



European Commission announces plans to reform the European Citizens' Initiative to Improve Democracy in the EU Institutions

Brussels, 1 April 2016

The European Commission has today announced its intention to completely reform the European Citizens' Initiative after 4 years of its application have shown that it needs urgent reform if citizens' trust in Europe is to be maintained.

Citizens and NGOs have been calling for a reform of the ECI and the data over the past 4 years of functioning shows that 94% of all European Citizens' Initiatives have failed. Of the 52 registered so far, 20 were rejected for not fulfilling the legal conditions for the registration of an ECI. 16 ECIs failed because the organisers were not able to gather the required amount of signatures, and a further 8 have been withdrawn by the committee organisers.

In testimonies, ECI organisers have pointed out a number of limitations and weaknesses when it comes to organising an ECI such as problems with gathering and verifying the signatures. They also point out that of the 3 successful citizens' initiatives only 1 has resulted in any changes to EU policy-making.

The European Commission is committed to improving the functioning of the ECI so that citizens are given a say in EU policy-making. First Vice-President Frans Timmermans said: *"The ECI is one of the building blocks for strengthening trust in the European institutions and for promoting active participation of citizens. We must look for innovative ways to encourage greater and more effective use of the tool, and we must make sure that this important instrument lives up to its full potential."*

Just because the first ever transnational instrument of participatory democracy was launched on April fool's day, this does not mean that citizen participation in Europe should continue to be a joke.

Background

ECIs were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty and launched as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens in April 2012, upon the entry into force of the ECI Regulation which implements the Treaty provisions.

Once formally registered, an ECI allows one million citizens from at least one quarter of EU Member States to invite the European Commission to propose a legal act in areas where the Commission has the power to do so.

If – and only if – a registered ECI receives the signatures of one million validated statements of support from at least seven Member States, the Commission must decide whether or not it would act, and explain the reasons for that choice.

For more information

- [ECI website](#)
- [ECI Regulation](#)

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