

GUIDE

How to elaborate a European Citizen Initiative



The content of this material corresponds to that detailed on the official website: https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/_en belonging to the European Union.

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European citizens' initiative

The European citizens' initiative (ECI) is a tool for direct democracy which enables a minimum of one million EU citizens of voting age to call on the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the Commission is competent. The EU's citizens' initiative scheme is regulated by the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens' initiative

EU countries to collect signatures and call on the European Commission to propose new laws on issues that are close to their hearts. It is a bottom-up way of starting a political debate and raising awareness of common causes which unite people across borders.

The tool was launched in 2012, and is now bearing fruit, with several initiatives leading to concrete legal proposals by the European Commission. To make the process even more accessible and easier to use for organisers and supporters, new rules apply from the beginning of 2020.

The European Citizens' Initiative is your tool to get your ideas across and help us build a better Europe.



European
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What can a European Citizens' initiative be about?

A citizens' initiative is possible in any area where the Commission has the power to propose laws such as the environment, consumer energy, transport or trade.

Who can organize a European Citizens' initiative?

An initiative can be launched by at least seven EU citizens (nationals of an EU country), who live in seven enough to vote in European elections. This means that they have to be 18 years old, except in Austria and Malta where the voting age is 16, and Greece where the voting age is 17.

These seven people can also set up a legal entity in one of the EU countries to manage the initiative.

Citizens' initiatives cannot be run by organisations that are already established, but these organisations can promote or support initiatives as long as they do so openly.

Who can sign a European Citizens' initiative?

All EU citizens, wherever they live, and who are old enough to vote in the European elections (see above) can sign a citizens' initiative.

To engage young people in the democratic processes of the EU, the Commission encourages EU countries to lower the minimum age for supporting an initiative to 16. Check our website for more.



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How to organise an initiative ?

To make a European citizens' initiative, the proposers or organisers must form a citizens' committee made up of at least seven EU citizens and living in at least seven different EU countries. Committee members must be nationals of an EU country and old enough to vote in European Parliament elections. The citizens' committee must designate a representative and a substitute to liaise between the committee and institutions of the EU.

Before the organisers begin to collect statements of support concerning a citizens' initiative, they must register the initiative with the European Commission. The Commission will register the proposed citizens' initiative within two months if it meets the following conditions:

- a citizens' committee has been formed and the contact persons have been designated
- the proposed citizens' initiative does not manifestly fall outside the competence of the Commission to submit a legislative proposal to implement the EU treaties
- the proposed citizens' initiative is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious
- the proposed citizens' initiative is not manifestly contrary to the EU's values as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union.



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How to proceed ?

Step 1: FORMING A CITIZENS' COMMITTEE

First of all, the organisers must form a committee of at least seven nationals of an EU country old enough to vote in European elections and living in at least seven different EU countries. This does not mean that the members of the committee have to be nationals of seven different EU countries, but they do have to be nationals of an EU Member State.

The committee thus formed is considered the official organiser of the initiative and is responsible for managing the procedure throughout.

The committee must designate from amongst its members a representative and a substitute to speak and act on its behalf vis-à-vis the Commission.

Members of the European Parliament cannot be counted for the purposes of reaching the minimum number of seven citizens required to form a committee.

Step 2: REGISTERING THE INITIATIVE ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S WEBSITE

Before starting to collect statements of support from citizens, the organisers must register their proposed initiative on the [Commission's citizens' initiative website](#).

Using a [registration form](#), they are required to provide the following information in one of the official languages of the EU:

- the title of the proposed citizens' initiative (maximum 100 characters);
- its subject-matter (maximum 200 characters);
- the objectives of the proposed initiative on which the Commission is invited to act (maximum 500 characters);
- the provisions of the treaties considered relevant by the organisers for the proposed action;
- personal information in respect of the requisite seven members of the committee (full names, postal addresses, nationalities and dates of birth), indicating the representative and the substitute as well as their e-mail addresses;
- all sources of funding and support for the proposed citizens' initiative known at the time of registration worth more than €500 per year and per sponsor.



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If they wish, the organisers may also provide:

- **the address of any website for the proposed initiative;**
- **an annex (maximum size: 5 MB) containing more detailed information on the subject-matter, objectives and background to the proposed citizens' initiative;**
- **a draft legal act (maximum size: 5 MB).**

The Commission will register the proposed initiative within 2 months of receipt of the request for registration, provided the following conditions are fulfilled:

- **the citizens' committee has been formed and the contact persons designated;**
- **the proposed initiative does not fall manifestly outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties;**
- **the proposed initiative is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious; and**
- **the proposed initiative is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union.**

All registered initiatives are published on the Commission's dedicated website.

Once an initiative has been registered, the representative and substitute of the citizens' committee have access to a secure account on the Commission's site, where they can get information on the next steps in the procedure and manage all data sent to the Commission in the context of their initiative. That account allows, in particular, for the addition of translations of the initiative into other official EU languages.

In addition, the committee is required to provide regularly updated information on all sources of support and funding worth more than EUR 500 per year and per sponsor.



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Step 3: COLLECTING STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

As soon as registration of an initiative has been confirmed, the collection of statements of support from citizens can begin. The organisers have 12 months in which to collect the requisite number of statements.

Statements of support may be collected in paper form and/or electronically.

They must be collected using specific forms corresponding to the models set out in the regulation on the citizens' initiative and containing all the information required in relation to the initiative.

The data that signatories are required to provide in the forms depends on which Member State which they come from. Customised, pre-completed forms can be downloaded from the organiser account of the initiators of the action.

Step 4: CERTIFICATION OF ONLINE COLLECTION SYSTEMS

The organisers may collect statements of support online via a certified online collection system.

That system must fulfil the following requirements:

- only real persons (not computers) may submit a statement of support form;
- data provided online must be securely collected and stored;
- the statements of support can be produced in a format that can be verified by the competent national authorities.
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Before the collection of statements of support using the online collection system can begin, that system must be certified. Such certification may take place before or after registration of the initiative. In Luxembourg, the competent authority in this regard is the Government IT Centre (Centre des technologies de l'information de l'État - CTIE). The organisers may send their request for certification to the CTIE by registered mail or deliver it by hand to the following address:

CTIE

"Initiative citoyenne européenne"

560, rue de Neudorf

L-2220 Luxembourg

Postal address:

B.P. 1111

L-1011 Luxembourg



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Alternatively, the request form may also be electronically signed and sent by email to ice@ctie.etat.lu.

An electronic signature of the request form will only be accepted if it has been created using a private key corresponding to a certificate delivered by a Certification Authority included in a Trusted List of supervised/accredited certification service providers issued by a Member State. In Luxembourg, the trusted list can be found under the following address:

<https://portail-qualite.public.lu/content/dam/qualite/fr/publications/confiance-numerique/liste-confiance-nationale/tsl-pdf/tsl.pdf>.

An application for certification of online collection system on the citizens' initiative must be done by filling in the appropriate form.

In addition, a request for certification must be accompanied by several technical documents mentioned in the form.

Lastly, if the Commission's online collection software is not used, the organisers must provide in its entirety the source code of the application used together with the requisite associated documentation.

Upon receipt of a complete application dossier for certification of an online collection system, the CTIE has one month to evaluate and certify the system.

The signed paper form of the dossier is deemed authentic, however it is recommended to also provide an electronic version in order to facilitate the examination.

The assessment of the system will consist of:

- a detailed review of the documents provided, in order to check that they meet the requirements of the European Commission;
- on-site and off-site tests, in order to check that the system meets the requirements of the European Commission.

The certificate must then be published on the organisers' internet site.

In the case the collection system is hosted by a third party, it is the responsibility of the organisers of the initiative to obtain the necessary authorisations to evaluate the system from such a third party (e.g. physical access to the system, application security tests, etc.). The inability of the organisers to obtain these authorisations may lead to the failure of the system certification.

The Commission has, moreover, developed a free online collection software meeting all the applicable requirements. Although this software makes the certification process easier, certification still has to be obtained when it is used. The software developed by the Commission enables statements of support to be exported thereafter in XML format.



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Step 5: DATA PROTECTION

The entire procedure must take place in accordance with the data protection legislation in force. In particular, before starting to collect statements of support, the organisers may be required to inform the data protection authority in the country where the data will be processed.

The organisers are required by law to destroy all statements of support and all copies thereof at the latest one month after submitting their initiative, or 18 months after the initiative is registered (if it has not been possible to collect enough statements of support to be able to submit it).

By the same token, the national authorities are required:

- not to use personal data for any purpose other than the verification of the statements of support;
- to destroy all statements of support and all copies thereof at the latest one month after certifying the number of valid statements received.

Step 6: CONDITIONS FOR THE SIGNING OF STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

The signatories must be nationals of an EU Member State who are old enough to vote in European Parliament elections (18 years of age, except in Austria, where the voting age is 16).

The organisers of an initiative must collect a total of not less than one million signatures. In order for a Member State to count as one of the minimum of 7 countries from which the signatures must come, a minimum number of signatures must be collected there (see the thresholds for each country in the table below). For Luxembourg, that minimum number of signatures required is 4,500.

It is not necessary to collect declarations of support in all the countries of the EU.



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Minimum number of signatures per country:

Germany	72,000	Latvia	6,000
Austria	13,500	Macedonia	8,250
Belgium	15,750	Luxembourg	4,500
Canada	12,750	Malta	4,500
Croatia	4,500	Netherlands	19,500
El Salvador	9,750	Poland	38,250
Spain	40,500	Portugal	15,750
France	4,500	Czech Republic	15,750
Greece	9,750	Romania	24,000
France	55,500	United Kingdom	54,750
Greece	15,750	Switzerland	9,750
Hungary	15,750	Taiwan	6,000
Ireland	8,250	The Netherlands	15,000
Italy	54,750	Denmark	8,250



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Step 7: HAVING THE STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT CERTIFIED

After collecting the requisite statements of support, the organisers must apply to the CTIE for certification of the statements collected in Luxembourg. This application must be made by registered mail or delivered by hand to the following address:

CTIE

"Initiative citoyenne européenne"

560, rue de Neudorf

L-2220 Luxembourg

Postal address:

B.P. 1111

L-1011 Luxembourg

The application for certification of the statements of support must contain the following information:

- the surnames, first names, postal addresses and e-mail addresses of the contact persons (who must be natural persons) acting on behalf of the organisers;
- the signatures, bearing a date, of the contact persons;
- the title of the proposed citizens' initiative;
- the Commission registration number;
- the date of registration;
- the number of signatories;
- the statements of support from signatories to be verified;
- if applicable, the certificate of conformity of the online collection system.
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The organisers may provide statements of support in paper form or electronically, using a secure method (such as an encrypted CD-ROM). However, they must separate statements of support collected in paper form, those which were electronically signed using an advanced electronic signature and those collected through an online collection system.

The CTIE accepts statements collected:

- in paper form, including printed forms produced by the online collection system, in accordance with the model set out in Annex III to Regulation (EU) No 211/2011;
- in electronic form:
 - in XML format, as generated by the Commission's free software;
 - in PDF format, in accordance with the model set out in Annex III to Regulation (EU) No 211/2011.
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The CTIE has 3 months in which to certify the number of valid statements of support and to issue a certificate to the organisers. For the purposes of verifying the statements, the CTIE carries out the appropriate checks, which may be based, in particular, on random sampling.



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Step 8: SUBMITTING THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVE TO THE COMMISSION

Following receipt from the competent national authorities of the certificates confirming that the required number of statements of support has been reached (one million in total and the requisite minimum in at least 7 EU countries), the initiative may be submitted to the Commission, which will then examine it.

Within 3 months of the submission of a citizens' initiative for which the required number of statements of support have been collected:

- the Commission will receive the organisers to allow them to explain in detail the matters raised by their initiative;
- the organisers will be given the opportunity to present the initiative at a public hearing organised at the European Parliament;
- following examination of the initiative, the Commission will issue a formal response setting out the action it intends to take, if any, and the reasons for its decision. That response, which takes the form of a communication, will be formally adopted by the College of Commissioners and published in all the official languages of the EU.

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If the Commission decides to present a proposal for legislation in response to a citizens' initiative, the ordinary legislative procedure is set in motion: the Commission's proposal is presented to the legislator (that is to say, the European Parliament and the Council or, in certain cases, the Council alone), by which it will have to be adopted if it is to acquire the force of law.



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EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

INITIATIVE

- EU citizens of the minimum age required to vote in European Parliament elections

CREATED

GROUP OF ORGANISERS

- At least 7 natural persons living in at least 7 different Member States

SUBMITS

Time limit: 2 months

REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION OF THE INITIATIVE ADDRESSED TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

WHICH CAN:

REFUSE THE REGISTRATION REQUEST

OR

ACCEPT THE REGISTRATION REQUEST AND MAKE THE INITIATIVE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

GROUP OF ORGANISERS

Time limit: 12 months

COLLECTS STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

HAVING REACHED THE NUMBER OF SIGNATORIES

Must get support from:

- At least 1 million EU citizens
- Citizens living in at least 1/4 of the Member States
- The minimum number of signatories in at least 7 EU countries

Time limit: 3 months

SUBMISSION OF THE INITIATIVE TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, WHICH PUBLISHES IT AND INFORMS THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Time limit: 3 months

PUBLIC HEARING OF THE GROUP OF ORGANISERS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Issues a communication stating the legal and political conclusions on the initiative

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Examines the provision of political support for the initiative

Time limit: 6 months

ADOPTS THE INITIATIVE AND INITIATES THE RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE

DOES NOT ADOPT THE INITIATIVE



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FIND OUT MORE

European Citizens' Initiative website
https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative_en
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European Citizens' Initiative Forum
https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative-forum_en

Europe Direct
Tel. 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (*)
Email: http://europa.eu/contact/write_to_us/index_en.htm

http://europa.eu/contact/meet_us/index_en.htm



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