

Brussels, 22/07/2010
C/2010/5147

Dear President,

The European Commission welcomes the interest of the Italian Chamber of Deputies in the European citizens' initiative and thanks you for having transmitted its position on the proposal for a Regulation on the citizens' initiative {COM(2010)119}.

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 on the one hand and the need to keep the instrument simple and user-friendly on the other, taking 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, the Commission agrees to your suggestion that the Regulation should be drafted in clear terms in order to avoid divergences in interpretation.

The Commission also concurs with your comment that it should adopt technical specifications for online collection systems that reflect the highest security standards.

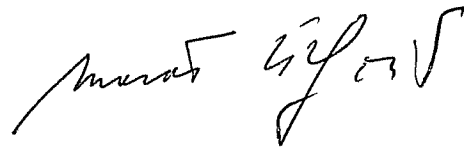
As regards your suggestion that the registration of proposed initiatives and the Commission's decision on their admissibility (after the requisite number of signatures has been obtained) should be concurrent, the Commission does not consider that this would be appropriate. Indeed, the Commission remains of the view that organisers should be able to register initiatives on the Commission's website before having to collect signatures (although proposed initiatives that are frivolous or manifestly against the values of the Union would not be registered). This will provide the necessary transparency for citizens as regards on-going initiatives and will mark the starting date for the 12-month collection period. However it would not be appropriate for the Commission's formal decision on the admissibility of proposed initiatives to be taken at this stage, since that would lead to a serious risk of abuse and overload of the system and also because a positive decision could be seen as a green light on the substance of the initiative and, on the other hand, a negative decision could be perceived as a form of censorship of disliked initiatives to prevent the collection of signatures.

Mr Gianfranco Fini
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The Commission therefore remains convinced that the registration of proposed initiatives and the Commission's decision on their admissibility need to remain two distinct stages of the process, with registration intervening at the very beginning of the process, and the formal decision on admissibility being taken only after a certain threshold of signatures has been reached (although the Commission had proposed that this threshold should be 300.000 signatures, it has accepted the Council's position to set the threshold at 100.000 signatures).

As you know, the proposal is currently being discussed in the European Parliament and the Council. In the Parliament, a draft report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs is not expected before November. As for the Council, it reached an agreement on a general approach on 14 June.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mariasthina Gifford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.