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

- **ECI organisers**
  - 16 replies
  - 18 interviews

- **Civil society**
  - Workshop & survey

- **Member States**
  - 25 replies

- **European Parliament report**

- **Citizens**
  - 7200 general survey replies
  - 60,000 COCS exit-survey replies

- **Statistics**

**ECI review report**
## Minimum age to support ECIs

### State of play

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

*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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection to start</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection ongoing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn or closed with insufficient support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Below 5000 signatures</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 5-10,000 signatures</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 10 – 50,000 signatures</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 50 – 100,000 signatures</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 100 - 250,000 signatures</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 250 - 500,000 signatures</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Above 500,000 signatures</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collected over 1 million signatures</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**

- **63,72%**
- **29,52%**
- **4,96%**
- **1,48%**
- **0,33%**
eID integration with COCS

State of play of e-ID integrations with COCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabling eID</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, HR, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, AT, PT, SK, SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enabling eID</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>BG, DK, IE, EL, FR, CY, HU, PL, RO, SI, FI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.