

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS ON „GREEN PAPER ON A EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE“

*Conclusions drawn by a round table discussion in EC Representation in Lithuania
14 January 2009*

Participants: academia, NGOs, state institutions, experts.

1. Conclusions as regards questions that are not or not enough specified in the Green Paper:

→ Languages. It has to be guaranteed that all the citizens in all member states have an access to identical language versions. Language issue is a very important one in order to ensure equal rights and opportunities.

→ Signatures. The principle "every signature counts" has to be followed. A precise provision (in a future regulation or so) is necessary, how the signatures of citizens that come from other MS than those which belong to a „minimum number of Member States from which citizens must come“ will be counted for the purpose of a concrete initiative.

→ Responsibility. It has to be foreseen very clearly, who is responsible to ensure that the same document is submitted for signature in all MS.

2. Conclusions as regards questions that are specified in the Green Paper:

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

→ 1/3 of MS is acceptable.

2. Minimum number of signatures per Member State

→ The threshold of 0.2% of the total population is appropriate.

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

→ Since the provisions in a view of the age vary from country to country, every MS state should decide on this issue. However, it could be acceptable to apply the provisions governing EP elections.

4. Form and wording of a citizens' initiative

→ It is a very complex question. The initiative must be in a form of a legal act, readable and suitable for translation into other languages. The scope, goals, tasks, and issues to be covered by the initiative have to be stated very clearly without leaving the space for interpretation. Should electronic collection of signatures be allowed, to collect a required number of signatures will be not a difficult task, thus the question of quality becomes very important and ways to ensure it should be well considered and provided for in the regulation.

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

→ Two possibilities for signing have to be foreseen: electronically (on line) and on paper. A verification and authentication of signatures should be a responsibility of each MS. However, if a citizen of a member state has signed in another member state (electronically or on paper), the verification and authentication should be done by a member state of origin of the citizen. MS should decide which institution in a MS will be responsible for verification and authentication of signatures, and MS' laws should be applied to those procedures. Protection of data and safe and secure procedures are essential issues. An open question remain whether a citizen can recall his/her signature.

6. Time limit for the collection of signatures

→ 1 year is an appropriate time limit. The starting date should be very clearly fixed.

7. Registration of proposed initiatives

→ There should be two possibilities to register the initiatives: centrally (a specific website, administrated by European Commission or somebody else in accordance with the regulation) and in MS.

8. Requirements for organisers - Transparency and funding

→ Public funding has to be excluded and ensuring the transparency of finances is an obligatory principle to follow. A control of financing may be very difficult to carry out.

9. Examination of citizens' initiatives by the Commission

→ Time limit of 6 months is acceptable.

10. Initiatives on the same issue

→ It is very difficult to decide whether it is the same initiative or not. Any regulation of such process could create a lot of difficulties. Open questions remain: is it allowed to edit/change the text after the process started, can initiatives be merged, can initiatives be cancelled/finished/completed earlier? In order to avoid and prevent a deliberate disruption of the initiative, it might be wise do not allow cancellation of the initiative at all.