

Brussels, 26/08/2010
C/2010/5643

Dear President,

The European Commission welcomes the interest of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus in the European citizens' initiative {COM(2010)119} and thanks your Parliament for having transmitted the opinion of your Committee on European Affairs regarding the proposal for a Regulation on the citizens' initiative adopted on 31 March 2010. The Commission also takes note of the AKEL political position.

The Commission takes note of the comments made on different points of the proposal and would like to emphasize that, in its proposal, it tried to find a good balance between the need for appropriate and proportionate rules and procedures, and the need to keep the instrument simple and user-friendly. The Commission has also strived to take into account the many contributions received during the public consultation as well as the outcome of the Stakeholder Hearing organised on 22 February 2010.

In particular, in relation to the minimum number of Member States from which citizens must come, the proposal sets it at one third since it would be in line with other provisions of the Treaty (such as "enhanced cooperation", or the subsidiarity mechanism in protocol 2). It also reflects the outcome of the public consultation.

Concerning the minimum age to be eligible to support a citizens' initiative, the Commission considers that citizens must be of voting age for the European elections since this is a general practice in Member States: to support a citizens' initiative at national, regional or local level, citizens usually need to be of voting age. This is also the position of the European Parliament in its resolution of 7th May 2009, and of most stakeholders. Moreover, setting the minimum age at 16 could create a significant administrative burden for the Member States.

As you know, the proposal is currently being discussed in the European Parliament and the Council. In the Parliament, a report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs is expected in the autumn. The Council reached an agreement on a general approach on 14 June last.

Yours faithfully,

/-/ Maroš Šefčovič

*Mr Marios GAROYIAN
President
House of Representatives
of the Republic of Cyprus
CY-1402 Nicosia
CYPRUS*