

## **Response to the GREEN PAPER on a European Citizens' Initiative**

### **1. Minimum number of Member States from which citizens must come?**

We agree that a number of nine member states is a significant number.

### **2. Minimum number of signatures per Member State?**

We consider that 0.2% of the total population of each chosen Member State is an appropriate threshold. If the number does not constitute 1 000 000 signatures, it is possible to complete it by including signatures from other Member States. However we would not require that the same rate (0, 2 % of the population) of signatures should be collected in those Member States.

Example:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>0,20%</b>
<b>Germany</b>	82000000	164000
<b>France</b>	65500000	131000
<b>UK</b>	60000000	120000
<b>Slovenia</b>	2000000	4000
<b>Lithuania</b>	3500000	7000
<b>Malta</b>	410000	820
<b>Hungary</b>	10000000	20000
<b>Sweden</b>	9500000	19000
<b>Netherlands</b>	17000000	34000
<b>Total</b>		499820

### **3. Eligibility to support a citizens' initiative - minimum age**

The minimum voting age should be linked to the voting age for the European Parliament elections in each Member State. This excludes complicated adjustment measures for the Member States. Austrian signatories, aged 16 or more, will therefore be entitled to sign a European citizens' initiative.

### **4. Form and wording of a citizens' initiative**

To reach a certain standard of uniformity between the Citizens' Initiative wordings, the Commission should come up with a certain online tool where the initiators can fill in their proposal (e.g. goal of a proposal). We would propose that there should be some kind of questionnaire, which has as main goal to clearly present the subject matter and objectives of the proposal. Afterwards this 'form' should be posted on the Commission website under the heading 'Citizens' Initiative'.

In this way the other initiators will be able to see what is going on at the moment. And also the repetition of the same issues can be avoided, as the initiators can overview what initiatives are already launched or in process. Moreover there should be a call (e.g. a link in the 'form') for other people to contribute to this initiative in order to create a network which will allow a better (more efficient) collection of the needed signatures. For example, somebody from Spain can join the initiative of Dutch people on the initiators' level and help to work it out in his own Member State. Ideally there should be eventually 9 different nationals from the needed 9 Member States, who can help to spread the initiative and collect the required number of signatures.

## **5. Requirements for the collection, verification and authentication of signatures**

An online tool should be made available, which will gather the different proposals and explain the functioning of an initiative. (Online support is desirable but complicated since digital signatures are not yet possible.) The EU should provide some guidelines, taking examples from Member States that do have experiences with citizens' initiative. The verification should be done in the most efficient way. We propose that the Commission should take a statistically significant sample from received signatures and send them back for the verification to the Member States. If more than 5 % of the signatures are not valid, the Commission should notify the initiators about the details (who, where). The collectors will have to gather that percentage again within 3 months.

The collection of signatures should be standardized throughout the EU. All kinds of ways of collection should be made possible in all Member States (e.g. online tool, collecting on the street, posting, etc).

## **6. Time limit for the collection of signatures**

The initiators will post the initiative online (see point 7). Afterwards the Commission has to give a feedback within five weeks or give the initiative a 'green light'. Afterwards the initiators have six months to prepare the initiative (see point 7). After those six months the group will notify the Commission that they are ready and the initiative officially starts through a post in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Afterwards the initiators have one year to collect all signatures. Afterwards the Commission has two months to examine the initiative and give feedback.

## **7. Registration of proposed initiative**

Every initiative should be registered through a registration form made up by the European Commission. This registration form will ask basic questions about the initiative. If every initiative has to be registered online on a common homepage, duplication of an initiative can be avoided and citizens from all member states will have the possibility to receive an overview of all proposals and contribute to them. Furthermore this form can ensure a common framework for every single initiative, which makes an overview very simple.

The basic information could contain:

Name of the initiative

Content of the initiative (word limit of 200 – 400 words)

Reasons for the initiative (word limit of 200 – 400 words)

Initiators and their contact details

Participating countries

The Commission will have to review the proposal and give a 'green light' or an explanation why the initiative is not possible indicating, for example, whether the initiative falls under the competences of the EU, whether the EU has already taken action on that field or whether it is compatible with EU law or not. Of course there needs to be sufficient reasoning if the initiative is rejected. This recommendation has to be sent within 5 working weeks.

Afterwards the initiators have up to six months to prepare for the signature collecting, by e.g. getting in touch with other countries, setting up homepage or finding sponsors. Those six months are also a time limit if the initiative did not start after these six month, the Commission will have the right to remove the initiative.

Of course it is also possible that the initiators are ready before the time limit ends. In any case they will have to notify the Commission, who will then start the entire initiative, by posting it in the Official Journal of the European Union.

## **8. Requirements for organizers – Transparency and funding**

This should be made available for the public:

- List of funders and supporters;
- The initiators' email addresses and spending should be online;
- The Member States which participate in the initiative;
- The information on current situation in participating Member States should be up to date and available online.

## **9. Examination of citizens' initiatives by the Commission**

After that all the signatures have been collected, the Commission disposes of maximum 2 months to examine the initiative (see point 6).

## **10. Initiatives on the same issue**

As points 4 and 7 already showed the proposed mechanism should be able to prevent the initiatives on the same issue.

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