

Please see below my response to the queries raised by the Green Paper on a European Citizen's Initiative.

Regards,

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

I believe one third is an appropriate number of member states to qualify as a 'significant number' and ensures the threshold is not too high and not too low. However citizen's initiatives should allow for signatures from countries beyond the nine count towards the one million figures even if their country is not counted as one of the nine.

2. Minimum number of signatures per Member State

I believe 0.2% of the population is a very reasonable requirement and threshold for signatures per member state.

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

I believe that the minimum age of signatories in each country should match the minimum age for voting for MEPs in that country.

4. Form and wording of a citizen's initiative

I believe that ultimately the Commission must understand the initiative. The requirement could be for the Commission to understand the subject matter and objectives. I imagine the matter will be largely self policing as in order to get the signatures necessary the public will need to understand the initiative also. If it was felt that the Commission was placed in an awkward position when refusing an initiative an appeal panel of randomly selected MEPs could have the final say. The Commission could publish a template for citizen initiatives to fill out and could also provide a short memo of common policy terms and their meanings to encourage understanding. While citizens may have a dictionary they may not comprehend the policy significance of a word (such as regulation or consumer) or the various meanings attached to current commission directives. The Commission should also make clear on a website what issues and types of issues are outside the remit of the Commission and are the responsibility of the governments of member states.

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

I believe that the EU should require a basic level of procedural requirements in every instance but allow member states to put further requirements in place at whatever level the state deems fit so long as the member state in question adopts a uniform policy and does not discriminate between initiatives. An EU citizen should have the same voting rights with citizen initiatives as they would with voting for an MEP. If a citizen can vote in their country of residence for MEP they should be allowed to vote for a citizens initiative from that country. While citizen initiatives should be available on-line security concerns may make it difficult. At the very least the verification and authentication of on-line signatures should be similar to off line collection. Spot checks on signatures may be necessary so contact details should be required.

6. Time limit for the collection of signatures

I believe a one-year limit is appropriate, measured from when the initiative is registered on-line. In the event that this posed a genuine problem people could always start organising a campaign before registering the initiative on-line.

7. Registration of proposed initiatives

I believe a mandatory registration system is good idea and should be done through a specific website provided by the Commission. The website should be open to the public and once an initiative is registered they should be able to view it. The website could also have a template for citizen initiatives on it.

8. Requirements for organisers – Transparency and funding

Requirements should be stringent and standard right across the EU, even if over and above the requirements of an individual member state. Organisers should publish their own accounts but the EU should require that any organisations that take a supportive or negative position on an initiative disclose any financial or other support they provided to either side. I believe that the mandatory presentation of accounts every quarter of an initiative's life should be sought.

9. Examination of citizen's initiatives by the Commission

I believe that a time limit of a year should be the basis for any examination by the Commission with further deadlines within that year for Commission responses. Within 1 working month of registration the Commission should comment on an initiative with regard to if the Commission has the powers the initiative assumes it does and to outline whether the Commission could act in relation to the issue.

Within 1 working month of completion (necessary signatures submitted and checked as necessary) The Commission should indicate if the Commission has the powers the initiative assumes it does, to outline whether the Commission could act in relation to the issue and whether the Commission will be responding to an initiative with other initiatives or proposals before the European Parliament. The Commission should also indicate a timeline for a response at this stage and if they are likely to need longer than a year to carry out the wishes of the initiative. Within 6 months of completion the Commission should be able to indicate whether the timeline for a response will need to be extended to carry out the wishes of the initiative. Within 1 year of completion the Commission should have acted on the Citizen Initiative or provided a reason as to why it has not done so and a timeline of when it will fulfil its obligations. Further updates should be provided in line with any new timetable the Commission proposes.

10. Initiatives on the same issue

I believe that initiatives on the same issue should be allowed. If they are contradictory or take a different approach the Commission should factor that into account in its eventual response including potentially doing nothing if approximately the same number of people and countries seem to support or

A website open to the public that shows all registered initiatives should cut down on the number of very similar proposals. When an initiative is registered it should be the responsibility of the person registering it to ensure that it is available in at least three official languages of the European Union including one of the three procedural languages of the Commission itself – English, French or German. If further translations become available in other languages they should be added free of charge to the particular initiative on the website.

I believe there should be a flat fee of one hundred euro to register an initiative on-line. This is a reasonable amount of money for one person or organisation to provide but the charge is high enough to hopefully deter timewasters. Under no conditions should the €100 be returned to a person.