

Sir/Madam

My views on the questions laid out in Brussels, COM(2009)622/3

1) Minimum number of Member States from which citizens must come:

I believe the proposed one third of member states is an appropriate threshold and ensures a reasonably wide spread concern of the EU population.

2) Minimum number of signatories per Member State:

Considering the thresholds set in Member States mentioned in the communication and including Austria, Spain, Lithuania etc. it would appear that 0.2% is somewhat on the low side. I would have concerns that extremists could potentially utilise the citizens initiative to propose less savoury proposals. Although I have confidence in the Commission to reject any such proposals it does make me think that a higher threshold might be appropriate. If the minimum number of Member States is to be set at one third (9) would it be useful to establish a theme on numerical stands and perhaps suggest 0.9%

3) Eligibility to support citizens' initiatives - minimum age.

I personally believe that we have in the UK too many different age limits in force for different aspects of life. My understanding is that the age of 16 is a relatively common age across the EU for a person to be considered of an age to live and independent life, to obtain paid work, to smoke, to be held criminally responsible etc. As such, although it would cause some difficulty in relation to administration, I would propose that any 16 year old citizen of Europe should have the freedom and right to express themselves through the citizens initiative. Perhaps such a right might actually encourage a re-think across the EU to recognise the talent that exists within our younger citizens and perhaps bring about a rationalisation of legal age limits in many capacities, not least the right to vote.

4) Form & wording of a citizen's initiative.

I fully agree with the thinking in the communication and would agree that a requirement of minimum content be set - i.e. subject matter and objectives.

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

I do believe there should be a common set of procedural requirements.

I think national level provisions should be restricted as I believe it is vitally important that ALL EU citizens have the same rights and freedoms to be involved in the democracy of the EU.

Specific procedures are surely not required to ensure EU citizen's can support initiatives regardless of their country of residence - surely this is covered by existing rights to vote?

On-line support I believe is vital and although I am not an IT expert surely a secure system that allows verification by use of Passport Number, EU Driving License Number, Voting Roll Number, ID Card number etc. would be possible?

6) Time limit for collection of signatures

I do think a time limit should be set and perhaps keeping the theme of numerical equivalence going that 9 months could be useful? Anything less is difficult to coordinate and publicise whereas the proposed 12 months may seem rather a long time and open for Euro Sceptics to refer to the beauracracy of the EU?

7) Registration of proposed initiatives.

Yes, a mandatory system of registration is required. A specific website is the logical way of doing this but can we ensure that publicity is provided of the website to ALL EU citizens (including the UK where sadly my fellow citizens seem rather disengaged!).

8) Requirements for organisers - transparency & funding.

I do not think this is an area where I have sufficient knowledge to comment reliably. I am concerned that if an individual citizen commences such an initiative that disclosure of information might lead to personal details/data getting into the wrong hands? Equally - the right to know the sponsors/drivers for an initiative are important to prevent extremist views being represented.

9) Examination of citizens initiatives by the commission.

I do believe a time limit should be set and I would not be adverse to the proposed 6 months however, again, perhaps keeping a theme a period of 9 months could be used?

10) Initiatives on the same issue.

By implementing rules that prevent the successive presentation of citizens' initiatives there is a danger that decisions would be made on initiatives that looked very similar but were in fact discreetly different and coming from different perspectives. As such I have a reservation about imposing rules that prevent action rather than rules that permit action. As such perhaps some form of initial vetting process could be used to determine if the initiative was similar or whether a subtle but essential difference existed. Perhaps this is not practical and would actually layer a tier of unnecessary administrative/procedural administration that would actually deter citizens' from using their rights.

Regards

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