



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

Directorate G
SG-G-4
General Institutional Issues



MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

17 January 2012

SUMMARY REPORT

1. STATE OF PLAY OF IMPLEMENTATION BY THE COMMISSION

The Chair updated the participants on the state of play of implementation of the Regulation. He announced that the technical specifications for the online collection systems were adopted by the Commission on 17 November 2011, the open source software was published on the Commission's website 'Joinup' and that the website/register will go online on the occasion of the conference foreseen on 26 January. The Chair clarified that the point of contact will be Europe Direct, with the support of the Commission's services. Finally, he mentioned the guide currently available in English and which will be soon available in all languages. He reminded member states which asked for printed copies of the guide to provide the Commission with the address where the copies should be sent.

The Chair also explained that given the recent change in the number of Members of the European Parliament, the minimum number of signatories per member state has to be modified accordingly. The Commission would soon adopt a delegated act to modify the corresponding annex to the Regulation.

In answer to questions from several experts, the Chair explained that all technical questions regarding the software should be submitted via the website 'Joinup' where assistance will be provided.

2. STATE OF PLAY OF IMPLEMENTATION BY THE MEMBER STATES

The Chair presented the non-paper prepared by the Commission on the procedure for certifying online collection systems. He reminded Member States that certification of an online collection system is required only once (in the Member State where the system will be physically located) and that the purpose of this certification is to guarantee the protection of data for all EU citizens signing up via the system.

Several Member States expressed concerns as regards the time limit of one month to certify the systems, in particular when the software developed by the Commission is

not used. The Commission recalled that compliance with the deadlines foreseen in the Regulation is imperative.

A Member State proposed to coordinate the certification of the online collection system by the national authority with the registration procedure by the Commission. The Commission agreed that cooperation would be beneficial to all, including the organisers who would not waste time in the 12-month collection period waiting for the certification of their online system. More generally the chair suggested setting up an informal "early-warning" system in which the Commission and the Member States could exchange information as regards requests for certification of online systems, for registration of an initiative, for certification of statements of support etc. Such a system would enable all parties to work more efficiently within the deadlines imposed by the Regulation.

An exchange of views also took place on the procedure to verify statements of support, in particular on of the methods for random sampling. The Chair also raised the issue of possible errors in statement of support forms, which should not lead to them being invalidated, in particular for instance due to a change of address. Given that on average 10% of the population changes address every year, and that this figure is much higher among young people, he urged Member State to take account of such "false errors" when extrapolating the results of the verification and to give the benefit of the doubt to the organisers.

In view of the discussions, the Commission proposed to create a network of national authorities using the CIRCABC platform in order to allow exchange of information and cooperation between the Commission and the competent national authorities in the Member States.

In concluding the discussions on this point, the chair urged Member States to do everything necessary in order to ensure that the competent authorities are designated and officially notified to the Commission by 1st March, and that all the other required measures are in place and are formally notified to the Commission by 1st April at the latest.

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Software for national authorities to check the statements of support collected online against their databases

Several Member States asked to advance the development of this software foreseen within the ISA programme, in order to have it ready by the end of this year. The Commission accepted to analyse the feasibility of this proposal.

The Commission announced that the next meeting of the expert group should take place in March, before the entry into application of the Regulation.