

Joint opinion of Hungarian civil organisations about the European Citizen's Initiative
Response to the public consultation

Below is the joint opinion of 59 Hungarian civil society organisations structured along the issues raised in the Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative.

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

In our opinion one fourth of Member States, i.e. 7 countries already constitute a „significant number”. This would be a more appealing solution for civil society, is in line with the proposition of the European Parliament and an existing proportion already in use in different initiatives of the European Union.

2. Minimum number of signatures per Member State
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?

To ensure the cross-border character and European nature of an initiative it is important to set a minimum number of signatories by Member State. We recommend the implementation of a 0.1% threshold. Taking into account the voting-age population an initiative would require the consent of approximately 8000 persons in the case of Hungary.

3. Eligibility to support a citizens' initiative - minimum age
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? If not, what other option would you consider appropriate, and why?

We support the age standard used in the European Parliamentary elections.

4. Form and wording of a citizens' initiative
Would it be sufficient and appropriate to require that an initiative clearly state the subjectmatter and objectives of the proposal on which the Commission is invited to act? What other requirements, if any, should be set out as to the form and wording of a citizens' initiative?

The proposal should be concise and easy to comprehend with minimal formal requirements but containing the subject and aims of the initiative. The elaboration of the initiative should be made possible after its registration with the opportunity of stakeholders to express their views.

5. Requirements for the collection, verification and authentication of signatures
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? To what extent should Member States be able to put in place specific provisions at national level? Are specific procedures needed in order to ensure that EU citizens can support a citizens' initiative regardless of their country of residence? Should citizens be able to support a citizens' initiative online? If so, what security and authentication features should be foreseen?

We support the application of common procedural requirements. It would be logical to involve the authorities of the Member States in carrying out the subsequent administrative tasks without putting additional conditions. Signatories should be able to join a citizens' initiative irrespective of their place of residence. Signatories are those citizens who are eligible to vote in the European Parliamentary elections. We support the collection of signatures online provided that the personal identification protocols are applied.

6. Time limit for the collection of signatures

Should a time limit for the collection of signatures be fixed? If so, would you consider that one year would be an appropriate time-limit?

We support the introduction of a time limit for the collection of signatures. The time frame should be one and a half years commencing on the start of signature collecting (the date when the signing sheets are authenticated). In line with the above an authentication procedure of signing sheets should also be set up.

7. Registration of proposed initiatives

Do you think that a mandatory system of registration of proposed initiatives is necessary? If so, do you agree that this could be done through a specific website provided by the European Commission?

Yes, we support a mandatory registration system to be overseen by the European Commission. The time limit (the proposed one and a half years) should be calculated from the day of registration/authentication. We support the online procedure and the possible utilisation of the recently established Register of Interest representatives into the registration process. To ensure an appropriate level of information flow the introduction of an information service would be necessary, which assists the initiator to meet the necessary administrative rules. The European Economic and Social Committee could serve as a helpdesk.

8. Requirements for organisers - Transparency and funding

What specific requirements should be imposed upon the organisers of an initiative in order to ensure transparency and democratic accountability? Do you agree that organisers should be required to provide information on the support and funding that they have received for an initiative?

We support that transparency and accountability considerations are fully met. Therefore we suggest that direct costs of an initiative should be made public by the initiators. The question suggests that there is organisational backing behind a citizens' initiative, albeit the possibility of the initiative of a single citizen cannot be ruled out. In this latter case too the transparency of direct finances should be safeguarded. We agree with the proposition that on the collection of a given number of signatories (e.g. 50,000) the European Commission should provide financial support for citizens' initiatives.

9. Examination of citizens' initiatives by the Commission

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

Yes, we support that every part of the process of the citizens' initiative should have a timeframe. The examination period shall be half a year, thereby the maximum lifespan of a citizens' initiative from its registration to the end of collecting signatures would not exceed two years.

10. Initiatives on the same issue

Is it appropriate to introduce rules to prevent the successive presentation of citizens' initiatives on the same issue? If so, would this best be done by introducing some sort of disincentives - or time limits?

Yes. To ensure the smooth operation and with an expected large number of citizens' initiatives we suggest the establishment a time limit in the case of multiple initiatives on the same issue. The time limit could be set to one year.

Budapest, Hungary, 31 January, 2010

List of Hungarian civil society signatories (in alphabetical order):

European House, Budapest (initiator and coordinator)
Alliance for the Rule of Law, Budapest
Alumni Circle of Friends of the Secondary School of Fonyód, Fonyód
Association of Civil Curators of Hungarian Public Broadcasters, Budapest
Association of European Election Officials, Budapest
Association of Language Schools, Budapest
Association of Pensioners of Kiskőrös, Kiskőrös
Association of Security and Property Guards, Budapest
Association of Visually Impaired People of Nyírség, Nyíregyháza
CIVICUS Europe Foundation, Budapest
Civil Centre of Nyírtelek, Nyírtelek
Civil Guard Association, Pécs
Civitas Association, Budapest
CSF Hungary, Budapest
Democratic Trade Union of Security Guards, Budapest

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Environment Protection Association of Kalocsa, Kalocsa
Ethnic German Association of Kiskassa, Kiskassa
EU Studies Foundation, Budapest
EUNET Foundation for European Cooperation Networks, Békés
Euroart Foundation, Budapest
Federation of Sport Associations of Kecskemét, Kecskemét
Federation of Technical and Scientific Societies, Budapest
Foundation "Women for tomorrow", Budapest
Foundation for the 21st Century Hungary, Budapest
Foundation for the Commemorative Places of Hungarians Living Abroad, Isaszeg
Future of Europe Association, Kecskemét
Generation Europe Hungary Foundation, Budapest
Half-Smile Foundation, Iharos
Helping Hand 2003 Social Association, Nyíregyháza
Hungarian Association of Military Science, Budapest
Hungarian Association of Teachers for Informatics, Budapest
Hungarian Civil Protection Association, Budapest
Hungarian Council of the European Movement, Budapest
Hungarian Esperanto Association, Budapest
Hungarian Family Therapy Association, Budapest
Hungarian Peace Association, Budapest
Hungarian Porphyria Association, Budapest
Hungarian-Romanian Friendship Association of Budapest, Budapest
Hungary-Azerbaijan Friendship Society, Budapest
Innorratio Research Institute Public Benefit Association for the Social and
Economic Development of Csongrád County, Szeged
IT Foundation for the Visually Impaired, Budapest
„Körkép" Cultural Association of Újfehértó, Újfehértó
Linum Foundation, Nagykovácsi
Manfred Wörner Foundation, Budapest
Musica Foundation, Budapest
National Association of Consumers' Protection, Kiskőrös Branch, Kiskőrös
National Association of Radio Distress-Signalling and Infocommunication,
Budapest
National Federation of Railway Pensioners Clubs, Budapest
National Federation of the Hungarian-Israeli Friendship Societies, Debrecen
National Media Roundtable, Budapest
National Society of Conservationists - Friends of the Earth Hungary, Budapest
Oliver Twist Children and Youth Care Organisation, Kecskemét
Pécs-Baranya Ethnic Circle of Germans in Hungary, Pécs
Public Benefit Association of Environmentalists and Nature Friends of the
Southern Trans Danubia Region, Fonyód
Roma Base Association of Pécs, Pécs
Scientific Society for Organisation and Management, Budapest
Telecottage Association of Üröm, Üröm
Women's Roundtable of Veszprém, Veszprém
Zselica Association, Kaposvár