

Dear Sir / Madam,

Having reviewed the Green Paper, I would like to make my contributions as follows:

i. Page 3 - Citizen's, Stakeholders and Public Authorities

As a Citizen, I'm uncomfortable with the terms 'Stakeholders' and 'Public Authorities' as they are much vaguer than the word Citizen. I view the Citizen as the granular, the grain of sand that all democratic public representation is for. If the words 'Stakeholder' and 'Public Authorities' must be used, can you clarify what these are to ensure the Citizen that submissions on how the CI should work is not being affected by Corporate or Government entities when this after all is to be a Citizen's Initiative.

Can the initiative focus on it's name Citizens' Initiative, an initiative for and by the citizen people of the European Union to engage with and speak with the democratic and elected bodies of the EU through the Commission.

1. Do you consider that one third of the total number of Member States would constitute a "significant number of Member States" as required by the Treaty?

The figure of 1/3 seems fair.

However, what are the propositions for:

- * Local issues (specific to one Country - for example my own Country has been very remiss with regard to flaunting EU rule, for example SPA's)
- * Regional issues (e.g., what about EU States on the periphery where issues may relate to their contiguous borders or some common internal mechanism - corporate, shared responsibility)
- * Issues where the Citizen's of a particular EU State are unhappy with their own Government and want to petition the Commission, for example, if the Irish Citizenry wanted to petition the Commission to compel Ireland to do something rather than allow derogations, etc. Under that situation, how would getting another 8 EU Member States be fair or even possible for such type of domestic issue

I would therefore recommend perhaps:

- * 1/3 for EU wide Citizen's Initiative (that has bearing on all of the EU)
- * and perhaps 1/4 for a EU Regional Citizen's Initiative (that has bearing on the EU at a Regional Level)
- * and perhaps 1,000,000 signatures from 1 EU Member State (or 51% whichever is lower) for a local initiative (that has bearing at an individual EU State Level). The 50% would * be there for EU States that don't have populations in the multiple of millions.

2. Do you consider that 0.2% of the total Population of each Member State is an appropriate threshold?

Yes, I think that is fair, however, given my discussion items in my point 2, I would recommend:

- * 0.2% for EU wide or EU Regional initiatives
- * 1,000,000 signatures of >51% of population for individual EU State

3. Should the minimum age required to support a European Citizens' Initiative be linked to the voting age for the European Parliament elections in each Member State?

No, I do not think it should.

I believe that the minimum age should be 16 for Citizens' Initiatives. We should enfranchise our younger generation and get them involved in the political process earlier. We should be able to demonstrate to them if you and your peers feel strongly enough about something, can articulate it and gather enough support through the EU for it, that like any Citizen you can present it.

I think 16 is a fair age, considering in certain EU States you can marry and start a family at 16 and work and pay taxes.

I also like the idea of a Childrens' Initiative - I'm not quite sure how that would work with regard to age and not having the initiative rail-roaded or taken over by adults. Given the terrible situation of abuse of Children especially that occurred in the Irish State, some mechanism where the 'Children' or the representatives of the 'Children' could target initiatives specifically aimed at the health, well-being, safety, inclusiveness, etc for Children would not be a bad thing considering they are our future working Citizens.

4. Would it be sufficient and appropriate to require that an initiative clearly state the subject-matter and objectives of the proposal on which the Commission is invited to act?

Yes, HOWEVER:

- * a non legal, no jargon, non technical template of no more than two pages could be used that has sections such as are indicated:

- > 2 paragraphs summary of the initiative

- > Initiative broken down into bullet points

- > For each initiative item what objective would the presenters like to see

There should be no reference to treaties, protocols or anything else needed by the Citizens. I would argue strongly for this given (a) what was presented to the Irish people for referendum on the Lisbon Treaty and (b) the nature, purpose and spirit of the CI is to enfranchise and bring the Government and people closer together not to separate them.

I do not believe a technical, legal or complicated document is needed. It is a Citizen Initiative and it shouldn't need a Lawyer, Accountant or another Professional (Economist, etc) to present. The Commission and the State and Body apparatus have those skills. The presented Citizens' Initiative should be interpreted by the Commission on behalf of the Citizens' and reflected back to the Citizens.

I believe the Commission should be capable based on the quality and calibre of people to break down a CI into it's constituent parts and in the background work on the preparation of the required legal, framework, statutory and other documents.

5. i. Do you think that there should be a common set of procedural requirements for the collection, verification and authentication of signatures by Member States' authorities at EU level?

Yes. To be honest, I wouldn't trust the Irish State to implement anything in the required timeframe needed by EU Regulation. To give an example, I received 8 letters to my address from a Minister of State talking about local issues. The database he used for this was the latest Electoral Register. I'm not a statistician or a Government expert, but I would hazard a guess in Ireland that the Electoral Register (maintained by the Local Authorities) is at most about 80% correct, however, given how disjointed and the lack of coherent thought that my home Government applies to linking up initiatives, infrastructures and systems, I would believe that it is much worse. Plainly, we couldn't rely on the Electoral Register for CI validation, even though we bizarrely rely on it for Local, National and European elections.

Whatever is put in place, must be consistent, the same across all of the EU and it must be easy for the Citizen to use, it must not dissuade the Citizenry and it MUST be policed by the European Commission so EU States are not remiss. Very importantly, it shouldn't cost the Citizen money to have their signatures being presented validated by whatever certifying means.

ii. To what extent should Member States be able to put in place specific provisions at National Level?

None. It is for all the Citizens' of the EU. It should be same process. A Citizen who moves between EU States should be capable of understanding and knowing what to do and what the process is regardless of the change in State and home language.

iii. Are specific procedures needed in order to ensure that EU Citizens can support a Citizens Initiative regardless of their country of residence?

A EU Citizen should be able to support a Citizens' Initiative (obviously only via 1 signature) regardless of their EU country of residence.

iv. Should Citizens be able to support a Citizens' Initiative online? If so, what security and authentication features should be foreseen?

Yes, it should be possible to support Citizens' Initiative online for the purpose of signature collection (for no other data collection purposes). The area of security and authentication of the individual will be problematic. A better approach (pre validation) might be for the Initiative to collect the relevant signatures (either through signed copies distributed by email, download, post and returned via post, fax, pdf, etc). These signatures could then be bundled together, presented for validation and then registered onto the Commission Web Site as a Initiative. If the online collection method has to be done centrally, I would be more comfortable if that was at an EU Level (audited and controlled and examined by the EU Parliament) AND NOT at the local EU State Level. The EU Commission CI Website could then perhaps think about a change in its business model - e.g., a scorecard of CI's that are in progress with total count, failed (after a specific timeline), rejected in full, rejected partially, taken-up. These would be powerful messages back to the Citizenry and show a transparency and could also be used as a performance tool for the Citizenry and Parliament to evaluate how the Commission is performing with the CI.

6. i. Should a time limit for the collection of signatures be fixed?

No. Under legal terms as I understand it, the Statute of Limitations is usually about 7 years, Financial, Banking, Accounting and Auditing records usually have to be kept for 7 years as well and I'm not legal expert, but I understand that taking a legal action in one's home State all the way to the EU can sometimes have a round-trip of anything up to 10 years.

ii. If so, would you consider that one year would be an appropriate time-limit?

No, if a time limit has to be set, perhaps set it as above 7 - 10 years, or if not, perhaps set it at the term of the current Parliament and Commission or something manageable but not less than 3 years.

7. i. Do you think that a mandatory system of registration of proposed initiatives is necessary?

I'm open on this, I think there are two options:

- * No, let the local level Citizenry get on with it, get their signatures, get them validated and then present them / register them on the Commission CI Website

- * Yes, again, with the registration, the Commission CI Website model could be as I described in Point 6 with CI stati, etc.

ii. If so, do you agree that this could be done through a specific website provided by the European Commission?

If registration is mandatory, then YES, make it at the European Commission level NOT at the EU State level.

8. i. What specific requirement should be imposed upon the organizers of an initiative in order to ensure transparency and democratic accountability?

I think if the organizers want to levy for amount from the signers to the CI to fund the CI that the amount should be set at no more than the cost of the local internal EU postage costs or perhaps 1 Euro Cent whichever is lower. With 1 million signatures, that would equate to about a maximum of 1,000,000 Euros. This should be more than enough to fund a Citizen Campaign - after all, it is to be a Citizens' Initiative. I don't think Corporate Bodies, National Entities, Associations, etc should be allowed sign the CI, HOWEVER, if they are allowed to sign, it should only be 1 signature not their body of members, if they want to sign, they must sign individually.

Perhaps, the Commission on it's website when an CI is posted for the collection of signatures that perhaps there is some form of micro payment collection of said maximum of 1 EURO when the signature is registered and that the funding from that is dispersed back to CI sponsors for further campaigning, etc.

Whatever, happens, the cost of the CI process has to be (a) minimized and (b) not allow for large donations for campaigning and sponsorship.

ii. Do you agree that organizers should be required to provide information on the support and funding that they have received for an initiative?

Yes. I think the sponsors / organizers should as part of their collection process indicate funds already collected and by what means and sources so that it is readily available to the Citizen contemplating adding their signature to the Initiative. I also think that donations, etc from Corporate Entities, Associations, Bodies or Political Parties should not be allowed. If someone wants to make a generous donation towards the cost of the campaign, that should be done in an individual capacity, and they should have one vote AND MORE importantly, anyone who contributes monies I feel should be mandated to sign, if you don't sign, you can't contribute. I would like to see everything including people's actions and interests above board.

9. Should a time limit be forseen for the Commission to examine a Citizen's Initiative?

No.

I believe the Commission with all its skills, staff and expertise should be capable of taking a CI and breaking it down based on the standard template submitted (non technical, non legal, etc) into the relevant items areas and from that build the initiatives, documents, procedures, green papers, frameworks, etc that are needed to progress the initiative.

I think the Commission in doing this activity should also 'reflect' back to the CI Organizers to ensure they are capturing the original spirit and intent of the Initiative.

The whole process should be transparent and the Commission for every Initiative should have on the website for public dissemination the status and progress including communications backwards and forwards and timelines for the Initiative or parts of the Initiative where known. The Initiative can't go into a 'black-hole'. Perhaps the progress of CI and status could be a bi-monthly item for the Parliament?

I feel the Commission should have the competency based on what is presented to them to be able to comment and communicate back with the Citizens and to keep them informed.

Given that the wheels of State can move very slowly, it is unfair to mandate time limits on Citizens Initiatives - the purpose of the CI is not to have Citizens' Initiatives time-boxed but rather to have them voiced, engaged, franchised and involved in the coal-face of democratic fairness and change. I don't think you can put a stricture on the voice of the people for the people.

10. i. Is it appropriate to introduce rules to prevent the successive presentation of Citizen's Initiatives on the same issue?

My natural inclination is to say NO, however, I understand the desire not to block up the system and delay other Initiatives at the expense of an Initiative that is consistently repeated.

However, my answer would still be NO, the people have to be allowed petition. Denying them the ability to not petition repeatedly for something they feel strongly about would be mean in spirit. Perhaps as a working solution, a re-introduced petition perhaps needs another increment of quorum of Member States and an additional number of signatures. It might also

be the case that parts of the CI presented are not workable. It should not be down to the Citizen to work out what and what can't be presented, the Commission should not be 'churlish' and reject the presentation in toto. As I indicated in my previous sections the Commission should interpret, break-down, and reflect back. In that way, perhaps the number of repeat submissions (if they actually occur would be minimized).

ii. If so, would this best be done by introducing some sort of disincentives - or time limits?

No, time limits or disincentives should not be introduced. As far as I would be concerned, this would in effect invalidate what the CI is actually all about.

If there was to be some disincentive introduced, it should not be time, an example from my previous section areas could be that the micro-payments for a repeat in toto do not get disbursement of these funds collected back to the sponsors / organizers.

GENERAL ASIDE

I would also like to see (if there is a Commission Website for CI) the following:

- * Poll section (where Commission and Citizen could indicate possible items for CI if people want to act on them)

- * Non Compliance Section - where Citizens can indicate where their EU Nation is failing in implementation of EU directives and regulations

I trust my submission is of value to you.

Kindest regards

Dwayne Keogh