

European citizens' initiative

2017/0220(COD) - 17/05/2019 - Final act

PURPOSE: to reform the Citizens' Initiative instrument in order to facilitate its organisation.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Citizens' Initiative.

CONTENT: the instrument of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) was introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon and was made operational on 1 April 2012 by Regulation No 211/2011.

The aim of this instrument is to enhance citizens' involvement in the democratic life of the European Union, by allowing them to directly address the Commission with a request to submit a proposal for legal acts of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

This Regulation aims to make the European Citizens' Initiative more accessible, less burdensome and easier to use for the organisers of an initiative and those who support it, as well as to strengthen its follow-up, in order to fully realise its potential as a tool to strengthen the debate.

Right to support a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)

Every citizen of the Union who is at least of the age to be entitled to vote in elections to the European Parliament shall have the right to support an initiative by signing a statement of support, in accordance with this Regulation.

Member States may set the minimum age entitling to support an initiative at 16 years. People with disabilities should be able to exercise their right to support initiatives and access all relevant sources of information on initiatives on an equal footing with other citizens.

EU citizens shall be able to support an ECI regardless of their country of residence. They shall provide less personal data when supporting an ECI.

Information and assistance by the Commission and Member States

The Commission shall:

- provide citizens and organising groups with easily accessible and comprehensive information and assistance concerning the ECI, including redirecting them to relevant sources of information and assistance;
- make available to the public, online and in paper format and in all the official languages of the Union institutions, a guide to the ECI;
- provide a free online collaborative platform dedicated to the ECI as well as an online register allowing groups of organisers to manage their initiative throughout the process;
- provide the translation of the content of the ECI once it has been registered, including the Annex, into all the official languages of the Union institutions, for publication in the register.

Each Member State shall establish one or more contact points to inform and assist the organising groups free of charge.

Registration

An ECI shall be prepared and managed by a group of at least 7 individuals. In order to ensure that as many initiatives as possible are registered, partial registration of an ECI shall be possible when only parts of it meet the registration requirements of the Regulation.

The group of organisers should submit the application for registration to the Commission via the register. When it refuses to register an initiative or registers it only partially, the Commission should give reasons for its decision and inform the group of organisers. It should also inform the organizing group of all judicial and extrajudicial remedies available to it. It should make available to the public, in the register and on the public website of the ECI, all decisions relating to requests for registration of proposals for citizens' initiatives that it has adopted.

The deadline for receiving statements of support remains 12 months. However, organisers shall now be able to choose the date on which this period can begin, within six months of the registration of the ECI.

Publication and public hearing

When the Commission receives a valid initiative, it should without delay publish an opinion to this effect in the register and forward the initiative to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and national parliaments.

Within three months of the presentation of the initiative, the group of organisers would be given the opportunity to present the initiative at a public hearing organised by the European Parliament.

Following the public hearing to be held on its premises, the European Parliament would assess the political support for this initiative.

Examination by the Commission

Within six months of the publication of the initiative, and after the public hearing, the Commission shall set out in a communication its legal and political conclusions on the initiative, the action it intends to take, if any, and its reasons for taking or not taking action.

Where the Commission intends to take action in response to the initiative, including, where appropriate, the adoption of one or more proposals for a legal act of the Union, the communication shall also set out the envisaged timeline for these actions.

The European Parliament shall evaluate the measures taken by the Commission following the Commission's communication.

The Commission shall raise public awareness of the existence, objectives and functioning of the ECI through communication activities and information campaigns. The European Parliament shall contribute to the Commission's communication activities.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 6.6.2019.

APPLICATION: from 1.1.2020.