

Response to the EC Consultation on a European Citizens' Initiative

by the Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU, Kehys

Responses to specific question raised in the Green Paper:

1. Minimum Number of Member States

We agree that half of the Member States is a very high proportion and should therefore not be understood as the "significant number of Member States" from where the signatories of a citizens' initiative must come from.

Kehys believes that the threshold of the number of states from which citizens must come should be set at 1/3 of Member States.

2. Minimum Number of Signatures per Member State

Kehys considers that 0.2% of the total population of each Member State is an appropriate threshold for signatures from each Member State. A fixed number of signatures per Member State would not give an equal footing for smaller Member States.

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

Kehys supports the Commission's view that the minimum age for supporting a European citizens' initiative should be linked to the voting age for the European Parliament elections in each Member State.

This way the minimum age to support the initiative would be 18 in all other Member States except in Austria, where the voting age is set at 16.

4. Form and wording of citizens' initiatives

Kehys considers that a requirement to prepare a draft legal act for a citizens' initiative would be unnecessarily restrictive and burdensome.

We however support the proposed requirement for initiatives' clear statement of the subject matter and objectives of the proposal on which the Commission is invited to act.

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

Kehys supports the option of on-line procedures but is not going to estimate how verification nor authentication of signatures could be solved.

6. Time limits for collecting signatures

Kehys supports a time limit of maximum one year for collecting the signatures.

7. Registration of a proposed initiative

Registration of proposed initiatives can help to make initiatives more accessible to all citizens. Kehys agrees with the necessity of a mandatory registration system of proposed initiatives. A dedicated website to organise registration system could be provided by the European Commission or the European Parliament.

8. Requirements for organisers – Transparency and Funding

We agree with the Commission that a provision of who may act as an organizer of an initiative may be too burdensome at EU level. Kehys supports the Commission's view not to impose any restriction as to who may present an initiative (organisations, or individual citizens).

Full transparency on organisations' support and funding should be available when proposing initiatives.

9. Examination of citizens' initiative by the Commission

Kehys supports the idea of a time limit for the European Commission to examine a citizens' initiative. Time limit should be no longer than the proposed 6 months. Commission should also provide adequate information of the examination process on the specific citizens' initiative webpage mentioned under point 7.

10. Initiatives on the same issue

Kehys does not see a reason to restrict initiatives to be re-presented at any time after the Commission has made a negative response to it.