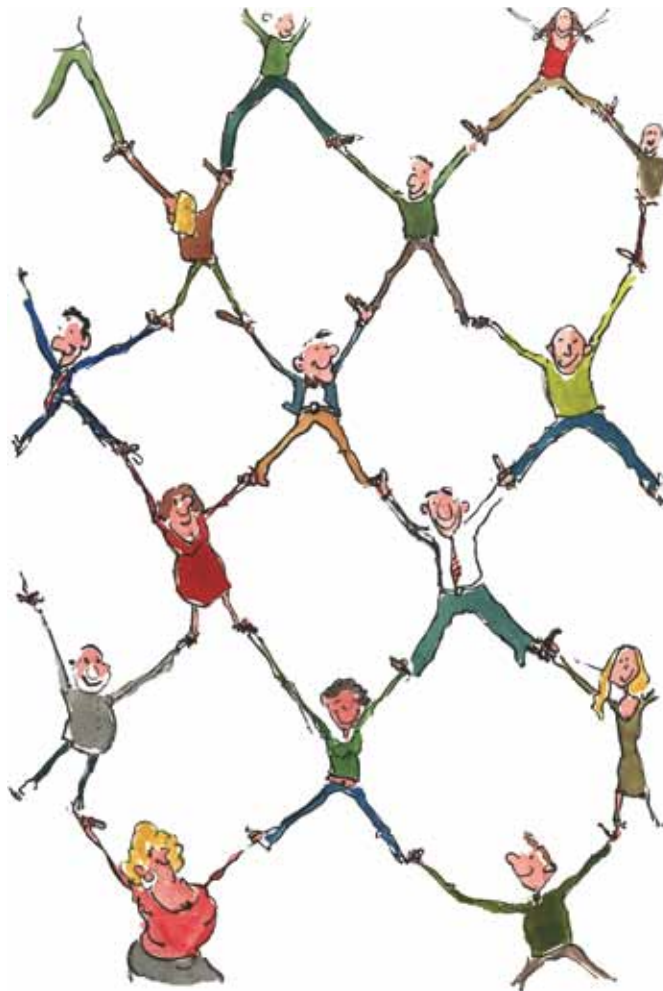


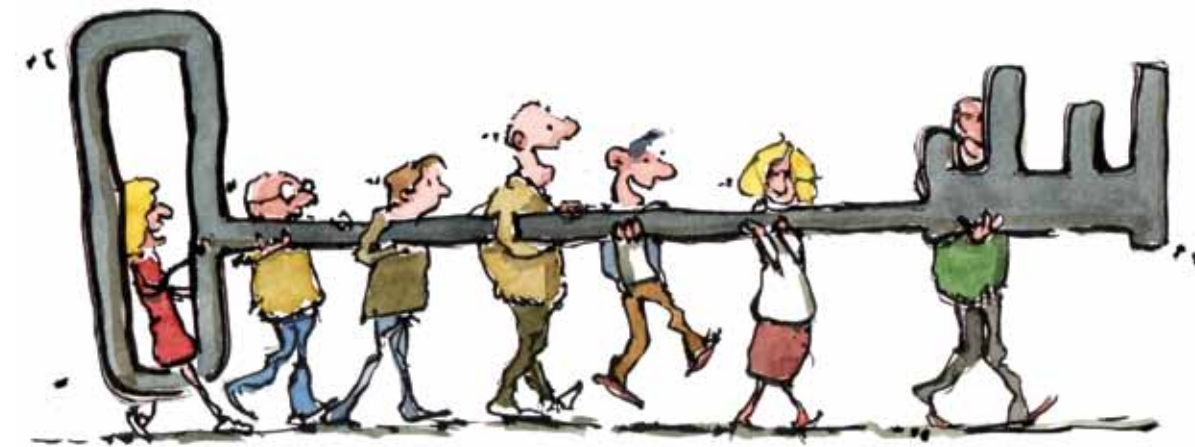
## Ten steps to a successful European Citizens' Initiative

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### Democracy's newest tool at a glance



From April 2012, one of the key features of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Citizens' Initiative, will be in operation. From this date EU citizens will be able to launch their own proposals for agenda setting of European legislation.

This leaflet offers an initial guide to this first transnational direct-democratic right in the world and complements the in-depth backgrounder published by the Green European Foundation in cooperation with the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe.

All legal references in this document refer to the "Regulation on the citizens' initiative" published in the Official Journal of the European Union on March 11, 2011 (eur-lex.europa.eu), or Addendums to the Regulation [5769/11].

#### Abbreviations

ECI – European Citizens' Initiative  
EC – European Commission  
MS – Member States  
MEP – Member of the European Parliament

#### Key points

- One million EU citizens from at least a quarter Member States (currently 7) have the right to propose new EU legislation
- Signatures (Statements of support) can be gathered in electronic form or on paper within 12 months after registration
- European Citizens' Initiatives have to deal with substantive issues within the EU Commissions field of competence
- Successful European Citizens Initiatives will be followed up by an official hearing in the European Parliament
- The European Commission (and further EU institutions as well as other governmental and non-governmental offices across Europe) will offer assistance and support during an initiative process

### Support for your ECI

The **Commission** "shall establish a point of contact which provides information and assistance" [4.1.]. In addition to this provision in the ECI regulation, the Commission has published an Addendum [5769/11] on support services, featuring

- a "comprehensive and user-friendly guide on the citizens' initiative in every official language of the Union";
- "support and guidance to the organisers during the process of registering and processing proposals";
- information by the Commission to the organisers of "current and intended legislative proposals on matters raised by the initiative";
- a checking service of additional language versions, requested to be included into the register.

Other EU institutions like the **European Parliament** and the **European Social and Economic Committee** are planning and preparing for additional support and guidance services to the EU citizens.

#### Non-governmental support, assistance and guidance are available at:

[www.europeancitizensinitiative.info](http://www.europeancitizensinitiative.info)  
(Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe)

[www.initiativeoffice.eu](http://www.initiativeoffice.eu)  
(European Citizens Initiative Office)

[www.citizens-initiative.eu](http://www.citizens-initiative.eu)  
(Democracy International)

[www.ecas-citizens.eu](http://www.ecas-citizens.eu)  
(European Citizen Action Service)

For a complete insight into this new tool of participation please consult the Green European Foundation's "European Citizens' Initiative Handbook". This publication is the first practical guide to the European Citizens' Initiative, including a detailed version of the Ten Step Manual for an efficient and successful use of the new instrument.

The handbook will give you half a billion other EU citizens the context and the background needed in order to make an effective entrance onto this new stage of European politics.

The ECI handbook is available in English, French, German, Spanish and Polish. You can either download your preferred language version at [www.gef.eu/publications](http://www.gef.eu/publications) or ask the GEF office to send you a hard copy at [info@gef.eu](mailto:info@gef.eu)



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Steps 1-4: Your big idea  
Indefinite before the process

1 Idea

Develop an idea for Europe which should address a serious problem with a clear solution, which is easily transferable into a legislative proposal. The idea should generate broad appeal across Europe.

2 Knowledge

Know your subject and learn the workings of the EU and the European Citizens Initiative (ECI).

3 Goals

Begin with clear goals; define what you will consider to be a success, what resources you have and what resources you will need. Establish a Committee to organise your ECI. Under the Regulation, this Directive must have at least seven European citizens from seven Member States (MS). They must provide their full details to the European Commission (EC) and two of them will be selected as liaison officers to the EC. MEPs may be members of this committee but will not be counted under the seven.

4 Design

The ECI committee will prepare the Proposal. It may include a draft legal act. It must have a title (max. 100 characters), the subject-matter (max. 200 characters), the objectives of the proposal (max. 500 characters) and a reference to the Treaty provisions “considered relevant by the organisers for the purposed action” [Annex II]. It should be well-written and easily understood, so that it appeals both to the legislators and to the EU citizens to gain their support.

Step 5: Getting ready  
2 months

5 Registration

The first official step is to provide the necessary information in one of the EU official languages online. Then on you will have to provide information on “all sources of support and funding for the proposed citizens’ initiative” [4.1]. For this provision of information you will get an acknowledgement by the EC within a few days.

Language translations of the initiative may be uploaded to the register, subject to EC approval. You are responsible for the translations, including their quality and ensuring that there are no significant inconsistencies between the original text and its translations. Only approved translations are to be used to gather signatures.

The EC then has two months time to check four different criteria before officially registering the ECI under “a unique registration number”. The four criteria are:

- the organisation: if the European Citizens’ Committee (“organisers”) fulfil the basic requirements [4.2a];
- the admissibility: if the proposal (“initiative”) is within the “framework of the EC’s powers to submit a proposal for a legal act” [4.2b];
- the language: if the initiative is not “manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious” [4.2c];
- and finally the compatibility with the EU values as “set out in Article 2 of Treaty on the European Union” [4.3 d].

If the EC refuses to register a proposed initiative reasons have to be given. You may appeal through the European Court and/or through the Ombudsman.

With your ECI officially published in the online register of the EC, you have 365 days to gather the needed signatures – 1 million signatures from at least 1/4 of MS.

Steps 6-7

Steps 6-7: Getting the signatures  
1 year

6 Signature Gathering

Signatures need not be gathered in a specific location (such as going to a public office, as some countries require). Signatures may be gathered on paper or online, with two specific forms available from the EC for this purpose. As each MS may have its own rules when it comes to the required information to be given, you should be attentive to such rules [Annex III of the Regulation].

When gathering signatures online, the system used will have to be approved by the “competent authority” in each MS where signatures are gathered [6.4 a-c]. The EC has developed free software which you may use for this purpose.

Signatories must be European Citizens aged 18 and over (16 in Austria) who declare that they have supported this proposed initiative only once. Signatories will have to conform to the requirements of the MS from which they derive their European Citizenship.

7 Dialogue

During your signature gathering, it is not enough to launch a website and wait for the signatures to come pouring in, no matter how good your idea is! So involve as many people as possible directly and engage local organisations, NGOs and the media in the debate around your ECI.

If you raise money for the campaign, keep full records of this. You will have to provide details of any funds received during the course of the initiative; [Regulation (EC) 2004/2003].

You will have to act as “data controllers” for the campaign, ensuring that the relevant data protection regulations are complied with.

Step 8: Verification  
3 months

8 Thresholds

Within 365 days of registration of the initiative, the organisers must have gathered at least 1 million signatures from at least a quarter MS. To ensure that the initiative is truly transnational the regulation sets a minimum number of statements that must be gathered in that MS for that State to count towards one of the seven. This minimum number is calculated by multiplying the number of European Parliament seats in that MS by 750 (i.e. 18,750 in the Netherlands).

Before submitting an ECI it is up to the “competent authorities” in the MS to verify and to certify the statements of support given on the forms which had been designed (and when it comes to online gathering even certified) according to their requirements.

This means that e.g. statements given by EU citizens with Spanish nationality with numbers of a Spanish ID-Card or Passport will have to be delivered to the Spanish “competent authority” while a EU Citizen with Spanish nationality residing in the United Kingdom and signing under the UK jurisdiction and requirements will be included in the lists delivered to a UK “competent authority”.

MS have a maximum of 3 months to complete this verification process [8.2]. You have the right to withdraw your proposed ECI at any time before the submission of statements of support [4.5]. Following verification by MS; you must submit the requisite number of signatures and the related necessary information [detailed in Annex VII] to the EC.

Step 9: The results  
3 months

9 Communication

Upon successful submission of an ECI, the proposal will be published ‘without delay’ [10.1 a].

After a three month period of examination and communication the EC will:

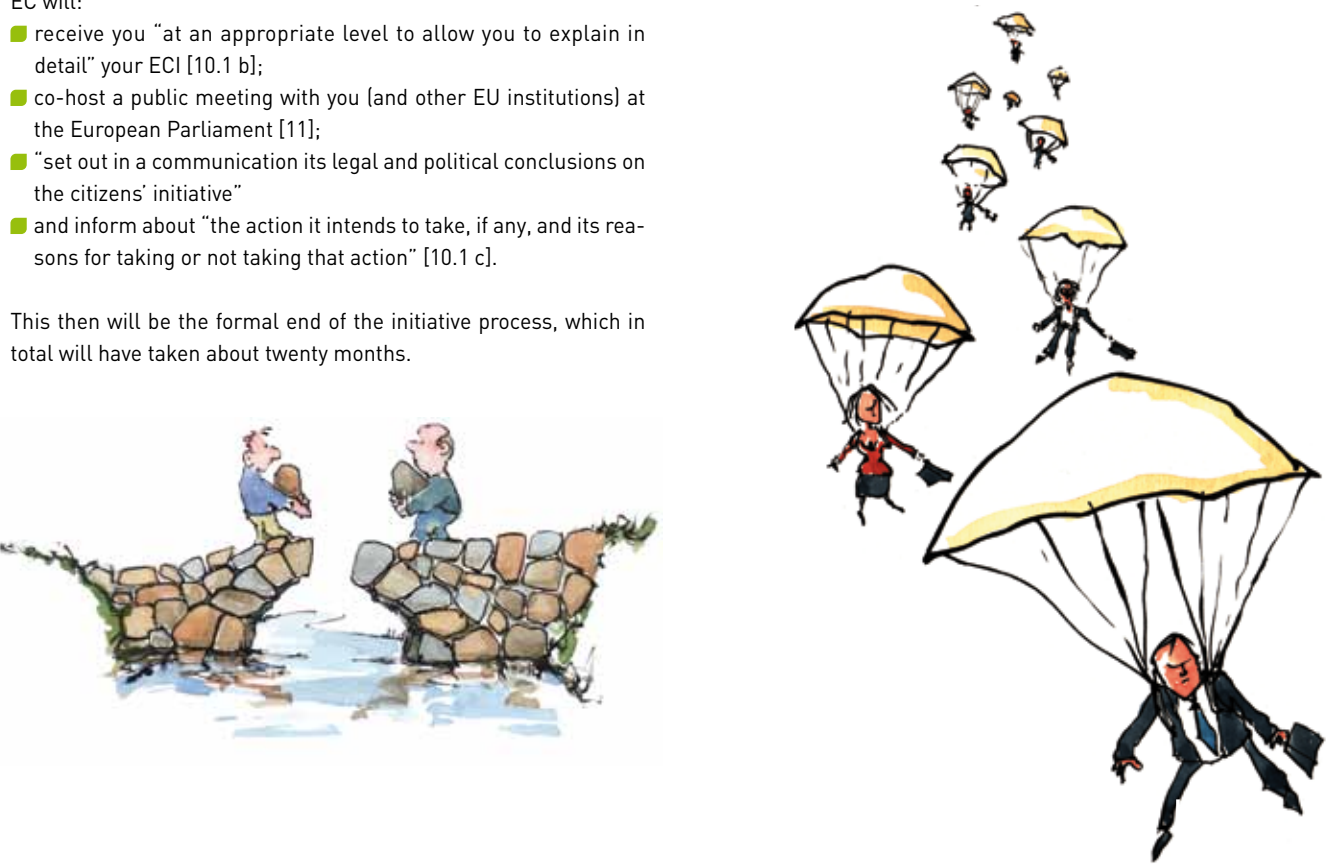
- receive you “at an appropriate level to allow you to explain in detail” your ECI [10.1 b];
- co-host a public meeting with you (and other EU institutions) at the European Parliament [11];
- “set out in a communication its legal and political conclusions on the citizens’ initiative”
- and inform about “the action it intends to take, if any, and its reasons for taking or not taking that action” [10.1 c].

This then will be the formal end of the initiative process, which in total will have taken about twenty months.

Step 10: Evaluation  
Indefinite after the process

10 Lessons learnt

It has been at least twenty months since you started; whether you succeeded or failed, what have you learned? Share you experience! Let the next ECI organizers into your secrets!



Steps 1-4

Step 5

Step 8

Step 9

Step 10

Indefinite

2 months

1 year

3 months

3 months

Indefinite