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The battle for a more democratic Europe heats up as we push for meaningful reform of the European Citizen's Initiative

Active citizens, NGOs and pro-democracy Members of the European Parliament are due to be disappointed tomorrow by several MEPs on the European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee, who are planning to vote against key proposals that would finally deliver on citizens' expectations for what a more democratic Europe should look like.

Despite the concerns raised by more than 60 NGOs as part of the #EPforgetusnot campaign, tomorrow's vote on the reform of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) looks like it will fail to address the democratic aspirations of the 9,000,000,000 citizens who already signed an ECI in the hopes of having their voices heard by the European Commission.

The ECI is the first ever cross-border tool for direct democracy that allows citizens to propose legislation to the European Commission after gathering 1 million signatures, and its set-up was a key victory for the Greens/EFA Group, which has consistently been working to make the EU institutions as transparent, democratic and accessible as possible.

However, many organisers of ECIs have found that the process for gathering signatures and submitting proposals to the European Commission is too cumbersome; and that the outcome of their mammoth efforts is all too often minimalistic, ineffective and disappointing. To remedy this, we successfully pushed for a reform of the European Citizens' Initiative, thus overcoming the Commission's insistence that changing the ECI was unnecessary and premature.

Because we want to empower citizens to participate in EU decision-making, we are pushing hard to ensure that the ECI lives up to its full potential and delivers meaningful changes for people and planet.

Specifically, our demands are for:

1. Independence in the process: There is an inherent conflict of interests if the Commission both evaluates the eligibility of an ECI before it is registered and then is also responsible for its political follow-up once it is completed. This is why one of our key demands is to establish an independent body to carry out the legal checks instead of the Commission. The European Court of Justice has already ruled against the Commission for refusing to register ECIs that it found to be politically problematic.

2. Freedom of proposals: The European Commission has been overly restrictive in what it considers to be an "eligible" proposal. We want to fix this by allowing citizens not only to propose new laws but also to

propose the abrogation or revision of existing EU legislation, and also to make proposals for Treaty amendments.

3. Meaningful follow up: We want to ensure that the European Parliament steps up to the plate by organising a plenary debate and the adoption of a resolution via a specific vote that would be triggered by each ECI reaching over 1 million signatures. This way the European Parliament could make recommendations on the Commission on how to follow-up on each initiative.

4. Speaking your own language: We want to include the possibility that Member States could authorise the use of additional languages other than the official languages of the Union.

However, it would appear that we are in the minority, at least within the Constitutional Affairs Committee. For now.

But there is still hope!

Members of the Constitutional Affairs Committee will vote tomorrow (20th June 2018) on the reform of the European Citizens' Initiative. The text adopted would then form the basis of the European Parliament's position for entering trilogue negotiations with the Commission and Council in order to reach a deal for the final reform. Unfortunately, neither the Commission nor the governments in the Council are particularly keen on strengthening citizen's democratic rights in a meaningful way.

However, there is still hope: The Green/EFA Group will challenge the outcome of the vote if it fails to deliver in key areas. We need a strong European Parliament position if we are to negotiate with the other two institutions and achieve a result that would empower citizens much more.

So, in the next Parliament plenary from 2-4th July, we will question the Parliament's position and trigger a vote on whether or not to rework it until it is good enough. If we win the vote, we will have the chance to introduce more ambitious proposals for the ECI.

If you want the European Union to be more democratic, act now to convince the other political groups!

What can you do?

- Write, call or send a tweet to your MEPs calling on them to push for more democracy in Europe and a stronger ECI!
- Support the NGOs that are working for a more democratic Europe!

- Read the letter by Greens/EFA MEPs

Recommended

Press release

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Press release

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Debriefing of the September Plenary Session

12.09.2025

Responsible MEPs



Pascal Durand

Vice-President



Josep Maria Terricabras

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group

Contact person



Pam Bartlett Quintanilla

Team leader - Outreach and campaigns

Attached documents

Letter ECI reply from_Terricabras and Durand

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