



## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

**18 SEPTEMBER 2025**

### 1. Agenda and objectives

The Chair (Jeroen Casaer, acting Head of Unit SG.C.1) introduced the meeting agenda.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss with the national authorities competent under Regulation (EU) 2019/788 on the European citizens' initiative (ECI) matters of implementation related to the ECI. The meeting focused on:

- the latest ECI developments, including the state of play of the citizens' initiatives and upcoming developments, followed by a tour de table on developments and experiences at national level;
- updates on recent IT developments;
- the state of play of the ECI communication campaign and guidance activities.

The PowerPoint presentations from the meeting are available on the ECI website: [https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/expert-group-meetings\\_en](https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/expert-group-meetings_en).

### 2. Points discussed

#### 2.1 General ECI developments

The **key figures** (up to 18 September 2025) show that: 51 new initiatives were registered since the revised ECI rules started to apply in January 2020; the two-stage registration procedure was used in 15 of these cases; only one request for registration was refused; 7 initiatives are currently collecting statements of support, and one initiative will start collecting statements of support soon.

The Commission services provided an overview of the European citizens' initiatives **registered** since the Expert Group meeting of 22 February 2024 as well as the valid initiatives and the initiatives pending submission to the Commission for examination.

As regards **valid initiatives**, the participants were informed that on 3 September 2025, the Commission replied to the valid initiative 'Cohesion policy for the equality of the regions and sustainability of the regional cultures'. In addition, one valid initiative - 'My Voice, My Choice: For Safe and Accessible Abortion' - was submitted to the Commission on 1 September 2025 and is currently being examined by the Commission. Another initiative - 'Ban on conversion practices in the European Union' - is pending submission to the Commission.

One initiative - 'Stop Destroying Videogames' - is **currently in the verification process**, while the initiative 'Stop Cruelty Stop Slaughter' would close its collection period on 24 September 2025 with over one million statements of support; the organisers will then have until 24 December 2025 to transfer the statements of support to the Member States for verification. It was recalled that the 'Stop Extremism' initiative, registered under the old ECI Regulation and having over one million verified statements of support, is still pending submission to the Commission for examination.

Participants were informed about the final **court judgments** in:

- Case C-54/22 P, *Romania v European Commission*, delivered on 22 February 2024 and upholding the Commission's 2019 decision to partially register the ECI 'Cohesion policy for the equality of the regions and sustainability of the regional cultures'.
- Case C-26/23 P, *Citizens' Committee of the European Citizens' Initiative 'Minority SafePack – one million signatures for diversity in Europe' v European Commission*, delivered on 5 June 2025 and upholding the General Court's judgment of 9 November 2022 rejecting the request of the 'Minority SafePack' organisers to annul the Commission Communication replying to that initiative.

They were also informed of one ongoing court case: T-151/24, *Citizens' Committee of the European citizens' initiative 'End the Cage Age' v European Commission*.

The Commission services provided an update on the **follow-up to the commitments made in the review report** regarding the application of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 on the European citizens' initiative, adopted by the Commission on 6 December 2023. It was recalled that for the 2023 review report the members of the Expert Group provided their contributions through a dedicated detailed questionnaire. The next review will be completed by the end of 2027, and the involvement of the members of the Expert Group will again be needed. An Expert Group meeting dedicated to the upcoming review will be organised in 2026.

In the ensuing **tour de table**, the participants were invited to provide updates on relevant national developments, in particular, as regards the lowering of the minimum age to support an ECI, the integration of national eID schemes with the central online collection system and any noteworthy national awareness-raising activities. The Commission services thanked the participants for their work on the completed and ongoing verification of statements of support for several ECIs in 2025 and encouraged participants to share their experiences with the recent and ongoing verification processes in the tour de table.

Finland mentioned that it had recently lowered the minimum age for supporting ECIs to 16. No other changes had occurred or are planned in relation to the lowering of the minimum age for supporting ECIs in other Member States.

As regards experiences with the verification process, most participants mentioned that the verification process went smoothly and that they had no issues to report. Some Member States (Germany, Luxembourg, Romania, Sweden) mentioned that they encounter statements of support that do not originate from their nationals but from nationals of other Member States. In such cases, they cannot validate those statements of support originating from non-nationals. The Commission services recalled that the Member States can in fact only verify those statements of support completed by their own nationals and that it would increase awareness

among ECI organisers and citizens about the necessity for EU citizens supporting an ECI to correctly choose their Member State of nationality to ensure that statements of support are validly completed.

As regards other points made in relation to the verification process, one Member State (Malta) indicated that at times it encounters difficulties when the eID identifier does not match the national ID card number. Another Member State (Latvia) mentioned that on average 10% of the statements of support are invalidated, with the main reasons being signatories not providing a valid national ID number and the lack of citizenship.

Beyond information on their experiences with the verification process, one Member State (Croatia) took the opportunity to note that it was pleased that more meetings are being held on the topic of ECI and that they also participated in the ECI communicators' network meeting in April 2025 in Brussels.

## **2.2 Update on IT developments**

The Commission services gave an overview of the recent IT developments.

Since the last Expert Group meeting, Member States successfully validated the statements of support for two ECIs and uploaded their Annex VIs in the file exchange service. The process went smoothly from the IT perspective.

As regards the use of eID, 20 Member States now offer the possibility to their citizens to use eID to support an initiative (with two more preparing for its use). The support via eID continued to grow as a percentage of the total support collected.

In line with the commitments made in the 2023 ECI review report, improvements to the central online collection system are continuously implemented based on user feedback. In this context, a new user interface of the central online collection system was rolled out in 2025, improving the usability, accessibility and security of the system. Users' satisfaction with the central online collection system remains high.

## **2.3 Communication activities**

The Commission services recalled the objectives of the 'EU Take the Initiative' campaign, launched in 2018:

- To raise awareness of citizens about the ECI as one of their key EU citizenship rights,
- To strengthen the network of multipliers and partners at national and local levels and provide them with high quality and easily accessible promotion materials to autonomously promote the ECI.

The Commission services provided an overview of the main communication channels used to promote the ECI, such as corporate Commission social media accounts, the ECI Facebook group, the monthly ECI newsletter (with 230,000 subscribers) and the channels of other multipliers, including other EU institutions.

Guidance for (potential) ECI organisers is offered via the ECI Forum, managed by a contractor on behalf of the Commission. It offers multilingual information and independent legal advice for organisers, specialised webinars, as well as an online course.

The Commission services informed on the 2025 update of the educational toolkit for secondary schools, available in all the official EU languages. It allows teachers to introduce the EU and the ECI in a playful way to their pupils (aged 16+). The aim of this toolkit is to increase awareness of the ECI among students and enable them to acquire skills to be active citizens.

The Commission services nurture the network of ECI Ambassadors (mainly representatives of civil society organisations, promoting the ECI on a voluntary basis – currently 53, based in all the Member States) and a wider network of ECI multipliers. In order to provide updates and allow for networking, the Commission services regularly organise online meetings for the ECI Ambassadors network, the national contact points and other multipliers. Physical gatherings in Brussels took place on 6 March 2024 and 8 April 2025. The 2025 edition included a high-level opening session with the participation of Commissioner Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Parliament, Katarina Barley and President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Oliver Röpke. The Commission services are also continuously selecting additional ECI Ambassadors and updating relevant multilingual materials for their use.

Other communication activities planned for 2025/2026 include a webinar targeted at Europe Direct Centres, participation in relevant events, media relations in 10 Member States as well as social media promotions.

## **2.4 Any other business**

There were no other points raised by the Member States.

## **3. List of participants**

- Representatives from the European Commission:

Secretariat-General, Unit SG.C.1 and Directorate-General for Digital Services, Unit DIGIT.A.4.

- Representatives of the following Member States:

Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden.

- Observers from the European Parliament (AFCO and PETI Committee Secretariats).