

Encouraging participation: Council ready to launch talks on a revised European Citizens' Initiative

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European citizens' initiative: Shape the EU the way you want!

The Council is ready to launch talks with the Parliament to make the European Citizens' Initiative more user-friendly and increase its impact.

On 26 June 2018, the Council agreed its position on a proposal for a new regulation which includes a number of changes which will improve the Initiative and encourage participation.

The Council's position will serve as a mandate for the Austrian presidency to enter negotiations with the European Parliament, once the Parliament has agreed its negotiating stance.

Citizens must be able to make their voice heard and draw the attention of EU decision-makers to matters close to their heart. The European Citizens' Initiative offers everyone the opportunity to make a difference. Member states are determined to ensure that this important tool is both simple to use and effective.

Ekaterina Zaharieva, deputy prime minister for judicial reform and minister for foreign affairs of Bulgaria

In its negotiating mandate, the Council backs most of the suggestions put forward by the Commission. This includes proposals concerning:

- enhanced information and assistance to the organisers, including the creation of contact points in Member States and an online collaborative platform
- the possibility of partial registration of initiatives
- translation of all initiatives into all EU languages
- enabling organisers to choose the start date of the 12-month collection period
- providing a free online service for the collection of signatures, with the possibility of uploading signatures collected on paper, as well as

using e-ID for support

- allowing EU citizens to support an initiative regardless of their country of residence
- extending the examination phase and providing for a more inclusive public hearing for successful initiatives

On the minimum age for supporting a European Citizens' Initiative, the Council prefers to keep the current system whereby initiatives can be signed by EU citizens whose age entitles them to vote in elections to the European Parliament.

Given that a common system for the collection of signatures will be made available, free of charge, the Council also proposes to discontinue the use of individual collection systems. This would simplify the procedure for both organisers and national authorities.

Next steps

The European Parliament is due to vote on its negotiating mandate in its plenary in July. Negotiations between the Council and the Parliament are expected to start after the summer break.

Background

Under the EU treaties, the European Commission has the sole right of legislative initiative, with exceptions in only a few areas.

The European Citizens' Initiative is an instrument of participatory democracy which enables one million EU citizens from at least one quarter of the member states to invite the Commission to propose a legal act in areas where it has the power to do so. EU citizens have this right alongside the Council and the European Parliament, which may also request the Commission to submit proposals on matters on which they consider that a Union act is required.

In the event of a successful European Citizens' Initiative, the Commission is required to provide its answer in a communication setting out its legal and political conclusions on the initiative, the action it intends to take, if any, and its reasons for taking or not taking that action.

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