



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Committee on Petitions

2014/2257(INI)

31.3.2015

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Petitions

for the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

on the European Citizens' Initiative
(2014/2257(INI))

Rapporteur (*): Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea

(*): Associated committees – Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Petitions calls on the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Considers the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) to be the first direct democratic instrument to enable citizens to become actively involved in the framing of European policies and legislation;
2. Recalls that, in previous resolutions and annual reports prepared by the Committee on Petitions, Parliament pointed out the weaknesses of the existing legal framework and the bureaucratic burdens in the practical running of the ECI owing to a lack of IT support and disparate use in the national administrations; calls for simplified and harmonised personal data requirements and procedures;
3. Expresses its concern about the low percentage of successful initiatives and the dramatic decrease in the number of new initiatives; stresses that the European institutions and the Member States must take all necessary steps to promote the ECI and to foster citizens' confidence in this tool; believes that the instrument still has the potential to engage the public and to promote dialogue among citizens and between citizens and EU institutions; welcomes the fact that some ECIs have managed to have an impact at local level;
4. Considers that the review of the ECI regulation should be used as an opportunity to enhance awareness of the petitions process, explain the distinction between ECIs and petitions and promote a link between them, via harmonised information on the European institutions' websites and in their advertisement policies;
5. Regrets the lack of clear information on the ECI instrument at the early stages, which led to a general misconception about its nature and generated some frustration when the first ECIs were rejected by the Commission; recalls that the instrument should be simple, clear and user-friendly;
6. Calls for enhanced inter-institutional cooperation when dealing with ECIs in providing information and support to ECI organisers; calls for the future establishment of a physical and online 'one-stop shop' providing information, legal advice, translation services and funding, which could use the resources of the point of contact based in the Europe Direct Contact Centre and the Commission's representations and Parliament's information offices in the Member States; considers that such a set-up would bring the ECI project closer to citizens;
7. Calls on the Commission to ensure transparency in the decision-making process and clarify the procedure for legal admissibility; invites the Commission to respond to successful ECIs with more concrete actions;
8. Calls on the Commission to improve the online collection system (OCS) software and make it accessible to persons with disabilities, allow for electronic signatures and for the collection of e-mail addresses, and include the most up-to-date online campaigning features, following the example of other successful online campaigning platforms; calls on

the Commission to support the creation of a public ECI application for mobile devices;

9. Invites the Commission to examine proposals relating to the creation of a European identity card, which should also meet the requirements of the regulation on the citizens' initiative for gathering signatures;
10. Calls on the Commission to come forward with proposals concerning the establishment of a complete electoral list of its citizens;
11. Invites the Commission to consider in the future revision of the regulation the proposal for allowing ECIs that require treaty amendments according to Article 48 TFEU;
12. Recalls that hearings concerning successful ECIs are currently organised by the competent committee, according to the subject of the ECI, with the Committee on Petitions associated; proposes that the Committee on Petitions should take over the role of organising hearings, as a neutral forum with the greatest experience in dealing with citizens.