

European citizens' initiative: Commission registers 3 new initiatives and determines 1 as inadmissible

Today the European Commission decided to register 3 new European citizens' initiatives: 'A price for carbon to fight climate change', 'Grow scientific progress: crops matter!', and 'Let's put an end to the era of plastic in Europe'. The Commission also determined that it cannot register a proposed European citizens' initiative entitled 'EU law, minority rights and democratisation of Spanish institutions' as it does not invite the Commission to make a proposal for a legal act.

At this stage in the process, the Commission has not analysed the substance of the initiatives, but only their legal admissibility. Should any of the 3 registered initiatives receive 1 million statements of support from at least 7 Member States within 1 year, the Commission will analyse and respond to the initiative. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances would be required to explain its reasoning.

1. 'A price for carbon to fight climate change'

The organisers of the initiative call on the Commission 'to propose EU legislation to discourage the consumption of fossil fuels, encourage energy saving and the use of renewable sources for fighting global warming and limiting temperature increase to 1.5°C'. The objective of the initiative is to introduce a minimum price on CO2 emissions, abolish the existing system of free allowances to EU polluters and introduce a border adjustment mechanism, while allocating the revenue from carbon pricing 'to European policies that support energy saving and the use of renewable sources, and to the reduction of taxation on lower incomes'.

Under the EU Treaties, the European Commission can take legal action in the areas of climate action, the environment, taxation and common commercial policy. The Commission therefore considers the initiative legally admissible and has decided to register it. The registration of this initiative will take place on 22 July 2019, starting a 1-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers.

2. 'Grow scientific progress: crops matter!'

The organisers of the initiative state that [Directive 2001/18/EC on Genetically Modified Organisms \(GMOs\)](#) is 'outdated' and ask for a revision of its rules concerning new plant breeding techniques (NPBT), with the objective of facilitating 'the authorisation procedure for those products obtained through NPBTs'.

Under the EU Treaties, the European Commission can take legal action in the area of the internal market and product authorisations. The Commission

therefore considers the initiative legally admissible and has decided to register it. The registration of this initiative will take place on 25 July 2019, starting a 1-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers.

3. 'Let's put an end to the era of plastic in Europe'

The organisers of this initiative 'call on the European Commission to revise the Directive on the impact of certain plastics on the environment with the aim of banning all single-use plastics in Europe'. The initiative aims to ban 'all plastic packaging and bottles by 2027 so that concrete measures can begin to be put in place to respect the limits of our resources.'

Under the EU Treaties, the European Commission can take legal action with an aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment. The Commission therefore considers the initiative legally admissible and has decided to register it. The registration of this initiative will take place on 26 July 2019, starting a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers.

4. 'EU law, minority rights and democratisation of Spanish institutions'

Referring to events in the context of the movement for independence in Catalonia, the organisers of this initiative aim to ensure that 'both the Commission and the Parliament are fully aware of the current situation in Spain [...] and the need to set mechanisms in motion to help improve democratic standards in Spain, thereby guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of minority groups and of all Spanish citizens by means of EU law and instruments.'

More specifically, the initiative invites the Commission to examine the situation in Spain and take possible steps in the context of the Commission's [2014 Communication 'A new Framework to strengthen the Rule of Law'](#). Under that framework, the Commission can enter into a dialogue with a Member State to prevent the emerging of a systemic threat to the rule of law. However, the initiative does not invite the Commission to submit a proposal for a legal act, which is the sole purpose of European Citizens' Initiatives.

The Commission has therefore concluded that the initiative manifestly falls outside the Commission's powers to propose a legal act for implementing the EU Treaties, and is therefore inadmissible.

Background

European citizens' initiatives were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty and launched in April 2012, upon the entry into force of the European citizens' initiative Regulation, which implements the Treaty provisions. In 2017, as part of President Juncker's State of the Union address, the European Commission tabled [reform proposals for the European citizens' initiative](#) to make it even more user-friendly. In [December 2018](#), the European Parliament and the Council agreed on the reform and the revised rules will start applying as of 1 January 2020.

In the meantime, the process has been simplified and a collaborative platform

offers support to organisers. All this has contributed to 30% more registered citizens' initiatives (38 registrations under the Juncker Commission compared to 29 under the previous Commission) and 80% fewer refusals (only 5 citizens' initiatives were not registered under this Commission compared to 20 under the previous Commission).

Once formally registered, a European citizens' initiative allows 1 million citizens from at least 7 of the Member States to invite the European Commission to propose a legal act in areas where the Commission has the power to do so.

The conditions for admissibility are that the proposed action does not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act, that it is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious and that it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union.

For More Information

Full text of the proposed European Citizens' Initiatives:

- A price for carbon to fight climate change (available as of 22 July 2019) <http://stopglobalwarming.eu/>
- Grow scientific progress: crops matter! (available as of 25 July 2019) www.growscientificprogress.org
- Let's put an end to the era of plastic in Europe (available as of 26 July 2019)
- EU law, minority rights and democratisation of Spanish institutions

[ECIs currently collecting signatures](#)

[ECI website](#)

[ECI Regulation](#)