Greens/EFA

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More democracy needed in Europe

Here’s a chance to push for it!

For those of us who believe in democracy, freedom and fundamental rights, the importance of citizen participation and inclusiveness is obvious. That’s why the Greens/EFA Group picked Transparency and Democracy as one of its priorities, and that’s why we rejoiced when - finally - after years of denying the need to improve the world’s very first tool for citizen participation across borders, the European Commission announced that it would take steps to reform the European Citizens’ Initiative (#ECI).

> Victory!! Commission VP .@TimmermansEU FINALLY decides to revise the EU Citizens' Initiative - We want a stronger EU democracy for all! #ECI pic.twitter.com/a5EMwgzurf
>
> — Pam Bartlett Q (@PamBQ) April 12, 2017

Shortly after, the European Court of Justice ruled that the European Commission had violated the rights of citizens by refusing to process the “Stop TTIP ECI” - which eventually gathered over 3 million signatures - because it called for an end to the negotiation of the Transatlantic Trade Agreement with the USA (also known as TTIP). The Commission’s arguments that citizens could not participate in this way because a trade agreement was not an EU law, and they were not making a positive proposal, were rejected by the Court, in another victory for democracy. This case-law needs to be taken into account in the future reform of the ECI.

And now's the chance to improve democracy in the EU!!! The Greens/EFA Group wants to strengthen this democratic tool as much as possible. The Commission has opened a public consultation on how to reform the ECI - fill it in here **before 16 August**!

If you want to see what the Greens/EFA group proposed, see here: Consultation response.

How to strengthen the European Citizens' Initiative?

The disappointing thing about the Commission's consultation is that it doesn't mention the possibility of making an ECI more binding than it currently is. We think this is an oversight and are calling for:

1. **All successful ECI's should have an impact:** We want ECIs to lead to a debate in the European Parliament and a vote on a resolution so that the various political groups can show their support for the initiatives presented by citizens. We also want to strengthen the system so that not acting in response to an initiative becomes the exception rather than the norm. One proposal is to make sure that the decision on whether ECIs are admissible is taken by an independent body that is not the Commission.
2. **Treaties shouldn't be untouchable:** Citizens should have the right to call for changes to be made to the founding EU Treaties, there is no reason why they should be blocked from suggesting reforms.
3. **ECI's should not be rejected just because they are against EU policies:** Citizens should be able not only to propose, but also to reject EU laws and policies, including international agreements, as decided by the European Court of Justice.
4. **Improve Citizens' Rights!** Everyone should be allowed to participate an in ECI in their own language, at least in all official EU languages. All people over the age of 16 should be allowed to sign an ECI. All EU citizens that reside in other countries should also be able to participate.
5. **More support and guarantees for ECI organisers:** The process of engaging in an ECI should be facilitated so that less data needs to be collected from citizens, guarantees are in place to prevent individual organisers from excessive legal liabilities, help with translations is provided, as well as legal advice for organisers

To watch a short video on what we propose, see Pascal Durand's intervention (in French), here:

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Debriefing of the September Plenary Session

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Responsible MEPs



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Attached documents

ECI-Public consultation GreensEFA contribution.pdf

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