

European Citizens' Initiative: Commission registers 'Respect for the rule of law' initiative

The aim of the initiative is to create 'an objective and impartial evaluation mechanism to verify the application of the European Union's values by all the Member States'. More specifically, the organisers call on the Commission to 'provide the European Union with general legislation [...] to verify the practical application of national provisions relating to the rule of law'. In addition, the organisers aim to 'facilitate the enforcement of European laws on judicial cooperation in criminal matters (e.g. the European Arrest Warrant)' and strengthen the role of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

The decision to register the 'Respect for the rule of law' initiative coincides with the launch of a reflection process by the European Commission today on possible next steps for further strengthening the rule of law in the European Union (press material [here](#)) as announced in the [Commission's Work Programme for 2019](#). Today's consultative Communication will be followed by a more forward-looking initiative in June. Under the Treaties, the Commission can propose legal acts to evaluate the implementation by Member States of Union policies in the area of freedom, security and justice, and to strengthen the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The European Commission therefore considered the initiative legally admissible and decided to register it. At this stage in the process, the Commission has not analysed the substance of the initiative, only its legal admissibility.

The registration of this initiative will take place on 8 April 2019, starting a one-year process of collection of signatures of support by its organisers. Should the initiative receive 1 million statements of support within 1 year, from at least 7 different Member States, the Commission will analyse it and react within 3 months. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances would be required to explain its reasoning.

Background

European Citizens' Initiatives were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty and launched as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens 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.

Once formally registered, a European Citizens' Initiative allows 1 million citizens from at least one quarter of EU 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' Initiative (available 8 April 2019)

[ECIs currently collecting signatures](#)

[ECI website](#)

[ECI Regulation](#)