

Response to Consultation on European Citizens' Initiative Green Paper

4.

Wording of an initiative should lead to the process being as open as possible.

Thus an initiative should be able to be submitted either stating the subject matter and the objectives, thereby allowing the Commission to determine the legal wording of any submission in consultation with the registered 'developer' of the initiative.

But also, if an individual has the requisite knowledge or ability to draft the legal text of an initiative, they should not be restricted from doing so. Allowing direct legal drafting would enable the objectives of the initiative to be clearly stated, thus improving accuracy for those who sign the petition.

5.

There should be a common procedure at European level for the verification of signatures as this will give undue weight to the opinions of citizens of one member state over the opinions of the citizens of another member state.

There should be no restrictions placed on where or how signatures can be collected. All signatures should be certifiable ex-post. To place restrictions on the method and location of signature gathering would adversely impact on those of reduced mobility etc. It also does not allow for the consideration of technological progress. It also negatively affects those who are attempting to produce a grass-roots campaign, and will unnecessarily impinge on the democratic value of the process.

With regard to the online collection of signatures, this is an area where grass-roots groups can heavily get involved. To place undue restrictions on the use of the internet would be anti-democratic. Therefore, signatures collected online where only computerised text is used should be verifiable.

However, it is possible for signatories to make an electronic signature, in which case restrictions should be identical to those used for verifying physical signatures on paper. Thus, perhaps signatories should be required to 'make a mark'. This could be an electronic mark, or a physical mark.

6.

Signatories should be able to time-limit their signatures. But there should not be a time limit on an initiative.

When a signature is gathered, the signatory should be required to state the date of their signature, and what period of time they would like their signature to be valid for. One month, one year, etc. This

allows for initiatives to gather momentum without signatories feeling they do not have the scope to change their mind.

If an initiative no longer has relevance due to the time it has taken to gather the required signatures, there would be no need to place a time-limit as the creators of the initiative would find it difficult to find citizens willing to sign the initiative.

7. As there would be no need for a time limit on an initiative, there should be no need for an initiative to be registered. However, an initiative could be registered to allow citizens' to have the confidence the initiative is genuine.

There should also be a registration fee for an initiative. This would be similar to the deposit placed by candidates for elected office. The fee would be nominal, around €250. This would prevent the creation of bogus initiatives.

9. The Commission should be required to examine a citizen's initiative within three months.

10. There should be no restrictions placed on duplicate initiatives. It is the responsibility of the creators of an initiative to ensure that they are not duplicating another initiative.