



Building bridges: providing citizens with information they request

This quarterly review gives information compiled by the [Citizens' Enquiry Service](#) (CITES) garnered directly from citizens through the correspondence sent to the European Parliament which is received and treated by the Unit. CITES aims to give citizens, when asked, information about the EP, how it works and how legislation is formulated.

We provide one of the bridges between citizens and their representatives across which they can express themselves in writing and receive replies. The purpose of the review is to give an insight into the issues that were preoccupying citizens who wrote to our Unit.



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Ailing economic situation in the European Union

Citizens' preoccupation with the current economic climate has remained a recurring theme in the first quarter of 2013. In particular, the enquiries received by CITES concerned the economic crisis in the European Union as a whole and the financial situation in Cyprus.

The proposed bail-out of the Cypriot banking sector was a major concern of many citizens. There is an underlying fear that people will be unable to recuperate their life-savings due to the proposed taxes on bank deposits. The handling of the economic crisis by the Eurogroup was also the subject of criticism.

Furthermore, comments were received on specific matters such as unemployment in Spain, pensions in Greece, taxation in Italy and the establishment of a free zone in Sardinia.

Multiannual Financial Framework

One of the other frequently asked questions was the status of the vote on the Multiannual

Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020. Some enquiries were purely factual, for example to know when the MFF would be adopted, others were to question the budget itself.

Citizens have also written in regarding the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived 2014-2020. There is a certain concern that sufficient funding would be available for its objectives to be fulfilled.

In addition, CITES has continued to receive general proposals from citizens on how, in their view, the European Union's financial crisis should be solved.

More information

[EP leaders comment on Cyprus banks' deal](#)

[European Union Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020](#)

[Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived \(2014-2020\)](#)

Governments criticised

Governments of some Member States came under fire this quarter. In their correspondence, citizens protested against decisions made by EU countries and, in some cases, wanted more action and intervention from the EP.

The political situation in Hungary was one of the most criticised, in particular the changes to the constitution adopted in March. Citizens expressed their concern about the amended rules on the powers of the Hungarian constitutional court. They were also worried about minority rights and what they perceived to be an increasing influence of the government on the media and other institutions of the country.

Issues surrounding the democratic principles and the rule of law in Romania have also incited citizens to express their discontent and profound regret. The price of electricity in Bulgaria, resulting in the toppling of the government, similarly provoked comments.

More information

[Schulz regrets hasty adoption of constitutional changes in Hungary](#)

Human rights issues

Human rights violations continue to concern citizens. This quarter, CITES received many comments, protests and requests for action on a variety of subjects.

These included the detention and treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli prisons as well as the hunger strikes by some Palestinian prisoners, urging the international community to take action. Furthermore, some citizens commented on the two-state solution being proposed in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Citizens also wrote to the European Parliament about the ongoing situations in Syria, Mali and Tunisia, as well as the policies of the Russian authorities towards homosexuals and feminism.

More information

[EP's resolution on the case of Arafat Jaradat and the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails](#)



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Privatisation of water services

CITES received many enquiries, principally from Germany, on the subject of privatisation of water services. Although the context of these enquiries was the proposed amendment to the directive on the procurement in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors, it was the water services, presently not privatised in Germany, which elicited a reaction from citizens.

Enquiries ranged from requests for the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee's report and other documentation on the subject, to protests regarding the implications of implementing the proposals. CITES provided links to the report and its progress through parliamentary procedure as well as information about the current citizens' initiative requiring governments to ensure and provide all citizens with sufficient and clean drinking water and sanitation.

More information

[Citizen's initiative](#)

[Procedure file in the Legislative Observatory](#)

Animal welfare: citizens care

During this quarter, citizens contacted CITES on several animal welfare issues. Among these were an online video on the mistreatment of horses, the plight of Tania, an Asian elephant being kept in isolation in a zoo in Romania, and the ongoing problem of stray dogs in this country.

More information

[EP's resolution on the establishment of an EU legal framework for the protection of pets and stray animals](#)

Gender stereotypes

The EP resolution on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU evoked comments from citizens concerning pornography on the Internet. Some of those writing criticised the EP for interference in this matter whereas others felt that this resolution did not go far enough in the quest to eliminate pornography in the media.

More information

[Procedure file in the Legislative Observatory](#)

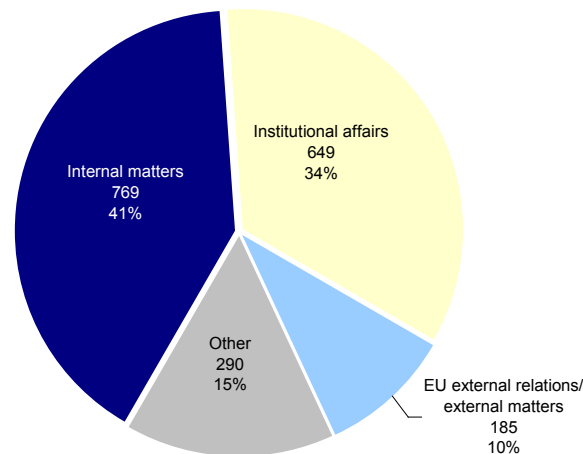
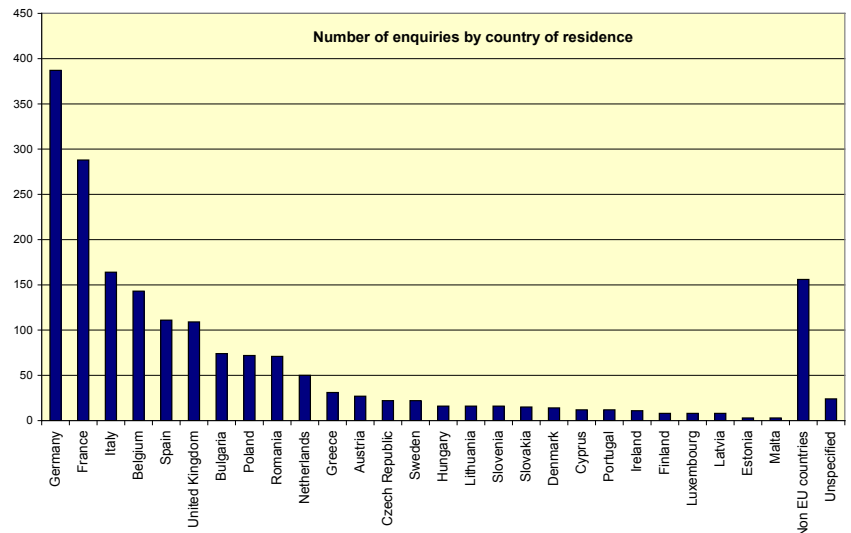
Statistics for the first quarter of 2013 — activities of the EP make up almost one third

In this first quarter of 2013, CITES treated a total of 1,893 enquiries from citizens of all the Member States as well as outside of the European Union.

Activities within the EU and its Member States (internal matters) made up the largest percentage of correspondence received. 47% of these enquiries were on the subject of civil liberties, justice and home affairs.

Those relating to institutional affairs amounted to a third of all enquiries treated. A consistent 92% of this correspondence focused on the activities of the EP.

Human rights and animal welfare constituted a large portion of the enquiries regarding EU external relations/external matters.



Internal matters		
Civil liberties, justice and home affairs	365	47%
Economy and finance	81	11%
Employment and social affairs	64	8%
Consumer protection	60	8%
Environment	59	8%
Culture	29	4%
Transport	21	3%
Agriculture	20	3%
Public health	18	2%
Internal market	13	2%
Education	12	1%
Energy	11	1%
Other	16	2%

Institutional affairs		
European Parliament	597	92%
EU institutions and constitutional affairs	25	4%
Budget	21	3%
Enlargement	6	1%

EU external relations/external matters		
Agriculture/animal welfare	56	30%
Human rights	55	30%
Foreign affairs	27	15%
Security and defence	9	5%
Employment and social affairs	8	4%
Other	30	16%

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