

European Commission Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative  
Contribution to the Consultation Process  
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1. Any CI will already be shown to be an important European issue by the fact that the initiative is countersigned by one million supporters. The population of each Member State includes both citizens who are native of that state and citizens who are native of other member states. Therefore, in modern Europe, the one million signatures will almost certainly include those of citizens who are natives of various states. It would also be possible for one million signatures to be collected from natives of one Member State who are at that time resident in 9 different Member States. Presumably the Commission is referring to the current residence or domicile of the supporters? In Europe today this is not an easy concept to define. People who are citizens of the European Union and who travel for study or work may have various apparent countries of residence in the same year!

In order to comply with the stipulation in the Treaty of "coming from a significant number of Member States" I would suggest adopting a minimum of 4 countries and making no further stipulation for the simple reason that creating a regulation that is impossible to enforce or authenticate serves no useful purpose.

2. For the reasons stated above (1) the regulations governing the ECI should simply state that the initiative must be countersigned by at least one million citizens who are resident in at least 4 different member states. No percentages of citizens per member state should be cited. Counting and checking the actual residences and domiciles of one million signatories would be a task of such magnitude and irrelevance as to render the process ridiculous and make it extremely costly.
3. The minimum age requirement should be standard because of the transient nature of the population in modern society. I would suggest adopting 16 as the minimum age for supporting an initiative. Young people should be encouraged to express their ideas in a democratic way and may have good ideas to contribute which are not evident to others.
4. The ECI should state concisely, simply and clearly the subject matter and objective of the proposal. Supporters would then countersign this simple statement. The draft legal act and any supporting evidence should be submitted together with the countersigned proposal and should be in conformity with it. However it should not be either assumed or required that all signatories have read the draft legal act and the supporting evidence in their entirety.
5. The suggestion that the national authorities will be responsible for verifying and certifying the results of the collection exercise in their country would be a burden on most administrations. May I suggest that each signature on paper should be accompanied by the full name in capital letters and one of the following: passport number, driving licence number, date of birth or full home address. Random checks could then be made on a small percentage of signatories via the local passport offices,

registry of births and deaths, licensing authorities and the electoral rolls. This information is available to public offices via data bases on the Internet, so could be done effectively from the petitions office in Brussels. The procedural requirements should be exactly the same in all member states and no specific provisions should be allowed at a national level. All EU citizens should be entitled to sign any ECI irrespective of their nationality or country of residence. All EU citizens should be able to support a citizens' initiative online. As an authentication feature on-line signatories should be required to give their full name and one of the following: passport number, date of birth, driving licence number or full home address as they would on paper. Random checks could then be run from the petitions office using the internet as described above. The petitions office could arrange to have access to the necessary data bases for all Member States. This would be simpler and more cost-effective than calling for authentication to be done in each separate country, which would entail not duplication but 27-ication of resources!

6. There should be no time limit for the collection of signatures.
7. In the absence of a time limit there would be no need to make pre-registration of an initiative necessary.
8. Any person over 16 years of age, resident in the European Union should have the right to address a petition to the European Parliament. The person or organisation presenting the petition should be required to keep accurate detailed accounts together with relevant receipts and invoices. The entry for any single donation in excess of 1,000 Euros should give the name and address of the donor. The petitions office should have the right to inspect these accounts.
9. The Commission should examine a CI within 6 months of its presentation.
10. It is not appropriate to limit the successive presentation of Citizens Initiatives on the same issue. Citizens should be free to exercise this right as and when they deem it necessary to do so. If there is duplication then the Commission should take into consideration the total number of signatories of all the similar initiatives and give the particular subject priority.