

10 Recommendations to make a success of European Citizens' Initiatives

- 1) Every household should receive a leaflet about ECIs and a regulation should oblige the EU institutions and national governments to inform EU citizens of their new agenda-setting right.
- 2) A reliable and user-friendly system for online signature collection should be maintained permanently by the European Commission and offered to organisers who may also benefit from support from the EU for translation and meeting facilities.
- 3) An independent civil society help desk should provide more personalised assistance with legal issues, campaigning and communication strategies.
- 4) A start-up fund should allow ECI organisers to test their ideas, pilot signature collection and design the necessary tools before registration, provided they stand a reasonable chance of success.
- 5) A major simplification of the regulation should be carried out in the revision of the regulation, in particular to reduce the multiplicity of the different national requirements for signature collection and, in particular, the use of ID or passport numbers, which is a real deterrent.
- 6) Experience shows that 1 year is insufficient for organisers of initiatives to have a fair chance of collecting 1 million signatures: as many civil society organisations warned before the regulation was adopted, 18-24 months would be preferable.
- 7) For the ECI to become part of a European civic and democratic culture, multilingual websites and tips for organisers should be supplemented by training programmes and educational material.
- 8) The new regulation should clarify that citizens' committees are only subject to the data protection law of the member state where their representative or headquarters organisation is established and not to different regimes across other member states.
- 9) Organisers and the general public should know the state of play with ECIs at all stages, as well as the reasons for decisions affecting individual initiatives. Transparency is proving to be important to build knowledge and trust that ECIs are fairly treated, so that basic practice established should be codified.
- 10) In the new regulation, there should be a commitment to enlarge access to ECIs. There should be a guarantee that European citizens resident in other member states can sign an ECI. There should also be a debate about lowering the age of eligibility to participate to 16 and extending this collective right for European citizens to legally resident third country nationals in the Union.