. Furthermore, the speakers identified possible best practices to promote full compliance of Member States with the Habitats Directive.

On 18 July 2023, the Committee on Petitions held, in association with the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, a public hearing on: ‘Schengen Borders: - issues raised by petitioners’. On the basis of several petitions Nos. 0428/2020, 0653/2020, 0227/2022, 0719/2022, 0004/2023 and 0037/2023 the hearing aimed at giving voice to citizens' concerns over the reintroduction of border checks between some Member States (e.g. Denmark and Sweden, Denmark and Germany), thus limiting the free movement of persons within the EU. It also touched upon other aspects such as the strengths and the weaknesses, the extension of the Schengen area, as well as the costs of Non-Schengen. The exchanges were organised in

two panels, with the first focusing on the historical background and the current state of play of the Schengen area and the second on the issue of reintroduced border controls within the Schengen area. The Commission pointed out the ongoing dialogue with the Member States and the review of the Schengen Borders Code and stressed that the enlargement of the Schengen area remains a priority.

On 24 October 2023, the Committee held the public hearing ‘A reflection on the EP Committee on Petitions and the petitions’ systems of third countries’. The hearing focused on the analysis and comparison of the EU petitions’ system and the petitions’ systems of selected non-European countries with shared democratic values, namely Canada, Brazil and Norway. The aim was to exchange best practices that could inspire the EU petitions’ system to become more efficient and closer to the citizens and to gather evidence on how citizens can bring forward their concerns through petitions. The experts analysed the legal, procedural and institutional framework governing the Canadian, Brazilian and Norwegian petitions’ systems, as well as the differences with the EU system concerning the submission, admissibility, examination and closure of petitions.

Workshops

In 2023, the Committee on Petitions organised three workshops covering subject-matters raised in petitions.

On 25 January 2023, the Committee on Petitions held a workshop on “Transparency of pricing and reimbursement of medicinal products”. The workshop discussed transparency from the perspective of patients/consumers, producers of medicinal products, and academic research. The discussions focused on research and development costs of companies and information available on the actual prices paid for medicines. The exchanges concluded that without full transparency on these issues, any discussion on fair medicine prices and access to medicinal products remains highly difficult.

On 22 March 2023, the Committee on Petitions hosted a workshop on “The impact of climate change on social security and the most vulnerable groups”. The workshop focused on the effects of climate change on vulnerable groups in society, such as the elderly, low-income families, and people with disabilities. It also looked into the role attribution science - an area of science that aims to determine which extreme weather events can be explained by or linked to climate change - can play in helping develop (social) policies for the future.

On 29 November 2023, the Committee on Petitions held its “Annual Workshop on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, during the first European Parliament’s Disability Rights Week. The workshop focused on two themes: coping with the cost-of-living crisis and on inclusive communication. The first panel looked into the situation of persons with disabilities in the context of recent crises (COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis and rising inflation) and discussed proposals for measures to overcome obstacles. The second panel debated the European institutions’ efforts to ensure effective communication with and about persons with disabilities, both internally and in their relations with citizens.

Studies

In 2023, the committee heard the presentations of the following studies commissioned by the

Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at its request:

- Study on 'FATCA legislation and its application at international and EU level: - An Update' on 25 January 2023. Professor C. Garbarino described the most relevant developments in the period 2018-2022 in chronological order and drew conclusions, which include a systemic view of the institutional dynamics, a provisional legal analysis on the basis of existing rules and policy suggestions.

- Study on "Environmental Crime affecting EU financial interest, the economic recovery and the EU's green deal objectives", presented by Prof. Dr Michael G. Faure (Professor of comparative and international environmental law at Maastricht University and Professor of comparative private law and economics at Erasmus School of Law in Rotterdam) and Dr. Kévine Kindji, (Research fellow at at the Maastricht European Institute for Transnational Legal Research (METRO) at Maastricht University) on 25 January 2023. The study suggested that despite commendable efforts, the transnational nature of environmental crime and its convergence with organised crime, money laundering and corruption, have not been adequately integrated into current reforms. It concluded that a proper categorization of environmental crime as a 'serious crime' was needed as an essential basis for policy reforms;

- Study on 'The boundaries of the Commission's discretionary powers when handling petitions and potential infringements of EU law', presented by Prof. Armin Cuyvers (Leiden University) on 26 April 2023. The study analysed the legal limits on the discretion of the Commission when deciding to launch, or not to launch, an infringement action, especially in response to a petition. In addition, it assessed how the Commission uses this discretion in practice, and formulates recommendations on improved political collaboration between the European Parliament and the Commission, in the interest of EU citizens;

- Study on "Cross-Border Legal Recognition of Parenthood in the EU", presented by Professor Alina Tryfonidou (Neapolis University) on 17 July 2023. It examined the problem of non-recognition of parenthood between Member States and its causes, the current legal framework and the (partial) solutions it offers to this problem, the background of the Commission proposal, and the text of the proposal. It also provides for a critical assessment of the proposal and issues policy recommendations for its improvement;

- Study on "Compensation for Victims of climate change disasters", presented by Professor Michael Faure (Maastricht University and Erasmus Universit), on 18 July 2023. The study outlined the dangers and effects of climate change in the EU, as well as the EU policies and mechanisms to deal with climate change disasters. It also analysed the types of compensation available to victims of climate change disasters in the EU and in a representative selection of Member States and formulated several policy recommendations;

- Study on "Homelessness in the European Union" presented by Professor Eoin O'Sullivan, (Trinity College) on 30 November 2023. The study insisted on the need to change systems that respond to homelessness as an issue of individual dysfunction and inadequacy, to systems that actually end homelessness. Public policy should aim to prevent homelessness in the first instance. It highlighted that the duration of homelessness should be minimised by rapidly providing secure, affordable housing, in order to reduce further experiences of homelessness, decrease costly emergency accommodation, and alleviate trauma associated with homelessness.

In addition, in the frame of the Annual Workshop on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 29 November 2023, the following study has been presented by Magdi Birtha (European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research):

- Study on “Targeted measures for persons with disabilities to cope with the cost-of-living crisis”. The study analysed the impact of the ongoing cost-of-living and energy crises on the standard of living for persons with disabilities. Based on available evidence, it provided for an overview on legislation, policy measures and schemes that support persons with disabilities and their families to cope with the rising cost of living at EU level and in selected Member States.

Key issues

Internal Market

It is worth noting the high increase in 2023 in the number of petitions on internal market issues. This rise is in large part due to a high number of petitions submitted on the situation of the beach concessions in Italy in particular on alleged non-compliance with Directive 2006/123/EC on liberalisation of services (‘Bolkestein Directive’). A second major topic is related to the citizens’ concerns over the reintroduction of border checks between some Member States (e.g. Denmark and Sweden, Denmark and Germany), thus limiting the free movement of persons within the EU and other aspects such as the strengths and the weaknesses, the extension of the Schengen area, as well as the costs of Non-Schengen in particular for Romania and Bulgaria.

The Committee adopted a short motion of resolution on the Accession to the Schengen area on 27 June 2023 and organised a public hearing on Schengen Borders: - issues raised by petitioners on 18 July 2023.

Fundamental Rights

Still in 2023, the committee received a high number of petitions on fundamental rights, including alleged breaches of the General Data Protection Regulation in different EU countries and on the respect of the rule of law and democracy.

In addition, the Committee continued to receive petitions on the violation of the human rights in several third countries and a series of petitions on the fundamental rights of LGBT-EU citizens.

Other relevant topic concerned the homelessness in the EU, how to deal with this sensitive issue and a study has been presented on November 2023, insisting on the need to change systems that respond to homelessness as an issue of individual dysfunction and inadequacy, to systems that actually end homelessness, with a new role of the public sectors.

Environmental issues

In 2023, environmental issues remained high in citizens' concerns and the committee paid paramount attention to them. The protection of the environment was discussed in almost all committee meetings, on the basis of petitions. Topics such as protection of wildlife and forest policy within the EU have been discussed as well as alleged breaches of the Habitats Directive in some Member States.

The Committee examined also petitions on the protection of the quality of groundwater resources against chemical environmental pollution and on control of the air pollution and air quality safeguarding of the health of the population concerned.

In addition, the committee held fact-finding visit to Romania (Bucharest, Sfântu Gheorghe and Suceava), in relation to several petitions that raised some issues as the management and the protection of the brown bear population and the illegal logging in the country.

Other topics submitted to the attention of the PETI committee have concerned alleged breaches of EU environmental law and the new dimension of the climate change. In this frame, the Committee on Petitions held a workshop on the impact of climate change on social security and the most vulnerable groups on March 2023 and in its meeting of July 2023, a study on Compensation for victims of climate change disasters has been presented and discussed.

The animal welfare became a relevant topic in 2023, with a series of petitions calling for a revision of the legislation on animal welfare and a specific legislation for the protection and management of companion, domestic and stray animals inside the EU. The Committee examined petitions against the cruel treatment of animals in different Member States and proposed to have a Commissioner specifically competent for the animal welfare issues.

Disability issues

The Committee on Petitions plays a specific protection role as regards compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) within the policymaking and legislative actions at EU level. Within this responsibility, the committee deals with petitions on disability issues. It is worth stressing that in 2023 the number of petitions on disability (22) slightly decreased in comparison with 2022 but almost doubled as compared to 2021 (28 in 2022 and 13 in 2021). In 2023, the committee continued examining petitions on disability revealing that the main challenges remain discrimination, access to education and employment as well as inclusion. Special attention was given by the committee to Petition No 0822/2022 asking for the European Disability Statute to contemplate the rights of people with autism followed by the approval of a short motion of resolution on the same topic, Petition No 0756/2019 on an EU-wide disability card, Petition No 1056/2016 requesting the European Parliament allow for the tabling of petitions in national sign languages used in the EU as well as Petition No 0569/2023 on the accessibility of public transport for wheelchair users in Belgium.

From 13 June to 15 June 2023, the Committee on Petitions participated in a joint ad hoc

EMPL, LIBE and PETI delegation to the 16th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD COSP), which took place at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. The main purpose of the delegation was to build on the well-established contacts of the previous year and to highlight and guarantee Parliament's oversight in the implementation and monitoring of the UN CRPD, within the "Team Europe" cooperation. It gave the delegation the opportunity to exchange views and discussed how ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities and improve their digital accessibility.

Finally, on 29 November 2023, the Committee hosted the Annual Workshop on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, focusing in the first part on 'Coping with the cost-of-living crisis' where the situation of persons with disabilities in the face of recent crises has been presented (the energy crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, together with rising inflation) and some proposals for targeted measures to overcome obstacles have been discussed (EU funds, the European Social Fund Plus and temporary instruments, the Recovery and Resilience Funds (RRF)). In the second panel on 'Inclusive communication' the focus was on the efforts made by the European Institutions to ensure effective communication with and about persons with disabilities, both internally and in their relations with citizens.

Reports, Motions for Resolutions and Opinions

The Committee on Petitions worked intensely to adopt a considerable number of parliamentary files.

In 2023, the Committee on Petitions adopted three own initiative reports as follows:

- Report on the Activities of the European Ombudsman - Annual Report 2021" (2022/2141(INI)) PETI/9/10044 - Rapporteur: Anne Sophie Pelletier (GUE) - adopted on 28 February 2023;
- Report under Rule 227(7) on the Deliberations of the Committee on Petitions in 2022" (2023/2047(INI)) PETI/9/11741 - Rapporteur: Alex AGIUS SALIBA (S&D) - adopted on 24 October 2023;
- Report on the Activities of the European Ombudsman - Annual Report 2022" (2023/2120(INI)) PETI/9/12602 - Rapporteur: Peter JAHR (EPP) - adopted on 29 November 2023;

The Committee also adopted the following fact-finding visits mission reports:

- Report of the fact-finding visit to Poland 19-21 September 2022 PETI/9/11016 - adopted on 22 March 2023;
- Report of the fact-finding visit to Washington D.C. 18-22 July 2022 PETI/9/11015 adopted on 22 March 2023;
- Report of fact-finding visit to Germany from 3 to 4 November 2022 on the functioning of the "Jugendamt" (Youth Welfare Office) PETI/9/11343 adopted on 26 April 2023;
- Report of Fact-Finding Visit to Romania from 15 to 18 May 2023 on the management and the protection of the brown bear population and the illegal logging in Romania, as raised in Petitions Nos: 1188/2019, 1214/2019, 0685/2020, 0534/2021, 0410/2022 (the brown bear population), as well as 1248/2019, 0408/2020, 0722/2020, 1056/2021 (the illegal logging)

PETI/9/13165 - adopted on 29 November 2023;

In addition, the committee adopted the following Motions for Resolutions:

- Short motion for resolution on the Accession to the Schengen area 2023/2668(RSP), PETI/9/11832 - Rapporteur: Dolors Montserrat (Chair) - adopted on 27 June 2023;
- Short motion for resolution on Standardised dimensions for carry-on luggage 2023/2774(RSP) PETI/9/12441 - Rapporteur: Dolors Montserrat (Chair) - adopted on 20 September 2023;
- Short motion for resolution on Harmonising the rights of autistic persons, 2023/2768 (RSP) PETI/9/12151 - Rapporteur: Dolors Montserrat (Chair) - adopted on 20 September 2023;

In 2023, the Committee on Petitions also adopted two opinions, as follows:

- Opinion in form of a letter on Monitoring the application of European Union Law 2020, 2021 and 2022, 2023/2080(INI) PETI/9/12224 - Rapporteur: Loránt Vincze (EPP) - adopted on 20 September 2023;
- Opinion in form of a letter on Establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities, 2023/0311(COD) PETI/9/13175 - Rapporteur: Dolors Montserrat (EPP) - adopted on 29 November 2023;

Finally, the committee adopted the following texts:

- Amendments to the Budget 2024 - adopted on 18 July 2023.
- Oral Question on Improving the strategic approach on the enforcement of EU Law 2023/2886(RSP) PETI/9/13266 - Rapporteur: Dolors Montserrat (Chair) - adopted on 24 October 2023.