



## European Citizens' Initiative Consultation:

### Response from Euclid Network

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### Summary of the Commission's Green Paper on a European Citizens Initiative

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#### Issues

#### [1. The minimum number of Member States from which citizens must come](#)

The EC believes this should be set at a third in line with the European Parliamentary decisions. Other suggestions are 7 Member States (MS) (i.e. a quarter of MS) or 14 MS (i.e. a majority of MS).

*Do you consider that one third of the total number of Member States would constitute a "significant number of Member States" as required by the Treaty?*

*If not, what threshold would you consider appropriate, and why?*

EN: Euclid Network suggests that a quarter of member states would be an appropriate threshold. Not only would this ensure participation from a significant number of Member States (MS), but it would also mean that worthwhile campaigns which are clearly in the interests of the European Community are not hampered by soaring organisational costs.

Furthermore, the more MS required to participate gives the corporate sector an unfair advantage. We therefore believe that fewer the MS would allow for a more level the playing field.

It might also be worthwhile to consider advisory status for EU enlargement.

#### [2. Minimum number of signatures per Member State](#)

The EC believes there should be a minimum number of participants per MS calculated proportionately based on population. The population of European MS currently stands at just under 500 million. 1 million of this is therefore 0.2% - therefore the minimum no. of signatories per MS could also be set at 0.2%.

*Do you consider that 0.2% of the total population of each Member State is an appropriate threshold?*

*If not, do you have other proposals in this regard in order to achieve the aim of ensuring that a citizens' initiative is genuinely representative of a Union interest?*

EN: The proposals to 0.2% participation from MS is an appropriate threshold.

#### [3. Eligibility to support a citizens' initiative - minimum age](#)

The EC thinks this should be in line with the age people are allowed to vote for MEPs. This is 18 in all MS apart from Austria where it is 16.

*Should the minimum age required to support a European citizens' initiative be linked to the voting age for the European Parliament elections in each Member State?*

EN: Euclid Network does not believe this should be linked to the voting age - it is about citizenship, not voting rights. The more eligible citizens, particularly younger generations, who participate the better because it increases active citizenship.

*If not, what other option would you consider appropriate, and why?*

EN: We think 16 is a suitable age. Euclid Network also believes it should be widened to include prison inmates and those who are compos mentis but denied citizens' or voters' rights unless there are valid and overriding political reasons for not doing so. One should also consider including legal/permanent non-EU residents.

#### 4. Form and wording of a citizens' initiative

The EC believes that drawing up a legal act would be restrictive and burdensome. Instead they suggest that the matter and objectives a clearly laid out. This would not exclude a legal act being drawn up along side it.

*Would it be sufficient and appropriate to require that an initiative clearly state the subject matter and objectives of the proposal on which the Commission is invited to act?*

EN: We believe this would be appropriate because it would make it less financially restrictive for civil society. As with directives, the transposition and implementation of this might require diversity.

*What other requirements, if any, should be set out as to the form and wording of a citizens' initiative?*

EN: The registration, the relevance of the initiative to EU citizens, contributory aspects of the initiative and proportionality should all be thoroughly checked, as with current legal proposals.

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

The EC is concerned about how the signatures would be collected and verified due to the differences between MS. The EC suggest that it will lay out the requirements for the different MS to do this. They are also in favour of this being done online.

*Do you think that there should be a common set of procedural requirements for the collection, verification and authentication of signatures by Member States' authorities at EU level?*

EN: We do not feel we can judge this.

*To what extent should Member States be able to put in place specific provisions at national level?*

EN: See above.

*Are specific procedures needed in order to ensure that EU citizens can support a citizens' initiative regardless of their country of residence?*

EN: We believe that if someone is a legal resident then they should be allowed to sign the initiative. If a national of a MS is concerned but they happen to live elsewhere in the EU,

they should also be allowed to sign. Again, this is not about voting so residents outside of the EU apart from candidate countries should be allowed to sign. This would make the initiative stronger without prejudice to the number of MS states requirement.

*Should citizens be able to support a citizens' initiative online?*

EN: Yes, This should work alongside the e-government.

*If so, what security and authentication features should be foreseen?*

Cannot judge.

#### 6. Time limit for the collection of signatures

The treaty does not take a time limit into account for how long organisers should have to collect signatures; however the EC wishes to set this at 1 year so that campaigns do not lose their relevance.

*Should a time limit for the collection of signatures be fixed?*

EN: Yes, because it also requires the initiative needs to be relevant and over time and the relevance of an initiative can change.

*If so, would you consider that one year would be an appropriate time-limit?*

EN: Yes, we consider this an appropriate balance between the relevance and urgency of an initiative, and the organisation and finance of those organising it.

#### 7. Registration of proposed initiatives

Registration of proposed initiatives would mark the beginning of a campaign and also introduce transparency to the system. It doesn't however say whether the proposed campaign would be admissible by the EU i.e. the organiser could collect all the signatures and then find out that the campaign does not fall under the remit of the EU. The Commission does emphasise though, that the proposal on which it is invited to act should be within the framework of its powers and is sufficiently clear and known at an EU level.

*Do you think that a mandatory system of registration of proposed initiatives is necessary?*

EN: We do not believe it is necessary, however, it is advisable to have a preparatory phase which is not included in the one year time limit. This would start the debate, comments and consultation, which would strengthen the initiative and give it publicity. We also recommend that this period should be used to see if the initiative is admissible and if it is proportionate, as with current legal proposals.

*If so, do you agree that this could be done through a specific website provided by the European Commission?*

EN: Yes, this would be advisable, so long as the EU bears the cost of this. The organisations which are likely to make use of this initiative are unlikely to be wealthy but might have legitimate and important concerns, which they wish to voice.

#### 8. Requirements for organisers - Transparency and funding

The commission considers it important that organisers of an initiative should be required to provide basic information about its supporters and sources of funding in the interests of



transparency. However, they don't see any reason to stipulate who is allowed to organise and put forward an initiative.

*What specific requirements should be imposed upon the organisers of an initiative in order to ensure transparency and democratic accountability?*

EN: Euclid Network campaigns for the establishment of a common European standard of good governance. We would like to see this implemented by the EU and believe this presents an ideal opportunity to do so, like we have in the UK. An organisation should be required to present their accounts from the year they put forward an initiative for public scrutiny.

*Do you agree that organisers should be required to provide information on the support and funding that they have received for an initiative?*

EN: Transparency and disclosure are paramount to establishing legal and international citizens' initiatives. We think this will prevent "astro-turfing" (pretend grass-root support) and hidden corporate sector pressure.

#### 9. Examination of citizens' initiatives by the Commission

At present the EC does not have any guidelines on how long it should take to respond to an initiative it is presented with. The green paper suggests a period of 6 months by which time they must have assessed the initiative and formed a public communication.

*Should a time limit be foreseen for the Commission to examine a citizens' initiative?*

EN: A time limit is absolutely necessary and six months seems adequate.

#### 10. Initiatives on the same issue

It may well be that initiatives covering the same issue are put forward - a registration would help to prevent this. If this were to happen repeatedly it might undermine the reputation of the European citizens' initiative. Time limits could prevent the same initiative being dealt with simultaneously. However, this doesn't take into account initiatives which are similar but not entirely the same.

*Is it appropriate to introduce rules to prevent the successive presentation of citizens' initiatives on the same issue?*

EN: No, this is not appropriate - it suggests political parties should abandon their ideals. However, it does make sense to coordinate on certain issues such as climate change.

*If so, would this best be done by introducing some sort of disincentives - or time limits?*

EN: In terms of testing the transparency and relevance (e.g. a new party not getting enough support to register) it would make sense to put registration at the start of a pre-year period.