

Opinion of the Hellenic Parliament, COM (2010)119

In the frame of political dialogue with the European Commission and following publication of the final Proposal for Regulation concerning the detailed arrangement of issues pertinent to the Citizens' Initiative, the Special Standing Committee for European Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament, during its meeting of April 22 2010 has adopted by majority the following opinion.

The Hellenic Parliament clearly expresses its political will towards facilitating the European citizens' broadest possible participation in European legislation developing process. The encouragement of direct and participatory democracy, ensuring at the same time the system's credibility, is, after all, the European Citizens' Initiative ultimate objective.

More specifically:

- Concerning the minimum number of member-states (article 7), the Committee for European Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament deems the threshold of $\frac{1}{4}$ of member-states as meeting the requirements set by the Treaty regarding participation of a significant number of member-states, facilitating at the same time the undertaking of initiatives on European citizens' part. The proposed by the Proposal for Regulation $\frac{1}{3}$ threshold is deemed exaggerative.
- Concerning the minimum number of citizens per member-state (article 7 par.1) , the selected method in the Proposal for Regulation , based on the chosen multiple -750- of the number of members of the European Parliament for each member-state, improves the proposal of horizontal implementation of minimum participation at a percentage of 0.2% , as maintaining the dictated proportional equality and securing member-states' balanced participation, while decreasing the required signatures' limit.
- The registration of proposed initiatives in an on-line register (article 4) seems to be in the right direction, as ensuring transparency of the procedure. However, the provision on a priori control of proposed initiatives by the Commission, providing it with the possibility to reject initiatives regarded

improper as being abusive or against the values of the Union, is vaguely phrased and impregnates the danger of abusive/ improper exercise of the aforementioned control. The objection also regards the relevant provisions of article 8 on admissibility of proposed citizens' initiatives. On the contrary, it would be preferable to provide the citizens with free legal support, by the Commission's services, even during the initiative's preparatory stage, a practice that would encourage and facilitate the undertaking of initiatives and exclude, or at least limit the submission of abusive or devoid of seriousness initiatives.

- Concerning the possibility of online collection of statements of support, it is clear that the specific proposal simplifies substantially the signature collection process. However, central control of the online system's security features as defined in art.6 par.4, by a Commission's specific authority, would possibly result in improved system security.
- Concerning the time period available for examining an initiative typically submitted to the Commission, the proposed fourth-month deadline is more satisfying than the previous provision. At this point, however, the absence of a definite deadline regarding legislative action drafting process on the part of the Commission should be pointed out, which may dispute the effectiveness of the overall procedure.
- Closing, in order to facilitate citizens' involvement, it would be useful for the Commission itself to supply translation services in all EU official languages, so as not to burden citizens with that additional cost.