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JM/TJ/WK/sw

## Citizens Initiative

Our guiding principle is to make the use of the citizens initiative as simple and as easy as possible. We suggest the following elements of response:

Ad 1:

The Commission proposal of one third of the Member States would constitute too high a hurdle. On the minimum number of Member States, the threshold put forward by the European Parliament in its resolution makes sense: One quarter of the Member States. As we have experienced with our petition in favour of a framework directive on public services, the difficulties of such an initiative are enormous and the threshold should not be prohibitive.

Ad 2: A threshold of 0,1 % of the population would be appropriate; the Commission proposal being too high and too dissuasive.

Ad 3: One should not exclude the most engaged and most active parts of the population which are normally young people. Youth unemployment is at highest rates and if young people would like to launch an initiative towards the EU to be more proactive against unemployment or on education and training, it would be inappropriate to exclude young people from taking part up from age of 16. There is a difference between signing a citizens initiative and having the right to vote. So it is not necessary to demand a minimum age of 18 as for elections.

Ad 4: It must be sufficient to clearly indicate the subject-matter and the objectives of the proposals on which the Commission should act.

Ad 5: Basic provisions for verification and authentication should be set at European level, as it is not a national, but a European initiative. No superfluous bureaucracy should be created. National offices can be asked by the European authorities to check samples.

Ad 6: The time limit should be 18 month. The experience of the ETUC petition showed that after 12 month, when we stopped, we just had half a million of signatures. It takes some time to prepare the technical launch of such a petition and we learned by doing. So some time is needed for the necessary adaptations "en cours de route". In particular if limited ressources are available, the time factor is important.

Ad 7: The registration could be done on a specific website provided by the European Parliament or the European Commission. One should bear in mind, however, that in

some countries more paper signatures will be obtainable than electronic ones and further thought will need to be given as to how to deal with this.

Ad 8: No restrictions should be imposed as to who may present an initiative. However, precautions should be taken to ensure transparency as to who is driving an initiative and - more importantly - who pays for it.

Ad 9: The Commission's obligation to respond to a citizens initiative should not exceed 3 months after the end of the collection of signatures. It must be ensured that the Commission takes the matter seriously. It would be helpful if the European Parliament organised a debate on successful petitions, in the responsible Committee as well as in Plenary.

Ad 10: It would not be very democratic to avoid an initiative on the same or a similar issue as disincentives could be used by people who want to undermine the instrument by rapidly starting initiatives which are organised for failure to avoid a serious consultation. Furthermore, the Commission should assess the EU arrangement for a Citizens initiative and if necessary adapt it.