



ECI review

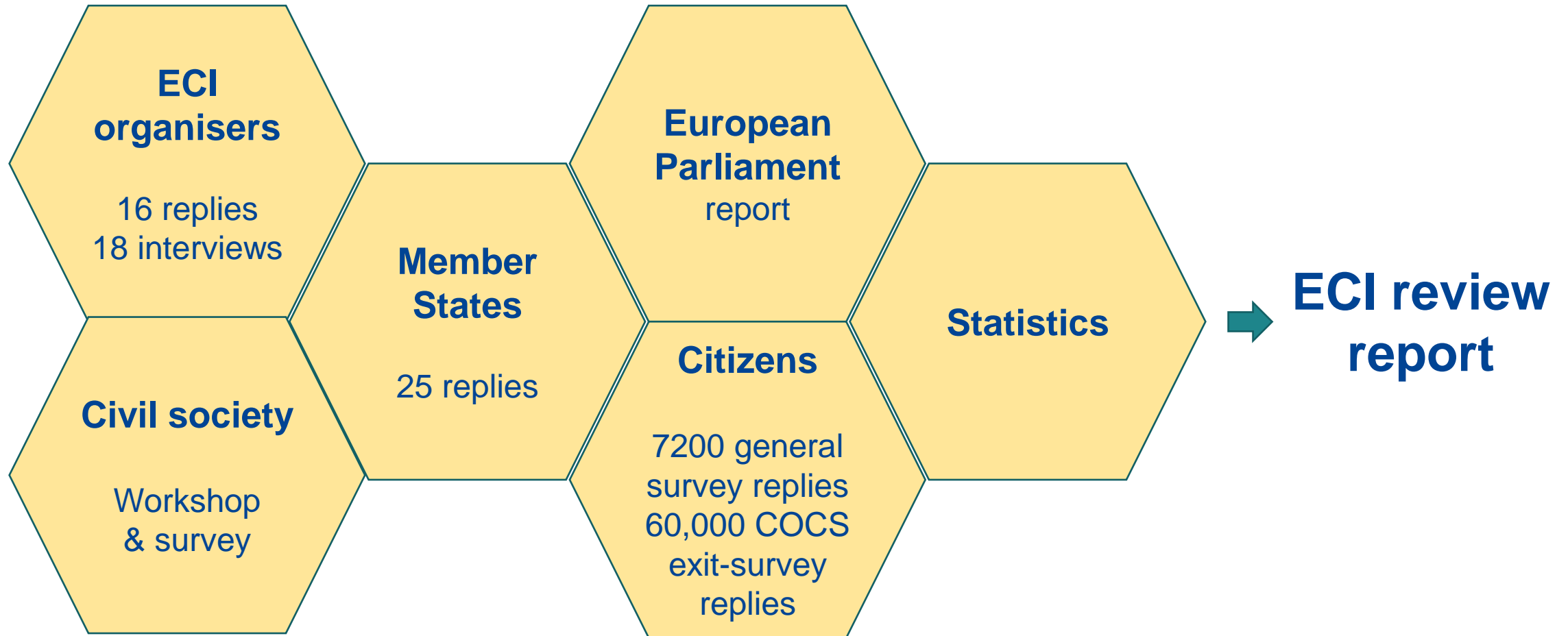
ECI Expert Group meeting

6/6/2023

Review clause

- *Commission to **periodically review** the functioning of the European citizens' initiative and present a report to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of this Regulation no later than 1 January 2024, and every four years thereafter. These reports shall cover also the **minimum age to support European citizens' initiatives** in the Member States. The reports shall be made **public**.*
- Take stock of the implementation and application of the rules so far, including COVID-19 temporary measures
- Identify practical improvements within the existing legal framework

Data collected



Minimum age to support ECIs

State of play

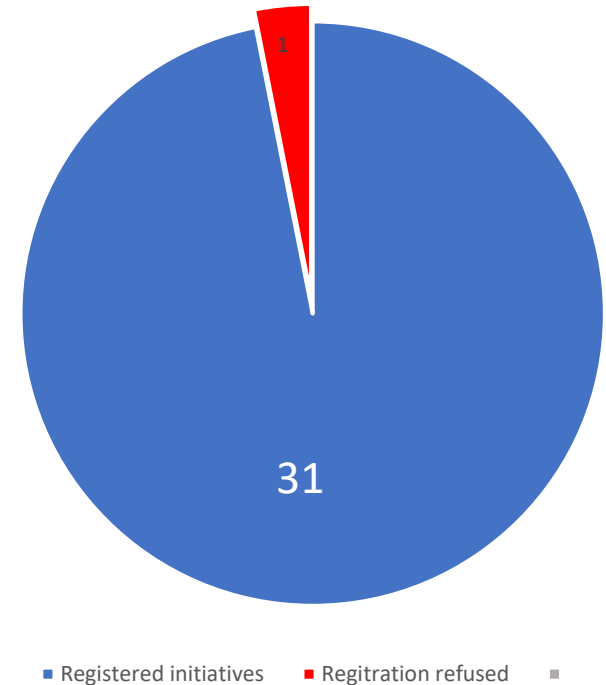
16 years old	AT, MT, EE (as of 1/1/2020), DE (as from 1/1/2023), BE (as of 1/5/2023)
17 years old	EL
18 years old	BG, CZ, DK, IE, ES, FI, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE, FR

Any updates?

Registration phase

- Over 90% registration success rate
- 2-stage procedure applied in 8 cases
- 75% of surveyed organisers concerned by the new rules find the ECI procedure for registration **overall effective** and **straightforward**

Registrations since 1/1/20



Collection phase

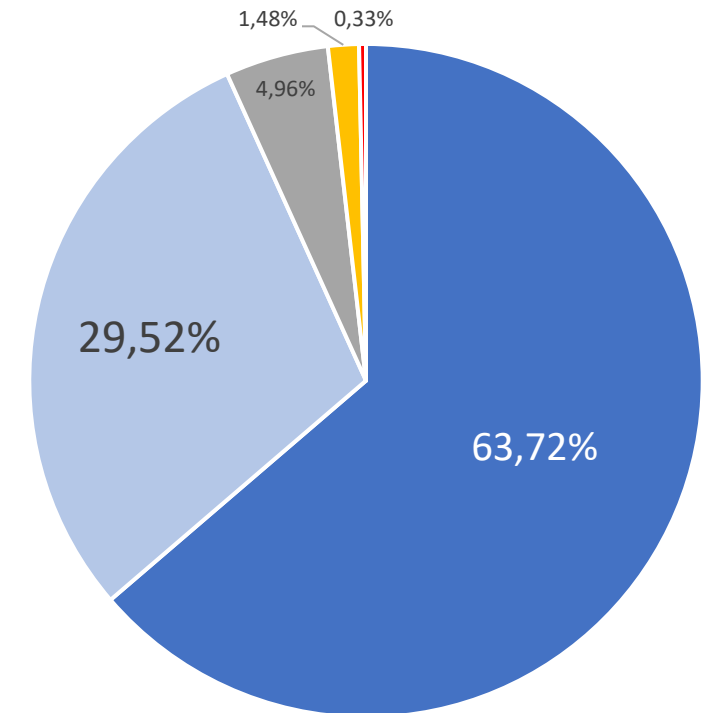
- **44** initiatives have been collecting signatures during the reporting period (16 under old Regulation + 28 under the new)
- **5** initiatives managed to collect 1 million signatures (2+3), **3** after COVID-19 extensions
- **Organisers** surveyed **fairly satisfied** with the effectiveness of the procedures and tools available for collection phase
- The **6 months after registration** - essential

Status of collection for ECIs registered under new rules	
Collection to start	3
Collection ongoing	9
Withdrawn or closed with insufficient support	
- <i>Below 5000 signatures</i>	6
- <i>5-10,000 signatures</i>	3
- <i>10 – 50,000 signatures</i>	0
- <i>50 – 100,000 signatures</i>	2
- <i>100 - 250,000 signatures</i>	0
- <i>250 - 500,000 signatures</i>	4
- <i>Above 500,000 signatures</i>	0
Collected over 1 million signatures	3

Online collection systems

- Before 31/12/2022: COCS & IOCS; **20 initiatives** chose **COCS**, **6 IOCS**
- Out of the **5** initiatives collecting over 1 million signatures – 3 used COCS and 2 IOCS
- **COCS**: Signatories – **high levels of satisfaction** with the system; organisers positive about **shift of most responsibilities for data protection to the Commission.**

How easy was it for you to support the initiative using the Central Online Collection System?



■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ Neutral ■ Difficult ■ Very difficult

eID integration with COCS

State of play of e-ID integrations with COCS		
Enabling eID	16	BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, HR, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, AT, PT, SK, SE
Not enabling eID	11	BG, DK, IE, EL, FR, CY, HU, PL, RO, SI, FI

Any updates?

Verification phase

- 6 initiatives completed the verification procedure during the reporting period, 5 with positive outcomes. Verification ongoing for 1 initiative.
- MS reported:
 - FES and prevalence of online signatures facilitates verification
 - **Most common irregularities:** 1) lack of identity details or mistakes; 2) multiple statements of support from the same signatory; 3) signatory not being a resident or not having the legal age for supporting an ECI.
- Organisers considered the **procedure for verification as overall effective**, while noting in certain cases some delays in the contacts with national authorities

Examination phase

- 5 valid initiatives submitted to the Commission for examination: ‘Minority Safepack’; ‘End the Cage Age’; ‘Save bees and farmers’; ‘Stop finning’; ‘Save cruelty-free cosmetics’.
- The Commission has already replied to 3 of them while 2 replies are under preparation.
- **Organisers surveyed mostly satisfied** with the opportunities offered to present their initiative (meeting with the Commission, public hearing at the EP).

Transparency

- Funding reported by ECIs on the rise:
 - **2** initiatives collected **over EUR 1 million** (both reaching the 1 million signatures target)
 - **8** reporting funds of **over EUR 100,000** (out of which 4 managed to reach the 1 million signatures target).

Information and guidance

- Communication
 - **‘EU Take the Initiative’ communication campaign** - positive trends regarding traffic to the ECI website; subscriptions to the ECI newsletter and reach of the social media campaigns.
 - **ECI website:** visitors overall satisfied
 - **National Contact Points** provide ECI information mainly: 1) through information published on their website (22 MS), 2) responding to requests and questions from citizens/stakeholders/media (21 MS) and; 3) reaching out to other relevant national institutions and partners (12 MS).
- Guidance to ECI organisers: **overall positive feedback** from organisers regarding the advice provided by the ECI Forum at different stages of the ECI procedure.

Overall assessments of new rules

- Organisers find most useful: 1) the 6 months available after registration to prepare their campaign; 2) the availability of a secure tool for collecting signatures online, free of charge for organisers; 3) the possibility for EU citizens to sign ECIs no matter where they live in the world
- MSs:
 - Overall satisfied with the new ECI rules.
 - Consider the following contribute the most to the effective functioning of the ECI: 1) easier access for citizens to support initiatives (also via COCS), 2) the clearer rules making the ECI more accessible; 3) the enhanced support to organisers

Impact of COVID-19

- The pandemic **significantly disrupted the functioning of the ECI** in the first two years of application of the new ECI Regulation.
- The temporary measures managed to limit the impact on initiatives.
- **12** initiatives granted extensions of up to 12 months for the collection of signatures
 - > **3** initiatives reached the required thresholds
- 1 MS granted upon request an extension of the deadline for completing its verification obligations.
- Once the temporary conditions were over, the **ECI could resume its normal functioning.**

EP draft report – selection of main recommendations

- Acknowledges the positive impact of the revised regulation in several areas, while calling for further improvements
- The Commission is called to: 1) further raise **awareness about the ECI** with the involvement of EP, MSs, regional and local authorities; 2) assess the possibility of reintroducing **Individual Online Collection Systems (IOCS)**; 3) provide **financial support** to valid ECIs and assess progressive support for others reaching milestones; 4) **strengthen debate and follow-up of ECIs**
- Encouragement to MSs to: lower the **support age for ECIs**; introduce all **eID** means for signing ECIs; coordinate **awareness raising at national level**; promote citizens' participation in EU decision-making in **schools and universities**; and together with the Commission act on further simplification and **harmonisation of national standards for data collection**.
- EP commits to: **assess the political support for all valid ECIs and enhance the scrutiny of Commission action**; be associated to the **information efforts**; **further assess how to make ECI more accessible and effective, also in the context of a future revision of the Treaties**.