

Stakeholder Consultation Strategy (May 2017)

Revision of the Regulation on the citizens' initiative

1. Context

The [European Citizens' Initiative](#) (ECI) was introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 11 TEU and Article 24 TFEU) and has been implemented by Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 on the citizens' initiative ([ECI Regulation](#)) which entered into application in April 2012.

The ECI aims to enhance citizens' involvement in the democratic life of the European Union, by allowing them to directly address the Commission with a request to submit a proposal for legal acts of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

In its [report](#) on the application of the ECI Regulation of 2015, the Commission listed a number of challenges arising in the implementation of the Regulation. It also committed itself to further analyse the impact of these issues on the effectiveness of the instrument, and to improve its functioning.

Stakeholders and institutions have also assessed and evaluated the instrument¹, identifying a number of shortcomings in the way the instrument operates, some of which can only be efficiently and effectively addressed via a revision of the ECI Regulation.

This revision aims at:

- making the European citizens' initiative more accessible and easier to use for organisers and signatories;
- achieving the full potential of the European citizens' initiative as a tool to foster debate and citizen participation at EU level and contribute to bringing the EU closer to its citizens.

2. Objectives of the Stakeholder Consultation

The main aim of the stakeholder consultation is that all stakeholders are given an opportunity to express their views, give feedback and suggestions on all elements relevant for the revision of the European citizens' initiative.

At the same time, the consultation activities, in particular the open public consultation, are an opportunity to raise awareness about the European citizens' initiative.

Of the various consultation activities described in this consultation strategy, a number have

¹ The following contributions should be highlighted in particular: two European Parliament studies "[European Citizens' Initiative – First lessons of implementation](#)" and "[Implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative](#)", [the Ombudsman own-initiative inquiry](#), the conclusions of the "ECI Days" of [13 April 2015](#) and [20 April 2016](#), [the Commission study on ICT impacts of the ECI Regulation of 2015](#), [the Council Presidency note of 2015](#), [the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of October 2015](#), [the Resolution of the European Parliament of October 2015](#), [the REFIT Platform Opinion of June 2016](#), and [the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of July 2016](#).

already been completed, or are work in progress.

The findings of the consultations will be summarised in a synopsis report that will accompany the Commission proposal on the revision of the Regulation. Stakeholders who participated will be able to see if – and if not, why – their views have been taken into consideration.

3. Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholders' categories:

- **Citizens as signatories/potential signatories of ECI**
- **Former and current organisers of ECI**
- **Member States' competent authorities:** this group includes the national authorities in charge of certifying online collection systems and the national authorities in charge of the verification of statements of support collected by organisers of initiatives. These are the authorities represented in the Commission's expert group on the citizens' initiative.
- **NGOs/CSOs:** mainly the ones active in the field of participatory/direct democracy, in particular the ones promoting the ECI and providing advice to (potential) ECI organisers. This group also includes NGOs/CSOs that would be interested in supporting (financially or symbolically) specific initiatives in line with their causes.
- **Hosting and software providers** contracted by ECI organisers to build their online collection systems.
- **Data protection authorities in the Member States:** the implementation of the ECI implies the processing of signatories' personal data by organisers of initiatives and Member States' competent authorities.
- **Research:** Researchers representing academia or think tanks that could have an interest in the ECI.
- **Public authorities managing similar participatory instruments:** they are not directly impacted by the ECI Regulation but there is an interest in sharing good practices and possibly in re-using IT tools.

It is important to note that the EU institutions also play a primary role in the implementation of the ECI, and in particular the European Commission and the European Parliament.

4. Methods & Tools

Feedback on the roadmap: During a 4-week period, all interested stakeholders will be able to provide feedback on the roadmap on the revision of the European citizens' initiative.

On the occasion of recent and ongoing studies, **targeted consultation activities** covering mainly

the technical aspects of the tool and the signatories' data requirements were carried out by the consultants:

- Organisers of past and ongoing citizens' initiatives as well as the most active NGOs/CSOs on the ECI or participatory democracy have been consulted via interviews and surveys.
- Competent national authorities have been consulted via interviews and surveys. The expert group on the citizens' initiative has also been involved and consulted on the occasion of several meetings.
- Hosting and software providers have been consulted via specific surveys and targeted interviews as part of the study on ICT impacts of the ECI Regulation.
- Data protection authorities in the Member States have also been interviewed as part of the study on signatories' data requirements.
- Public authorities managing similar participatory instruments have also been consulted via interviews or surveys.

The **open public consultation** will serve to reach a wider audience and to complement the input already gathered so that information gaps can be prevented. It will be based on a questionnaire focussing mainly on the issues identified in the current Regulation and on the possible options for its revision.

It will be open for contributions during 12 weeks. It will be published in English and will be available in all other official EU languages soon after its launch.

5. Website and communication on the consultation activities

All information related to the revision of the ECI Regulation, including on the consultation activities, will be published on the [ECI website](#).

In order to raise stakeholders' awareness about the open public consultation and to ensure an as wide as possible participation of citizens which are the main addressees of the ECI instrument, the Commission will promote it notably via the following channels:

- ECI website;
- media, including social media;
- Commission Representations in the Member States;
- Europe Direct network;

The Commission will also present the open public consultation to the expert group on the citizens' initiative on 2 June and it will encourage experts to forward this information among their networks.