

OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

To: Mr. Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President, European Commission

Dear Commissioner Timmermans,

We believed in the promise of the European Citizens' Initiative. We believed we had a powerful idea that would benefit Europe. We believed that at least one million Europeans would agree with us. We believed that, if they did, the European Commission would act. These beliefs led us to launch an ECI. None of us got what we intended. All of us discovered that the ECI in its current form does not work. But we think it still can and must.

Now more than ever, the European Union needs what the ECI can offer: the ideas and involvement of its citizens, shared European goals to overcome national divisions and proof that EU leaders are committed to strengthening democracy.

We urge you to propose a deep and meaningful amendment of Regulation 211/2011. It must become easier for citizens to both run and support an ECI. If not, the ECI will disappear from use.

Some of our ECIs ended prematurely, despite careful preparation and competent legal advice. Over 40% of all proposed ECIs were not registered for falling "manifestly outside the framework of the Commission's powers". Legal experts say sometimes this was clearly true, but often it was not. The law is open to interpretation. Appeals to the courts are long and complex. We urge you to register all ECIs that are serious and within the EU's values, while offering a non-binding opinion on legal competence. Let each campaign decide what to do. Also, allow ECIs calling for treaty amendments. These changes will help ECIs lead to the public and political dialogue you yourself advocate.

All of our registered ECIs struggled to collect signatures while respecting complex and bureaucratic procedures. Few got over 100,000 supporters, most much less. Many citizens are frightened away by the ECI's personal data requirements, especially ID numbers. The online signature collection software and paper forms are ill-suited to transnational campaigning. We aren't even allowed to stay in touch with our supporters! Some of these problems are easy to fix. Others require political will. We urge you, above all, to hold Member States to the promise they made to remove ID number requirements by 2015.

Only three of our ECIs formally succeeded. We worked hard to convince partners and supporters that the ECI was worth their effort. They expected action. They got empty words. Successful ECIs deserve serious consideration, including deliberation in Parliament and Council via normal legislative procedures. With no hope of action, no one will use the ECI. It will become an empty promise. If you are sincerely committed to the ECI's continuation, the Commission must pledge to respond to all successful ECIs with meaningful action. There is much the Commission can do while still remaining within the limits of the EU treaties.

See [12 Ways to Build an ECI That Works](#) for a list of necessary reforms. You can also read our stories in [An ECI That Works](#).

Signed by 21 European Citizens' Initiatives:

1. Fraternité 2020 – Mobility. Progress. Europe
2. Water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity!
3. One of us
4. Stop vivisection
5. High Quality European Education for All
6. Pour une gestion responsable des déchets, contre les incinérateurs
7. Central public online collection platform for the European Citizen Initiative
8. 30 km/h – making the streets liveable!
9. Single Communication Tariff Act
10. Unconditional Basic Income (UBI)
11. End Ecocide in Europe: A Citizens' Initiative to give the Earth Rights
12. ACT 4 Growth
13. Teach for Youth – Upgrade to Erasmus 2.0
14. European Initiative for Media Pluralism
15. Weed like to talk
16. European Free Vaping Initiative
17. New Deal 4 Europe – For a European Special Plan for Sustainable Development and Employment
18. An end to front companies in order to secure a fairer Europe
19. For a socially fair Europe! Encouraging a stronger cooperation between EU Member States to fight poverty in Europe
20. « On The Wire »
21. ONE MILLION SIGNATURES FOR "A EUROPE OF SOLIDARITY"

