

## **Provisions concerning the right of petition (German Bundestag)**

### **Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany**

#### **Article 17**

Everyone shall have the right individually or jointly with others to address written requests or complaints to the competent agencies and to parliaments.

#### **Article 45 c**

(1) The Bundestag shall appoint a Petitions Committee to deal with requests and complaints addressed to the Bundestag pursuant to Article 17.

(2) The powers of the Committee to consider complaints shall be regulated by a federal law.

## **Law on the Powers of the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag (Law Enacted pursuant to Article 45 c of the Basic Law)**

of 19 July 1975 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 1921)

### **Section 1**

To enable the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag to prepare decisions on complaints pursuant to Article 17 of the Basic Law, the Federal Government and the federal authorities shall submit files to the Petitions Committee, provide it with information and grant it access to their premises.

### **Section 2**

Section 1 shall apply mutatis mutandis to federal corporate bodies, institutions and foundations under public law to the extent that they are subject to supervision by the Federal Government.

### **Section 3**

(1) A refusal to submit files, provide information and grant access to premises shall be permissible only if the matter concerned must be kept secret pursuant to a law or if there are other compelling reasons for secrecy.

(2) The decision on a refusal shall be taken by the highest federal supervisory authority responsible. Reasons shall be given for the decision.

### **Section 4**

The Petitions Committee shall have the right to hear the petitioner, witnesses and experts.

### **Section 5**

The petitioner, witnesses and experts summoned by the Committee receive remuneration in accordance with the Law on the Remuneration of Witnesses and Experts as published in the Notification of 1 October 1969 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 1756) and as amended by Article 6 of the Law to Ease the Workload of the Regional Courts and to Simplify the Record of Legal Proceedings of 20 December 1974 (Federal Law Gazette O, p. 3561).

### **Section 6**

Pursuant to the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag, the Petitions Committee may, in individual cases, transfer the powers granted to it under this law to one or more of its members.

**Section 7**

The courts and administrative authorities shall be bound to render administrative assistance to the Petitions Committee and the members commissioned by it.

**Section 8**

Pursuant to Section 13, paragraph (1) of the Third Conversion Act of 4 January 1952 (Federal Law Gazette I, P. 1) this law shall also apply in Land Berlin.

**Section 9**

This law shall enter into force in the day following its promulgation.

## **Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag,**

### **X. Procedure for Petitions**

#### Rule 108

##### **Competence of the Petitions Committee**

(1) The Petitions Committee to be set up by the Bundestag in accordance with Article 45 c of the Basic Law shall deal with requests and complaints addressed to it pursuant to Article 7 of the Basic Law. The functions and powers of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall remain unaffected.

(2) Unless the Law on the Powers of the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag provides otherwise, petitions shall be dealt with in accordance with the following provisions.

#### Rule 109

##### **Referral of petitions**

(1) The President shall refer petitions to the Petitions Committee. The latter shall request the comments of the specialized committees if the petitions relate to a subject under debate in these committees.

(2) Members of the Bundestag who present a petition shall upon their demand be permitted to participate in the committee deliberations without being entitled to vote.

#### Rule 110

##### **Rights of the Petitions Committee**

(1) The Petitions Committee shall draw up principles governing the treatment of requests and complaints and shall use them as the basis for its decision in each case.

(2) Where requests for the submission of files, information, or access to premises are made direct to authorities of the Federation and to federal corporate bodies, institutions and foundations under public law, the relevant member of the Federal Government shall be informed.

(3) The relevant member of the Federal Government shall be informed in good time of any hearing of the petitioner, witness or expert.

#### Rule 111

##### **Transfer of powers to individual members of the Petitions Committee**

The Petitions Committee shall decide in individual instances whether to transfer to one or more of its members powers granted to it under the Law Enacted pursuant to Article 45 c of the Basic Law. The decision shall specify the nature and extent of the powers thus transferred.

#### Rule 112

##### **Recommendation and report of the Petitions Committee**

(1) The report on the petitions dealt with by the Petitions Committee shall be submitted to the Bundestag in the form of a list together with a recommendation. The report should be submitted monthly. In addition, the Petitions Committee shall submit to the Bundestag an annual written report on its work.

(2) The reports shall be printed, distributed and placed on the agenda within three weeks of sittings after they have been distributed; the rapporteur may give supplementary oral explanations. A debate shall, however, only be held if a parliamentary group or five per cent of the Members of the Bundestag present so demand.

(3) The petitioners shall be informed of the manner in which their petitions have been dealt with. This communication should state the reasons.

## **Principles of the Petitions Committee governing the Treatment of Requests and Complaints**

(Procedural Rules)

of 8 March 1989, edited by the decision of 20 February 1991, supplemented by the decision of 19 June 1991 and adopted for the 16th electoral term by the decision of 30 November 2005

On the basis of Rule 110, paragraph (1) of the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag, the Petitions Committee has drawn up the following principles governing the treatment of requests and complaints:

### **1. Relevant legal provisions**

(1) Pursuant to Article 17 of the Basic Law, everyone shall have the right individually or jointly with others to address written requests or complaints to the Bundestag.

(2) Pursuant to Article 45 c, paragraph (1) of the Basic Law, the Bundestag shall appoint a Petitions Committee to deal with requests and complaints addressed to the Bundestag.

(3) The powers of the Petitions Committee to prepare its decisions on petitions derive from Article 17 of the Basic Law and the Law on the Powers of the Petitions Committee of the German Bundestag (Law Enacted pursuant to Article 45 c of the Basic Law).

### **2. Submissions**

#### **2.1. Petitions**

(1) Petitions shall be submissions in which requests or complaints are made on one's own behalf, for third parties or in the general interest.

(2) Requests shall be demands and proposals for acts or omissions by organs of state, authorities or other institutions discharging public functions. They shall in particular include proposals for legislation.

(3) Complaints shall consist in objections to acts and omissions by organs of state, authorities or other institutions discharging public functions.

#### **2.2. Multiple petitions, collective petitions, mass petitions**

(1) Multiple petitions shall be individually written submissions concerning the same matter.

(2) Collective petitions shall be collections of signatures concerning the same matter.

(3) Mass petitions shall be a large number of submissions concerning the same matter, the text of which is completely or largely identical.

#### **2.3. Other submissions**

Petitions shall not include requests for information and mere statements, critical remarks, reproaches, statements of approval or other expressions of opinion without a specific request.

### **3. Petitioners**

(1) Every natural person and every legal person under private law resident in Germany shall have the basic right pursuant to Article 17 of the Basic Law.

(2) Legal capacity shall not be required in order to exercise the right of petition; it shall be sufficient for the petitioner to be in a position to express his concern intelligibly. The right of petition shall not depend on the petitioner's personal circumstances, such as his place of residence or nationality.

(3) If a petition is submitted for a third party, legitimation may be demanded. If the third party does not agree to the petition, it shall not be further processed.

### **4. Written form**

(1) Petitions shall be submitted in writing. The petition shall be in the required written form only if a signature is affixed.

(2) There shall be no right to present a petition orally or submit it in person.

### **5. Competence of the Petitions Committee**

(1) The Petitions Committee shall deal with petitions which fall within the Bundestag's own area of competence, particularly federal legislation.

(2) The Petitions Committee shall deal with petitions which fall within the area of competence of the Federal Government, federal authorities and other institutions discharging public functions. This shall apply regardless of the extent to which the federal authorities and other institutions are subject to supervision by the Federal Government.

(3) Within the limits defined in the Basic Law, the Petitions Committee shall also deal with petitions concerning the other constitutional organs of the Federation.

(4) The Petitions Committee shall deal with petitions concerning the execution of federal laws or EC legislation by the Laender as matters of their own concern (Articles 83 and 84 of the Basic Law) or as agent of the Federation (Article 85 of the Basic Law) only where the execution of such laws or legislation is subject to federal supervision or where the petition concerns a matter relating to federal laws or EC legislation.

(5) The Committee shall deal with petitions concerning legal proceedings only where at federal level

- the competent bodies as parties to the litigation are required to adopt a specific course of action in a lawsuit;

- legal provisions are demanded which would make it impossible in future for courts to hand down the rulings criticized in the petitions;
- the competent bodies are called upon not to enforce a judgement in their favour.

Petitions demanding encroachment upon the independence of judges shall not be dealt with.

## **6. Right to information concerning petitions and right to refer petitions**

### **6.1. Right to information**

(1) Article 17 of Basic Law shall give rise to a right to information in the case of both requests and complaints.

(2) In matters concerning the Federal Administration the right to information shall in principle be directed at the Federal Government. Where the matter is not subject to federal supervision, this right shall be directed at the body responsible which discharges public functions of the Federation.

### **6.2. Informing the Federal Government**

Where requests for submission of files, information or access to premises are made direct to authorities of the Federation and to federal corporate bodies, institutions and foundations under public law, the competent member of the Federal Government shall be informed (Rule 110, paragraph (2) of the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag).

### **6.3. Right of referral**

(1) To deal with a petition, the Petitions Committee may move, by means of a recommendation for a resolution to be adopted by the plenary of the Bundestag, that the petition be referred to the Federal Government or to another constitutional organ of the Federation.

(2) Where the matter is not subject to supervision by the Federal Government, the petition shall be referred direct to the agency of the Federal Administration or the competent body responsible which discharges public functions of the Federation.

## **7. Processing of submissions by the Committee Service**

### **7.1. Registration of petitions**

(1) Each petition shall in principle be registered separately.

(2) In the case of multiple petitions, one petition shall be treated as the principal petition.

(3) Mass petitions shall be treated as one petition (principal petition) for processing purposes. The individual petitions shall be collected and their number recorded.



## **7.2. Submissions other than petitions**

Submissions other than petitions (2, 3) shall be dealt with as far as possible by writing to the sender, in particular by giving advice or information or by forwarding them to the appropriate bodies. In all other cases they shall be filed away.

## **7.3. Deficient petitions**

(1) In principle, the Committee Service shall not prepare petitions for the Committee to deal with if

- their contents are confused;
- they are illegible;
- the petitioner's address or signature is incorrect or forged;
- the petitioner's address or signature is wholly or partly lacking;
- they demand something which is in fact impossible, a criminal offence, a breach of an administrative regulation or a measure in contravention of the constitutional order or moral law;
- their contents are insulting or their purpose is blackmail or coercion.

(2) Where a deficiency is not corrected either by the petitioner within an appropriate period or by the Committee Service, the Service shall file the petition away after consulting the Chairman.

## **7.4. Restriction of the right to an examination of the petition**

The petitioner shall not be entitled to have the contents of a petition examined again if he has already submitted an earlier petition on the matter, on which a decision has been taken, and no new facts or evidence of relevance to the decision have been presented.

## **7.5. Forwarding of petitions**

Where the parliaments of the federal states or other institutions are responsible for dealing with petitions, they shall as a rule be forwarded to them.

## **7.6. Petitions concerning a serviceman**

As regards the treatment of petitions concerning a serviceman, the Principles governing Cooperation between the Petitions Committee and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall apply. <sup>1)</sup>

## **7.7. Request for comments**

As regards the petitions to be dealt with by the Petitions Committee, the Committee Service shall as a rule request the comments of the Federal Government or of other bodies obliged to provide information.

## **7.8. Petitions on subjects under debate in specialized committees of the Bundestag**

Where a petition concerns a subject under debate in one of the specialized committees, the comments of the specialized committee shall be requested (Rule 109, paragraph (1) in conjunction with Rule 62, paragraph (1) of the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag). If the specialized committee has not submitted its comments within an appropriate period, a decision shall be taken on the petition.

## **7.9. Petitions settled in the petitioner's favour**

If the matter is settled in the petitioner's favour, he shall be informed accordingly. The Committee Service shall draw up a list of the petitions settled in the petitioner's favour (8.5.).

## **7.10. Petitions which will evidently be unsuccessful**

If the Committee Service considers that the petition will evidently be unsuccessful, it may advise the petitioner of the reasons and inform him that the petition proceedings will be concluded unless he lodges an objection within six weeks. If the petitioner does not express his views within this period, the Committee Service shall include the petition in the list of processed petitions (8.5.).

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<sup>1)</sup> See annex

## **7.11. Rapporteur**

For every petition not dealt with under 7.9. and 7.10., the Committee Service shall propose two members of the Committee from different parliamentary groups as rapporteurs. Every other parliamentary group represented on the Committee may in addition demand a rapporteur of its own. If the Bundestag itself is able to take remedial action in respect of the matter raised in a petition, each parliamentary group represented on the Committee shall be notified of the petition and asked if it wishes to have a rapporteur of its own.

## **7.12. Proposals of the Committee Service**

The Committee Service shall draw up proposals for further clarification of the matter (7.13.1.), for provisional settlement (7.13.2.), or for dealing with a petition conclusively (7.14.) and transmit them to the rapporteurs.

### **7.13.1. Proposals for further clarification of the matter**

For further clarification of the matter, the following proposals in particular may be made:

- that additional comments be requested;
- that a representative of the Federal Government be summoned to the meeting;
- that use be made, in the case of complaints, of the powers granted to the Committee under the Law on the Powers of the Petitions Committee, namely
  - to request the submission of files;
  - to hear the petitioner, witnesses or experts;
  - to inspect premises.

### **7.13.2. Proposals for provisional settlement**

Where an objection has been lodged to a measure which is about to be carried out, it may in particular be proposed that the Federal Government or other body responsible (5) be requested to defer carrying out the measure until the Petitions Committee has taken a decision on the complaint.

### **7.14. Proposals for dealing with a petition conclusively**

Proposals as to how the Bundestag should deal with a petition conclusively may include in particular:

#### **7.14.1. Referral to the Federal Government for remedial action**

The petition shall be referred to the Federal Government, coupled with the request that it take remedial action because the petitioner's concern is justified and the situation needs to be remedied.

#### **7.14.2. Referral to the Federal Government for re-examination**

The petition shall be referred to the Federal Government for it to examine the matter again and consider ways of remedying the situation because the submission makes it appear justified to request the Federal Government to review the matter and seek ways of remedying the situation.

#### **7.14.3. Referral as background material**

The petition shall be referred to the Federal Government as background material to ensure, for example, that it is included in the preparation of bills, ordinances or other initiatives or studies.

#### **7.14.4. Simple referral**

The petition shall be referred to the Federal Government

- to point out the reasons for the resolution adopted by the Bundestag, or
- to draw its attention to the matter raised by the petitioner.

#### **7.14.5. Forwarding to the parliamentary groups for their information**

The petition shall be forwarded to the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag

- because, for example, it appears to be a suitable matter for a parliamentary initiative;
- to draw the attention of the parliamentary groups to the matter raised by the petitioner.

#### **7.14.6. Forwarding to the European Parliament**

The petition shall be forwarded to the European Parliament because its jurisdiction is affected.

#### **7.14.7. Conclusion of the proceedings**

The petition proceedings shall be concluded

- because the matter has already been dealt with in the current electoral term;
- because the matter has already been settled as requested by the petitioner;
- because there is no prospect of the relevant legal provisions being amended or supplemented;
- because the matter cannot be settled as requested by the petitioner who made the request or complaint;
- because the conduct of the administrative agency concerned gives no cause for criticism;
- because the matter raised in the petition cannot be dealt with.

#### **7.15. Other proposals/obligation to give reasons**

The proposals listed under 7.14. shall be examples of how a petition may be dealt with and to which bodies a petition may be referred. The reasons therefore shall be given in writing.

### **8. Treatment of petitions by the Petitions Committee**

#### **8.1. Motions of the rapporteurs**

(1) The rapporteurs shall examine the proposal of the Committee Service and table in the Committee motions concerning the further treatment of petitions (pursuant to 7.13.1., 7.13.2. and 7.14.). A proposal pursuant to 7.13.2. shall be examined without delay; other proposals shall be examined within three weeks. The Committee should as a rule adopt a motion for further clarification of the matter tabled by a rapporteur. In the event of divergent motions, the reasons therefore should be stated briefly.

(2) In the case of mass and multiple petitions the motions tabled by the rapporteurs in respect of the principal petition shall also apply to the other petitions on the same matter.

### **8.2.1. Individual consideration of and vote on petitions**

In the committee meeting those petitions shall be considered individually in respect of which

- it is moved that the petitions be referred to the Federal Government, coupled with the request that it take remedial action or examine the matter again and consider ways of remedying the situation;
- it is moved that the petitions be forwarded to the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag for their information or to the European Parliament;
- the motions tabled by the rapporteurs and the proposal made by the Committee Service diverge;
- a motion for individual consideration is moved;
- it is moved that a representative of the Federal Government be summoned to a meeting of the Committee;
- it is moved that use be made of the other powers of the Petitions Committee, as well as
- a collective or mass petition is supported by at least 50,000 persons on its submission, or this minimum number of persons is reached at the latest three weeks after its submission (c.f. also Nr. 8.4 (4)).

### **8.2.2. Consideration of the reasons for the recommendation for a resolution**

The reasons for the recommendation for a resolution shall be considered in the committee meeting only in exceptional cases, particularly where in a specific case the rejection of a motion that a petition be dealt with conclusively is to be included in the reasons.

### **8.3. Collective vote**

Other petitions, in respect of which the motions of the rapporteurs and the proposal of the Committee Service coincide, shall be recorded in a list and submitted to the Committee to be voted upon collectively.

### **8.4. Special regulations for multiple and mass petitions**

(1) If further multiple petitions are received on the same matter after the Committee has adopted a resolution in the principal petition, they shall be recorded in a list and put the vote collectively in the Committee together with the motion in respect of the principal petition.

(2) Further submissions received on the same matter following the committee resolution on a mass petition (2.2., paragraph (3)) shall only be collected and their number recorded. The Committee shall be given a report on them every quarter.

(3) The procedure pursuant to paragraphs (1) and (2) shall be applicable only during the electoral term in which the resolution on the principal petition was adopted. The procedure shall no longer be applicable if a change occurs during the electoral term in the facts of the case or the legal situation or the Committee's opinion, on which the resolution on the matter raised in the principal petition, was based.

(4) If a collective or mass petition is supported by at least 50,000 persons (8.2.1, 7th bullet point) one or more petitioners shall be heard at a public committee meeting. The committee may decide against this with a majority of two thirds of members present. These procedures apply to requests and complaints. For reasons of privacy, a public committee meeting may only take place provided the person concerned agrees.

## **8.5. Confirmation of lists and minutes**

The following documents shall be submitted to the Committee for confirmation:

- the lists pursuant to 7.9. and 7.10.;
- the list of petitions in respect of which notification was sent during a parliamentary recess (9.1.2.);
- the minutes of every committee meeting in the meeting following distribution of the minutes.

## **8.6. List of petitions together with a recommendation for a resolution/recommendation for a resolution as a separate printed paper**

(1) The Petitions Committee shall report to the Bundestag in the petitions which it has processed in the form of a list together with a recommendation (Rule 112, paragraph (1) of the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag).

(2) If a parliamentary group announces that it will request a debate on a recommendation for a resolution or table a motion for an amendment to a recommendation, the recommendation for a resolution shall be printed separately.

## **9. Publication of resolutions**

### **9.1. Notification of petitioners**

#### **9.1.1. Time and contents of the notification**

After the Bundestag has taken a decision on the recommendation for a resolution, the Committee Chairman shall inform the petitioner how his petition has been dealt with. The notification should contain a reference to the list of petitions processed and - if a debate has taken place on the recommendation for a resolution - also a reference to the debate and the record of plenary proceedings. The reasons for the recommendation for a resolution shall be enclosed.

### **9.1.2. Notification during a parliamentary recess**

(1) If the Bundestag does not convene for a sitting for more than two weeks and if the motions of the rapporteurs and the proposal of the Committee Service on how to deal with a petition coincide, the petitioner shall be notified by the Bundestag prior to the resolution in the recommendation for a resolution, with the reasons being stated (so-called notification during a parliamentary recess).

(2) This shall not apply in the case of petitions which have to be considered individually in the committee meetings (8.2.1.), or in the period from the convening of a new Bundestag to the first meeting of a new Petitions Committee.

### **9.1.3. Notification of the person to be contacted/public notification**

(1) In the case of petitions submitted by a group of persons without legal capacity (citizens' action group, etc.) under an overall or collective name, only the person to be regarded as the group's joint contact (contact address) shall as a rule be informed how the petition has been dealt with.

(2) The same shall apply to collective and mass petitions.

(3) If the petitioners do not have a joint contact address, individual notification may be replaced by public notification. The Petitions Committee shall take a decision thereon and on the method of public notification.

### **9.1.4. Additional public notification**

In respect of 9.13., paragraph (1) and (2), the Petitions Committee may decide in favour of public notification in addition.

## **9.2. Notification of the Federal Government and other bodies**

### **9.2.1. Responsibility for notification/period within which a report must be given**

(1) The President of the Bundestag shall inform the Federal Chancellor of decisions of the Bundestag to refer a petition to the Federal Government for it to take remedial action. The Committee Chairman shall inform the federal minister responsible of decisions of the Bundestag to refer a petition to the Federal Government for it to examine the matter again and consider ways of remedying the situation.

(2) The Federal Government shall as a rule set a time limit of six weeks for its reply.

(3) If it is decided to refer a petition to a body other than the Federal Government (6.3.) for it to take remedial action or examine the matter again and consider ways of remedying the situation, paragraphs (1) and (2) shall apply mutatis mutandis.

(4) The President of the Bundestag shall inform the President of the European Parliament of decision of the Bundestag to forward a petition to the European Parliament.

(5) The federal minister responsible shall be informed by the Chairman of decisions of the Bundestag to refer a petition to the Federal Government as background material. He should report to the Petitions Committee after a year at the latest on how the matter has been dealt with further.

(6) The Committee Chairman shall give notification of all other decisions.

### **9.2.2. Replies of the Federal Government and other bodies**

The Committee Service shall inform the members of the Committee of the reply of the Federal Government or another body (6.3.) by means of a committee printed paper.

## **10. Report on the work of the Petitions Committee**

The Petitions Committee shall submit to the Bundestag an annual written report on its work (third sentence of paragraph (1) of Rule 112 of the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag).



## **Annex to Rule 7.6. of the Procedural Rules**

### **Principles governing Cooperation between the Petitions Committee and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces**

1. The Petitions Committee shall notify the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces of any petition which concerns a member of the Federal Armed Forces. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall inform the Petitions Committee whether he has received a submission on the same matter and whether he is taking any action.
2. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces shall inform the Petitions Committee of a submission if the Petitions Committee has evidently received a petition on the same matter.
3. If the Petitions Committee and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces are both concerned with the same matter, the submission shall in principle first be processed by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces.

If the Petitions Committee takes any action, it shall inform the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces accordingly.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and the Petitions Committee shall regularly provide each other with information in writing on how the matter is being further processed and on the result.

**Guidelines on the Treatment of Public Petitions  
pursuant to Rule 7.1, paragraph (4) of the Procedural Rules\*)**

In addition to the general right of petition, the Petitions Committee shall also offer – initially for a two-year trial phase beginning on 1 September 2005 – the possibility of submitting public petitions.

1. Public petitions may be submitted to the Petitions Committee by anyone, either individually or jointly with others, using the form provided. Public petitions shall be published on the Petitions Committee's webpage. There shall be no legal entitlement for a petition to be accepted as a public petition.
  
- 2.(1) To qualify as a public petition, the subject of the request or complaint must concern a matter of general interest and its treatment must fall within the Petitions Committee's area of competence. The concern and justification must be presented as clearly and concisely as possible; there is a set number of lines available for this. Concerns or parts of a concern which refer recognisably to individual persons or are requests or complaints about personal matters shall not be treated as public petitions.
  
- (2) Furthermore, publication may in particular be forgone if a petition on the same matter is already being examined by Parliament, or there are insufficient technical or staff resources for an appropriate public presentation.
  
- (3) The Committee shall reserve the right to summarise petitions with the same aims and determine the principal petitioner. The other petitioners shall be treated as supporters.
  
- 3.(1) Public petitions shall not be permitted if they
  - a) contain personal requests or complaints;
  - b) are not written in German;
  - c) infringe the principle of human dignity;
  - d) contain expressions of opinion which are evidently false, misleading or insulting;
  - e) are evidently not based on fact;
  - f) call for criminal offences or breaches of an administrative regulation, or demand measures in contravention of the constitutional order or moral law;
  - g) contain confidential information or interfere with the right to privacy of individual persons (e.g. by stating names);
  - h) use language not befitting the dignity of Parliament.
  
- (2) Public petitions may be rejected if the Committee has already taken a decision on a largely identical matter during the current electoral term and no new issues of relevance to the decision have been presented.

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\*) Applies from 1 September 2005

4. Before a petition is accepted as a public petition and placed on the Internet, the Committee Service shall examine whether the requirements for a public petition have been met. As regards publication, strict criteria must be applied. The spokespersons of the parliamentary groups on the Committee shall be notified about publication. Where a deficiency under 2 or 3 is not corrected by the petitioner within an appropriate period, the further treatment shall proceed according to the general procedural rules for petitions.
5. The initiator of a public petition shall be the principal petitioner. All correspondence necessary for the petition proceedings shall be conducted solely with the principal petitioner. His name and contact address shall be published together with the petition.
6. The principal petitioner shall determine the length of time for which other persons may co-sign the public petition or post comments. The co-signature period shall in principle last four to six weeks, and no longer than two months.
7. Co-signatories to a public petition or persons who participate by posting comments shall provide their name and address. The person's name, the federal state or country in which he lives, and the date on which the comment was posted shall be published.
- 8.(1) For comments in the discussion about a public petition, the same requirements shall apply mutatis mutandis as for the petition itself (cf. 2 and 3). Comments which do not meet these requirements or which have no substantive connection to the petition shall be removed from the webpage by the Committee Service without delay. There is a set maximum number of lines available for comments.  
  
(2) Similarly, where justified doubts exist about whether comments were posted by the person stated, these comments shall be removed from the webpage without delay.
9. After the conclusion of the co-signature period, the public petition shall be closed to further signatures and comments.
10. The Committee Service shall submit the public petition to the Committee. The Committee shall decide whether it wishes to hear one or several of the petitioners before Parliament's examination of the matter. The Committee Service shall then prepare the public petition for the Committee to deal with.
11. The final deliberations on the public petition shall in principle take place at a public Committee meeting.
12. The public shall be informed about the progress of the petition proceedings via the Internet.