

## THE RIGHT OF PETITION IN HUNGARY

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this article is to introduce the concept of the right of petition and its history and constitutional regulation in Hungary. Many say it is a long-forgotten right that has lost much of its relevance and has been replaced by more effective means of legal protection. However, it still exists today as a political right, it is present in national constitutions and has been given a new impetus in the European Union. It has its roots in the past and has always been available to the most vulnerable. Let us take a closer look at the specific nature and nature of this right.*

**Keywords:** *political rights, right to petition, public interest report, proposal, complaint, whistleblower, whistleblower protection lawyer, European Union*

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. THE CONCEPT, HISTORY AND PLACE OF THE RIGHT OF PETITION IN THE SYSTEM OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The right to petition or the right to lodge a complaint is the right to lodge a petition or a complaint with a public or local authority. The right of petition has lost much of its importance today, as it has been replaced by many other more effective means of legal protection. Ombudsmen and constitutional courts have been established, and there is also the possibility of appealing to international courts. Most textbooks now omit any mention of it or its place in the fundamental rights system. However, it is clear that this right must be included among political rights and it is also clear that it is not an absolute right, i.e. that it can be limited. It can be exercised individually or collectively with others. The Constitutional Court explained in an early decision that any right to express one's opinion is a right of communication<sup>1</sup>, so it is not only the freedom of speech in the literal sense, but also the right of assembly<sup>2</sup> or the freedom of expression of religion, that is, the expression of religion. Although the right to petition is not mentioned in the list of communication rights, I believe that it can safely be included here, because here too we express our opinions, for example, when people write a petition at a demonstration and formulate their demands in it. According to Tamás Földesi, the right to petition is not just one of the fundamental rights, but „one of the guarantees of all other fundamental rights.”<sup>3</sup> It is important to emphasise that this right is not a substitute for any means of

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<sup>1</sup> Decision No 30/1992.(V.26.) of the CC.

<sup>2</sup> See under this topic, BÓDI, Stefánia. Az egyesülési, gyűlekezési és a petíciós jog magyarországi szabályozásának története. [The history of the regulation of the right of association, assembly and petition in Hungary]. *Collega: szakmai folyóirat joghallgatók számára*. 2005, Vol. 9; BÓDI, Stefánia. A gyűlekezési jog hazai szabályozásának története és dilemmái. [History and dilemmas of the domestic regulation of the right of assembly]. *Magyar Jog*. 2011, Vol. 58.

<sup>3</sup> FÖLDESI, Tamás. Alapjog (legyen)-e a petíciós jog? [Should the right of petition be a fundamental right?] *Társadalmi Szemle. [Social. Review.]* 1992, Vol. 6, p. 41.

redress, i.e. it cannot be used instead of, for example, an appeal or a request for review, and these means of redress have strict formalities and deadlines, while the same cannot be said of the right of petition. Obviously, it is not the same as a referendum, which has a specific initiator, a specific formality and a multitude of prohibited subjects. Let us distinguish it from other legal instruments in terms of constitutional law.

The right to petition and the right to legal redress: petitions may not be submitted in lieu of ordinary or extraordinary legal remedies, whether in criminal, civil or administrative proceedings. Applications for legal remedies have strictly regulated formal and substantive requirements, they must be submitted within a statutory time limit, and the range of petitioners is also regulated. In contrast, petitions do not have any formal criteria, can be signed by a group of people, without any limitation in number, and are not subject to any time limits. It is, of course, possible to attach a petition to the court as an exhibit, but this cannot replace a statement of grounds for appeal.

The right of petition and the means of legal protection provided by the constitutional court: there are different types of proceedings before constitutional courts in each country, as constitutional courts themselves follow different models around the world. Constitutional Court proceedings may be brought by a petitioner challenging the application of an unconstitutional law, or by a judge challenging the constitutionality of a judicial decision. The exhaustion of remedies may be imposed as a prerequisite for recourse to a constitutional court. The right to petition is not conditional on the existence of judicial proceedings, nor on the exhaustion or exclusion of remedies. As mentioned above, a petition cannot be lodged against a judicial decision, nor can it be used in place of judicial remedies or in place of an application to the Constitutional Court. Of course, a petition may be filed against the entry into force of a provision of law that is not to the liking of the petitioner, but the exhaustion of remedies is not a prerequisite here either. The petition must be submitted to a state or municipal body, which is therefore a broader address than the Constitutional Court.<sup>4</sup>

Nor is it the same as bringing an action in the public interest, known as an *actio popularis*, which the prosecutor is empowered to do, for example, in cases where the infringement affects the masses or the rightholder is unable to defend his rights, say because he is a minor. In the case of the right of petition, the scope of cases is not defined in a taxonomy.

The beauty of the right to petition lies in its simplicity and accessibility, available to even the most disadvantaged. And although it is not dominant, it is one of the oldest political rights, a *sui generis* right that still exists in the constitutions of the vast majority of states. It has survived the changes of the centuries. The right of petition is included in the English Magna Carta of 1215 as a right of the barons, and the Petition of Rights of 1628 was originally written as a petition. It is also known as a subject's right in the Bill of Rights of 1689. It is also known as a right in the French Constitution of 1791, the first constitution of the Revolution, and in the US Constitution's Amendment No. 1, also of 1791. It is also included in the famous Belgian Constitution of 1831 or the German Constitution of 1848.

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<sup>4</sup> BÓDI, Stefánia. "Petíciós jog" [Right of petition]. In: András Jakab – Balázs Fekete (eds.). *Internetes Jogtudományi Enciklopédia [Internet Law Encyclopedia]. [Alkotmányjog rovat, constitutional law section, section editors: Eszter Bodnár – András Jakab]. 1.2. A petíciós jog elhatárolása más jogoktól és jogintézményektől [Distinguishing the right of petition from other rights and legal institutions]. [4] [6] 2018. In: *Internetes Jogtudományi Enciklopédia* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <<http://ijoten.hu/szocikk/peticios-jog>>.*

Its domestic antecedents can be found in the Golden Bull of 1222,<sup>5</sup> the first constitutional document. It states that every year on St. Stephen's Day the king receives petitions and hears the petitioners in Székesfehérvár. If the King was unavailable, his deputy, the Nador, would no doubt be present to receive the petitions and hear the petitioners. The king was not generous with time, as he had only one day to give to the people, meaning that if someone had a problem after the day of the petition, they could wait a whole year to bring it forward. It is also noticeable that people in all ages had a need to complain. The right to complain/petition existed in the rest of history, but we cannot find any statutory rules; we know that it existed from the collections of public law that have come down to us. The two parts were the right to complain and the right to petition. In this division, by petition I mean that citizens could ask for something. Its early development is shown by the fact that foreigners were allowed to use it. It was possible to file a petition in the county, at the municipality<sup>6</sup> and before the king. As far as possible, the complaint did not have to go to the king in the first place.

István Kiss, jurist, public and commercial barrister, habilitated university lecturer, law professor, wrote in 1886<sup>7</sup> about the right of petition that one can apply individually or collectively to the ministry, the king, the parliament or other authorities in writing to promote public or private interests. One can also apply to the king in person, this is called a petition of sovereignty, and there are general hearing days for this purpose. Petitions to the king could be started at the commune. However, the ministers also held audiencias one day a week, the author notes. Petitions to Parliament could only be submitted by the Speaker of the House, while petitions by individuals or bodies could only be submitted by a representative. Parliament at that time had a Committee on Petitions. He adds that petitions are primarily sent to the House of Representatives and not to the House of Lords (upper house). As for the right to hold grievances or complain, it says that it applies to violations of civil and political rights, when they are violated by the administrative authorities, by citizens or by bodies or municipalities and may be submitted in writing to the King or to any house of Parliament. The Parliament could also be addressed by jurisdictions and private citizens.

In 1891, Ernő Nagy, a law scholar and university professor, wrote in his work *Public Law of Hungary*<sup>8</sup> that „citizens are individually and collectively entitled to submit their petitions to the King, the Parliament, the Ministry and other authorities...” Petitions

<sup>5</sup> MÁSDIK, András. Aranybullája (aranybulla eredeti szövege), mely 1222. esztendőben költ (The Golden Bull of Andrew the Second (original text of the Golden Bull), written in 1222). In: *aranybulla.hu* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <<https://aranybulla.hu/aranybulla-eredeti-szovege/>>.

<sup>6</sup> A term used before 1945, A local administrative body established on the principle of self-government. A county or a city with the right of self-government as a legal entity. In: *Arcanum* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <<https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-magyar-nyelv-ertelmezo-szotara-1BE8B/t-4D5B8/torvenyhatosag-5037D/>>.

<sup>7</sup> KISS, István. 118.§ A kérvényezési jog, 119.§ A sérelememelési vagy panaszjog, In: Magyar közjog, Magyar államjog, (118.§ The right of petition, 119.§ The right to raise a grievance or complaint, In: Please, add author or editor. *Hungarian public law, Hungarian constitutional law*) 3rd edition. Eger: Érsek-Lyceumi Könyvnyomda, 1886, pp. 217–220.

<sup>8</sup> NAGY, Ernő. 66-67.§ A kérvényezési jog, Sérelememelési vagy panaszjog, In: Please, add author or editor. *Magyarország közjoga, (§ 66-67 The right of petition, The right to raise an objection or a complaint.* Please, add publisher location, publisher and year of publication. In: Please, add author or editor. *Public Law of Hungary*) Budapest, Eggenberger-féle Könyvkereskedés kiadása, 2nd revised edition, 1891, pp. 115–116.

could be made to the Ministry in person or in writing, but to Parliament only in writing. Until then, complaints and grievances could also be addressed individually or collectively to the king, the authorities and the National Assembly, and this was applicable if the courts had not provided satisfaction in the case in question. It could only be submitted in writing.

Ferenc Faluhelyi, university professor and jurist, in his 1926 work,<sup>9</sup> describes the freedom of petition in the same way as Ernő Nagy, adding that the right of petition is based on the Golden Bull. He also stresses that it was not possible to go to Parliament in person, but it was possible to submit a petition through a representative. The complaint is characterised as having a right of action in cases of constitutional violations, as being available to both private and public authorities, and as being available to foreigners. The right of complaint in the narrower sense refers to the right to redress grievances against which there is no statutory remedy. They must be submitted in writing, he adds.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of the 20th century, this right was mentioned in the provisions of the House of Commons of the time, when there was a Committee on Petitions as part of the parliamentary committees. There is no such committee today – and there hasn't been one since the change of regime – but that's not a negative, as it can be submitted to any public organ, which is a wider option in fact. The real expansion of the right to petition will come under socialism, and we take a detailed look at that below.

## II. THE LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE RIGHT OF PETITION

The right to petition was also included in the Socialist Constitution, in other words, in the Constitution of the People's Republic, which reads as follows: 'Article 64 In the Republic of Hungary, everyone has the right to submit, alone or in association with others, a written petition or complaint to the relevant public authority.' This right was first regulated by law in the period of socialism with Act I of 1954.<sup>11</sup> According to the title of the law, it was about the handling of complaints from the public. In the socialist spirit, the law stated that *"In order to promote this, it is necessary to develop the grassroots criticism of the population as vigorously as possible."*

It included the following as part of socialist democratism: it is the duty of every citizen to expose the errors and shortcomings that he or she has noticed in the field of state and economic life. The law was too broad in its definition of the recipients and led to an unmanageable flood of complaints. The addressees were the state administration, economic bodies and local authorities. All notifications had to be investigated without delay. Some authors point out that this law enabled the public authorities to obtain information about citizens,<sup>12</sup> since those who were angry constantly reported each other, e.g. neigh-

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<sup>9</sup> FALUHELYI, Ferenc. 48.§ In: Please, add author or editor. *Magyarország közzjoga. [Public Law of Hungary]. Volume 1.* Pécs: Karl Könyvesbolt kiadása, 1926, pp. 213–215.

<sup>10</sup> FALUHELYI, Ferenc. 48.§ In: Please, add author or editor. *Magyarország közzjoga. [Public Law of Hungary]. Volume 1.,* p. 216.

<sup>11</sup> In: *jogkodex.hu* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <[https://jogkodex.hu/jsz/1954\\_1\\_torveny\\_4840149](https://jogkodex.hu/jsz/1954_1_torveny_4840149)>.

<sup>12</sup> KONDOROSI, Ferenc. A panaszjog szabályozásának társadalmi összefüggései. [The social context of the right to complain]. *Acta, Humana.* 1994, Vol. 5. No. 14, p. 12.

bours. This is also confirmed by the fact that a register of notifications had to be kept. In addition, offices had to be set up in ministries and councils to receive complaints. It was possible to hear the whistleblower in person. The investigation had to be completed within 30 days or, if it took longer, the whistleblower had to be informed. The law contained an advanced guarantee provision that no adverse action could be taken against the whistleblower. And the remedy for the wrongdoing had to include holding the person who made the wrongdoing liable. The whistleblower could, if he wished, remain anonymous. Anyone who took any adverse action against a whistleblower was liable to a penalty of up to six months' imprisonment or a fine of up to HUF 5 000.

Subsequently, the law was regulated by Act IV of 1957,<sup>13</sup> which dealt with the rules of state administrative procedure, i.e. in this Act, this law moved as a foreign body,<sup>14</sup> since an administrative law contained an institution of constitutional law. Under the provision of this law, it was the duty of every citizen to disclose any errors or shortcomings that he or she had noticed in the public or economic sphere. The novelty of the law was that it divided the right of petition into three parts, which were non-appealable means, and this division is still in force today, at least as far as the designation is concerned. The categories of proposal of public interest and notification of public interest existed, which could be used to improve public and economic life, to correct errors and shortcomings. The administrative organ acting on the basis of a complaint, public interest report or proposal could annul or amend the decision in order to remedy the grievance. But the decision could not be annulled or altered if the decision was overturned by a court.

The report had to be referred to the superior authority. The whistleblower could also request anonymity in this case. If the report contained an untruth, the identity of the whistleblower had to be disclosed on request. If the whistleblower had suffered adverse action, he or she was entitled to moral satisfaction and financial compensation. The third category was the complaint. On the basis of a complaint, notification or proposal, a decision previously taken could be changed or annulled. But if a court had acted on the matter, it could not be overruled. The whistleblower had to be answered. Complaints could be made against a decision, action or omission on the merits of the case by a person whose rights or legitimate interests were affected. If the decision could be challenged in court, no complaint could be lodged. If the complaint was lodged after one year had elapsed from the date of service, it was not compulsory to deal with it. If the complaint was not redressed by its own authority, it had to be dealt with by the superior body. If the decision was subject to appeal and a complaint was lodged within that time limit, the complaint was deemed to be an appeal.

Then we came to the best-known regulation of the socialist era, Act I of 1977,<sup>15</sup> which, according to its title, was already about notifications, proposals and complaints of public

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<sup>13</sup> In: *keje.hu* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <<https://www.keje.hu/torvenyek/1957-evi-iv-torveny-kozlo-nyallapot/>>.

<sup>14</sup> VASS, György. Panasz, törvény, panasztörvény, avagy úton a petíciós jog kiteljesedése felé. [Complaint, Law, Complaints Act, or on the way to the full realisation of the right to petition]. *Magyar Közigazgatás. [Hungarian public administration]*. 1997, Vol. 48, Issue 1, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Act I of 1977 on public interest reporting, proposals and complaints or Act I of 1977 on public interest disclosures, recommendations, and complaints. The translations vary widely from author to author. In: *jogkodex.hu* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <[https://jogkodex.hu/jsz/1977\\_1\\_torveny\\_1390532](https://jogkodex.hu/jsz/1977_1_torveny_1390532)>.

interest. The Act was, by its own definition, part of socialist democratism, aiming both to improve social relations and to promote individual interests. The law defined the scope of the recipients more clearly than the previous legislation. The recipients could be: state bodies, enterprises, cooperatives, associations, bodies representing the interests of small traders and private traders, supervisory bodies, other bodies. Both the notification and the proposal could only be in the public interest and only the complaint could be aimed at remedying an individual interest, which suggested that the public interest was in practice superior to the individual interest. The aim was also the improvement of socialist society, economy or morals. The whistleblower could be heard if necessary. The competent bodies were obliged to act promptly and to deal with notifications and proposals of public interest within 30 days. Remedies for the harm caused were also to be provided for under this Act, and the initiation of a prosecution. The whistleblower could request that his identity not be revealed during the procedure. The Act defined a complaint as a request for the redress of an individual's injury or damage to his or her rights or interests. If the complainant did not consider the action to be appropriate, the matter was referred to the superior organ, but no further complaint could be made from there. Cases also had to be dealt with within 30 days under this law. The investigation of the complaint could be omitted if it was submitted more than six months after becoming aware of it. The law provided that the executive committees of the ministries and councils were required to analyse all petition submissions every 2 years, and the managers were required to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the experience every 5 years. The Act also had an implementing regulation, which was MT Decree 11/1977 (30.III.1977).<sup>16</sup>

Already at that time, they point to the cavalcade of concepts that still exists today, not only for citizens but also for administrators. There was confusion between the various forms of redress and the concept of petition.

### III. THE REGULATION OF THE RIGHT OF PETITION IN THE POST-CHANGE PERIOD

After the change of regime, the right to petition was forgotten, so the 1977 law remained in force for a long time with the socialist text unchanged. It was only repealed by Act XXIX of 2004. Perhaps this is all because the whole form of government, state bodies and economic life were being restructured, and in this process of regime change the most urgent issue was not the right of petition. Our country underwent a democratic transformation in 1989-1990, which resulted in the establishment of a parliamentary republic, the restoration of the President of the Republic and Western-style self-government, and the establishment of the Constitutional Court and the ombudsmen. The right to petition was substantially regulated by Act CLXV of 2013, which was entitled Act on Complaints and Public Interest Disclosures and was followed by Act XXV of 2023, which was very similar in content, on Complaints, disclosures in public interest and related Rules on Reporting Abuses. The main difference is that the new law places a strong emphasis on the obligations in relation to the Union, otherwise the conceptual division remains unchanged.

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<sup>16</sup> The Cabinet he Council was the government. In Hungarian *Minisztertanács*.

The law in force recognises the categories of notification of public interest, (reports in public interest with other word) proposal and complaint, which can be addressed to state or local authorities. It is noted that the wording of the law should be aligned with the Fundamental Law, which uses a different term in some cases. Article XXV reads: *“Everyone has the right to submit, individually or in association with others, a written request, (applications) complaint or proposal to any organ exercising public authority.”* The Constitution therefore uses the term application instead of notification of public interest. The word “everyone” also indicates that not only Hungarian citizens, but also anyone, foreigners, can exercise this right, as was the case in earlier times.

A complaint is defined by law as a request for the redress of an individual’s rights or interests, which is not subject to any other procedure, in particular judicial or administrative. A complaint may also contain a proposal. A proposal may therefore not only serve the public interest, but may also be linked to an individual complaint or a claim. Complaints and notification of public interest may be made orally or in writing. The processing deadline is also 30 days. If it would take longer than this, the whistleblower must be informed, but the time limit for dealing with a complaint or a notification of public interest must not exceed six months. If necessary, the complainant or the whistleblower may be heard. The examination of the complaint may be waived if the complainant has lodged the complaint after six months from the date on which he became aware of the act or omission complained of. If the complaint is lodged more than one year after the act or omission complained of occurred, the body responsible for the procedure shall not investigate it. The examination of an anonymous complaint may also be waived. The investigation shall take into account both the protection of personal data and confidentiality rules.

On the basis of the complaint or notification of public interest, if it proves to be well-founded, care must be taken to restore the lawful situation or the situation in the public interest, to take any other necessary measures, to remedy the causes of the defects found, to remedy the damage caused and, where justified, to initiate proceedings for prosecution. The action taken shall be notified to the notifier without delay. The law contains the guarantee rule mentioned above that the whistleblower or complainant must not suffer any prejudice. If the complainant or whistleblower has communicated false data or information in bad faith and is suspected of having committed a criminal offence or irregularity, his or her personal data must be transmitted to the body or person entitled to initiate or conduct the proceedings, or, if there are reasonable grounds to believe that he or she has caused unlawful damage to another person, to the body or person entitled to initiate or conduct the proceedings, at the request of the latter. A new feature of the Act is that it introduces an e-petition system, as in other countries, which means that notifications can be made electronically, not only to the body complained against, but also through a central system. The legislator has installed this system at the ombudsman and named it the Protected Electronic System for Public Interest Reports.<sup>17</sup> The name and address of the whistleblower shall be stored in the electronic system to

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<sup>17</sup> Közérdekű bejelentések elektronikus rendszere. In: *ajbh.hu* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <<https://www.ajbh.hu/kozerdeku-bejelentes-publikus-kivonat>>.

identify the whistleblower. It is good to make the notification through the central system because the notifications are assigned an identification number and are visible in the system in an anonymised way. It is therefore possible to request that the personal data of the whistleblower be visible only to the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights. The notification will of course be forwarded to the competent body entitled to take action and contact with the notifier can only be made via the electronic system if the notification has been made here.

The law introduces the concept of a whistleblower at risk, who is likely to face serious harm to his or her living conditions as a result of the public interest report he or she has made. The legislator shall provide for their protection in a separate law.

The legislator has also established a workplace reporting system, which it calls an internal abuse reporting system set up by the employer. An employer who employs 50 or more persons under an employment relationship shall establish an internal abuse reporting system, but it must be established in addition in certain cases, e.g. in the case of an employer registered in Hungary and operating as a licensee or operator in the offshore oil and gas industry outside the borders of the European Union, etc... An employer may establish an internal abuse reporting system even if there is no such obligation under the law. The operation of an internal abuse reporting system can be contracted to a so-called whistleblower protection lawyer or other external organisation. Not only the employee employed by the employer, but also the employee whose employment relationship with the employer has been terminated, for example, can report to the internal abuse reporting system. The whistleblower can make the report in writing or orally. An oral notification may be made by telephone or other voice messaging system or in person. Within seven days of receipt of a written report made through the internal whistleblowing system, the operator of the internal whistleblowing system shall send the whistleblower an acknowledgement of receipt of the report and shall close the case within 30 days. The investigation period may be extended to a maximum of 3 months.

If the notification justifies the initiation of criminal proceedings, arrangements must be made to report the matter. Where a notification is lawfully made, the notifier shall not be held liable for obtaining the information contained in the notification, unless the notifier has committed a criminal offence in order to obtain the information. A whistleblower shall not be protected by law if he or she breaches the rules on the protection of classified information, or fails to comply with the obligation of professional secrecy in relation to medical secrets, legal professional privilege, or if, in making a whistleblowing disclosure, a cleric breaches the obligation of professional secrecy applicable to him or her, or in relation to a judicial decision, breaks the rules on the protection of secrets protected by law, or violates the rules on data processing under the rules of criminal procedure, or, as a member of the law enforcement agencies, the Military National Security Service or the National Tax and Customs Administration, violates the rules applicable to the activities of these agencies.

The legislation allows bodies to conclude a contract of engagement with a lawyer to act as a whistleblower protection lawyer in order to receive and handle notifications relating to their activities. The whistleblower protection lawyer therefore receives notifications relating to the activities of the client, provides legal advice to the notifier, maintains contact with the notifier, may request information and clarification from the notifier,

may assist in the conduct of an investigation initiated on the basis of the notification and informs the notifier in writing of the events relating to the notification, in particular of the outcome of the investigation initiated on the basis of the notification.

#### IV. FINAL THOUGHTS

The right of petition has been given a new impetus by the European Union among international organisations, and is not mentioned by other international organisations, unless the right to turn to international bodies and courts is considered a petition in the broad sense. However, the UN Universal Declaration and two famous conventions of the United Nations do not include this right.

Let's take a closer look at when you can petition in the European Union. We can ask the European Parliament to look into an issue or complain about the application of EU law. This is called a petition. The European Parliament will investigate the matter and inform you in writing of the outcome of its inquiry. Any EU citizen, any person living in an EU country, any company, organisation or association based in an EU country can petition. Your petition must concern a policy area, according to the EU website. Petitions can be submitted individually or as a group. There is no minimum number of signatures. There are two ways to submit a petition: online or by post. The petition should be sent to the Chair of the Committee on Petitions, Postal address: European Parliament, 1047 Brussels, Belgium.<sup>18</sup> As regards the legal background, Article 44 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that *“Any citizen of the Union, and any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State, has the right to petition the European Parliament.”*

We should also mention the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure, which deal with this right under Title IX, Articles 232-235.<sup>19</sup> In this context, it states the following. Any citizen of the Union or any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State may, individually or in association with others, petition the European Parliament on a matter which comes within the European Union's fields of activity and which affects him or her directly. The names and addresses of all petitioners shall be indicated. If the petition is signed by more than one natural or legal person, the signatories must designate a representative and alternates who shall be considered as petitioners. Any petitioner may withdraw his signature at any time. The petition must be written in one of the official languages of the European Union.

Petitions can be submitted by post or via the petitions portal on the Parliament's website, and if several petitions are submitted on a similar subject, they can be dealt with together. Petitions will be registered in the order in which they are received. Once registered, petitions shall be referred by the President to the committee responsible for the petitions, which shall first determine the admissibility of the petition. If the committee

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<sup>18</sup> In: *European Commission* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <[https://commission.europa.eu/get-involved/engage-eu-policy-making/petition-eu\\_en#when-to-submit-a-petition](https://commission.europa.eu/get-involved/engage-eu-policy-making/petition-eu_en#when-to-submit-a-petition)>.

<sup>19</sup> In: *European Parliament* [online]. [2026-01-04]. Available at: <[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-10-2024-07-16-TOC\\_EN.html#T9](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-10-2024-07-16-TOC_EN.html#T9)>.

is unable to reach agreement on the admissibility of the petition, the petition shall be declared admissible at the request of at least one third of the members of the committee.

Once registered, petitions shall become public documents and Parliament may publish the name of the petitioner, any co-signatories and supporters and the content of the petition in the interests of transparency. However, the petitioner, co-signatory or co-sponsor may request that his or her name be treated as confidential in order to protect his or her privacy, which Parliament must respect. Parliament may also, on its own initiative or at the request of a third party, anonymise a petition in order to protect the rights of third parties. Petitions addressed to Parliament by persons who are not citizens of the European Union and who do not reside or have their registered office in the territory of a Member State shall be registered separately.

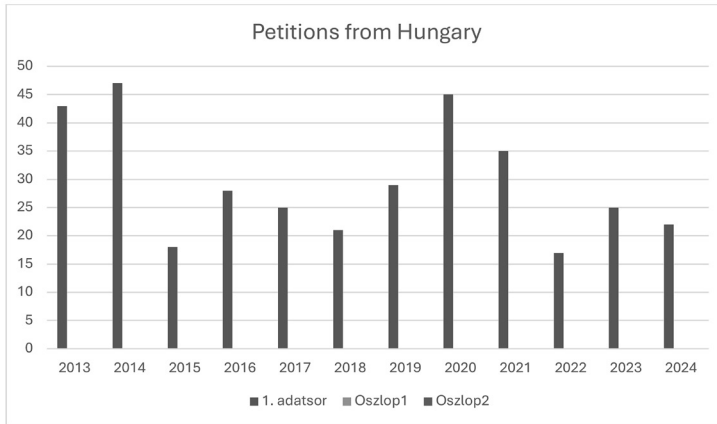
Admissible petitions shall be examined by the committee responsible for petitions as part of its normal work, and petitioners may be invited to meetings of the committee, where they may also request to attend. The committee may decide to submit a short motion for a resolution to Parliament on a petition declared admissible.

Signatories may express their support for or withdraw their support for a petition declared admissible on a petition portal. This portal shall be made available on Parliament's website. The committee may decide to submit a short motion for a resolution to the European Parliament on a petition declared admissible. The committee may also ask the Commission to provide it with assistance, in particular by providing detailed information on the application of Union law. Representatives of the Commission shall be invited to meetings of the committee. The committee may request that its opinion or recommendation be forwarded to the Commission, the Council or the relevant national authority. The Committee on Petitions reports annually to Parliament. Once the committee has completed its examination of an admissible petition, it shall declare it closed. The petitioner shall be informed of all important decisions of the committee and the reasons for them. A petition may be reopened on the basis of a decision of the committee if new relevant facts concerning the petition come to its attention and the petitioner so requests.

The Committee may organise fact-finding visits to the Member States or regions concerned by petitions in order to investigate petitions, establish facts or seek solutions. Members elected in the Member State of destination may not take part in the delegation. After each visit, the official members of the delegation shall draw up a report. The delegation report and any recommendations shall be submitted to the Committee. The members of the committee may table amendments to the recommendations, but not to the parts of the report relating to the facts established by the delegation.

The titles and summaries of the texts of petitions registered, as well as the opinions and main decisions forwarded in connection with the examination of petitions, are made available to the public on the petition portal on the European Parliament's website. The right of petition is often confused with the European Ombudsman, where people also complain, but the Committee on Petitions has been in existence since 1987, longer than the Ombudsman, and the two institutions have established a division of labour between them. Hungary submitted 22 petitions to the EU in 2024, 10 of which were deemed inadmissible. At the time of writing this article, Hungary has not yet submitted a petition in 2025. The graph below illustrates the Hungarian petitions between 2013 and 2024. The admissible petitions in 2024 concerned the following topics: e.g. the remuneration of

judges, the control of compulsory medical examinations, the marketing of energy drinks to minors, or accession to the European Public Prosecutor's Office.



*self-made figure*

To conclude, the right of petition is of paramount importance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as it provides an opportunity for society to participate directly in shaping public life and to express its opinions and needs in relation to government measures or legislation. According to Tamás Földesi, the petition is a related phenomenon to civil disobedience, as both express dissatisfaction.<sup>20</sup> We can conclude that the right to petition had its right to exist in the 20th century, both domestically and internationally. It has been present throughout history, as people have always had a need to express their criticism to state authorities. It is clear that under socialism, it was also useful for the state to obtain information about its citizens. It is clear that the regulation was flawed throughout history, and when socialism laid the foundation for the right to petition, it sometimes defined the recipients too broadly, meaning that the quality of the regulation has not been adequate until now. Today, among many other tools, it serves to protect the interests of citizens. Although many people confuse it with other legal instruments, there is also a demand for domestic and EU petitions, i.e. for the exercise of this right at the international level.

*The right to petition, which is a fundamental democratic right of citizens in most modern legal systems, gives people the opportunity to formally and in an organised way ask for changes to be made to laws and measures. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the right of petition has undergone significant changes, mainly with the development of digital technology. With the rise of the internet and social media, petitions have become easier to launch, more widely accessible and faster spreading. In addition to traditional paper petitions, online e-petitions are now possible and have become extremely popular, allowing people to quickly reach and mobilise like-minded people who want to take action on a particular issue.*

<sup>20</sup> FÖLDESI Tamás. Alapjog (legyen)-e a petíciós jog? [Should the right of petition be a fundamental right?]. *Társadalmi Szemle. [Social Review]*. 1992, Vol. 6, p. 39.