

[en](#)

[Event](#) | 27.06.2013

Citizens first!

Ideas for Improving and Extending the European Citizens' Initiative

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PRESENTATION

This one-day conference will look at the first year of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and discuss how citizens and organisations could use this instrument more effectively as well as options of further development of citizen participation in Europe. The focus will be on the strengthening of the ECI as tool of participative democracy and on the empowerment of ECI organisers: what can the EU institutions do, what can citizens and NGOs do to make campaigns better prepared, better funded and more visible? How to find the right issues for ECIs and how to achieve broad debates? Based on that, the hosts of the conference MEPs Gerald Häfner, Sandrine Belier and Isabelle Durant want to look beyond the current limitation of the ECI and ask how we shall proceed to strengthen instruments of citizen participation in EU matters.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

8:30

Registration

European Parliament, Altiero Spinelli building, Place du Luxembourg entrance 9:00

Welcome

by **MEP Rebecca Harms**, Co-Chair of the Greens/EFA Group in the EP 9:15

Opening debate

“The ECI as agenda-setting tool – an unfulfilled promise?”

with **MEP Isabelle Durant**, Vice-President of the European Parliament **Keynote speech:**

Andreas Gross (MP, Switzerland)

“Citizens first - how the ECI can be a start for more democracy in Europe” 10:45

Introduction to the programme ***“One year ECI: What next?”***

MEP Gerald Häfner, co-rapporteur of the EP on the ECI 11:00

Coffee break 11:15

[Water as a Human Right - The first successful ECI campaign](#)

Film presentation and debate on the campaign

Organised by MEPs **Heide Rühle**, **Raul Romeva i Rueda** and Nikos **Chrysogelos** 13:00

Sandwich lunch

(in front of room ASP 1 G 3, with vegetarian and non-vegetarian options) 13:30

Registration (for those who only attend the afternoon sessions) 14:00

Working Groups

1. **Improving the ECI:** How can Member States and EU institutions be more helpful to initiatives and what legal quick-fixes could help to make the ECI more citizen friendly?
2. **Revising the ECI:** What improvements and extensions should be foreseen for the upcoming revision of the ECI regulation?
3. **Promotion of the ECI:** How can EU institutions, Member States, initiatives improve on communicating the ECI - and how to make it more interesting for the media?
4. **ECI Good practice:** What are the essential ingredients of a well-prepared ECI campaign? How can initiatives learn from each other and help each other?
5. **Issues for ECIs:** What topics seem to be best suited for making an ECI successful and which ones should be supported from a Green point of view?
6. **Beyond the ECI:** What other instruments of direct and participative democracy should be introduced on EU level to move towards a genuine Europe of the citizens?

15:45

Coffee break (in front of room ASP 1 G 3) 16:00

Fishbowl debate on the working groups' recommendations
with **MEP Sandrine Bélier** 17:30

The future of participatory democracy in the EU

Concluding remarks and debate with **MEP Gerald Häfner** 18:30

Reception _____ *Interpretation will be provided in English, French and German. Please note that the working groups will be in English only. The event will be web-streamed (with the exception of the working groups) and remote interaction will be made available through Twitter (including during the working group phase). Follow the #citizensfirst hashtag!*

Recommended

Press release

European External Action Service (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/eeas/32978511020>)



[Now is the time to transform the EU before another Orb...](#)

21.04.2026

Press release

[homa-appliances_unsplash.com](https://homa-appliances.unsplash.com)



[We need an industrial booster for European industry, c...](#)

04.03.2026

Press release



[EU cannot afford to be at the mercy of Putin's puppets...](#)

23.02.2026

Press release



[Frozen Russian funds essential to support Ukraine](#)

18.12.2025

Responsible MEPs



Rebecca Harms

Member

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