



**European
Citizens'
Initiative**

COHESION POLICY FOR THE EQUALITY OF THE REGIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE REGIONAL CULTURES

KA-01-25-014-EN-N

As one of the EU's key tools for participatory democracy, the European citizens' initiative (ECI) allows citizens to call directly on the European Commission to propose new laws in areas where the EU has competence. Since its launch, the ECI has given Europeans a stronger voice in shaping Union policies, from environmental protection to social justice and cultural rights.

The initiative 'Cohesion policy for the equality of the regions and sustainability of the regional cultures' is part of this democratic process, highlighting citizens' demand that EU cohesion policy supports fairness, diversity and the preservation of regional identities.



WHAT ARE THE INITIATIVE'S GOALS?

This initiative calls for the **EU's cohesion policy** to:

- **Ensure equality** for those regions with national, ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics that are different from those of the surrounding regions;
- **Ensure equal opportunity** for these regions to access various EU funds;
- **Guarantee the preservation** of their characteristics and their proper economic development, to sustain the EU's development and maintain its cultural diversity.



REGISTRATION OF THE INITIATIVE

The organisers requested the registration of the initiative in June 2013. Following a ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Commission eventually registered the initiative on 7 May 2019.

The initiative was registered based on the understanding that it seeks proposals from the Commission for legal acts defining the tasks, priority objectives, and organisation of the Structural Funds, provided that the actions financed strengthen the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union.



ENGAGEMENT

This initiative collected **1,269,351 valid signatures** from citizens across the EU, with required thresholds reached in **eight countries**.

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citizens-initiative.europa.eu



CURRENT LEGISLATION

The European Union's cohesion policy is guided by a set of regulations for each programming period. These include the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), which lays down common rules for all relevant funds, along with specific Regulations for each fund. For the 2014–2020 programming period, the CPR was Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, while for 2021–2027 it is Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

The legal framework for cohesion policy has evolved significantly since 2013 when registration of this ECI was first requested. Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 introduced enhanced requirements to prevent discrimination, strengthened the partnership principle by including the involvement of relevant partners from civil society in preparing and implementing programmes, and increased transparency, which provided citizens with improved access to information on the support provided from the cohesion policy funds. In the 2021–2027 programming period, Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 further strengthened this legal framework and introduced stronger mechanisms to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

COMMISSION'S REPLY AND NEXT STEPS

The initiative was formally submitted to the European Commission for examination on 4 March 2025.

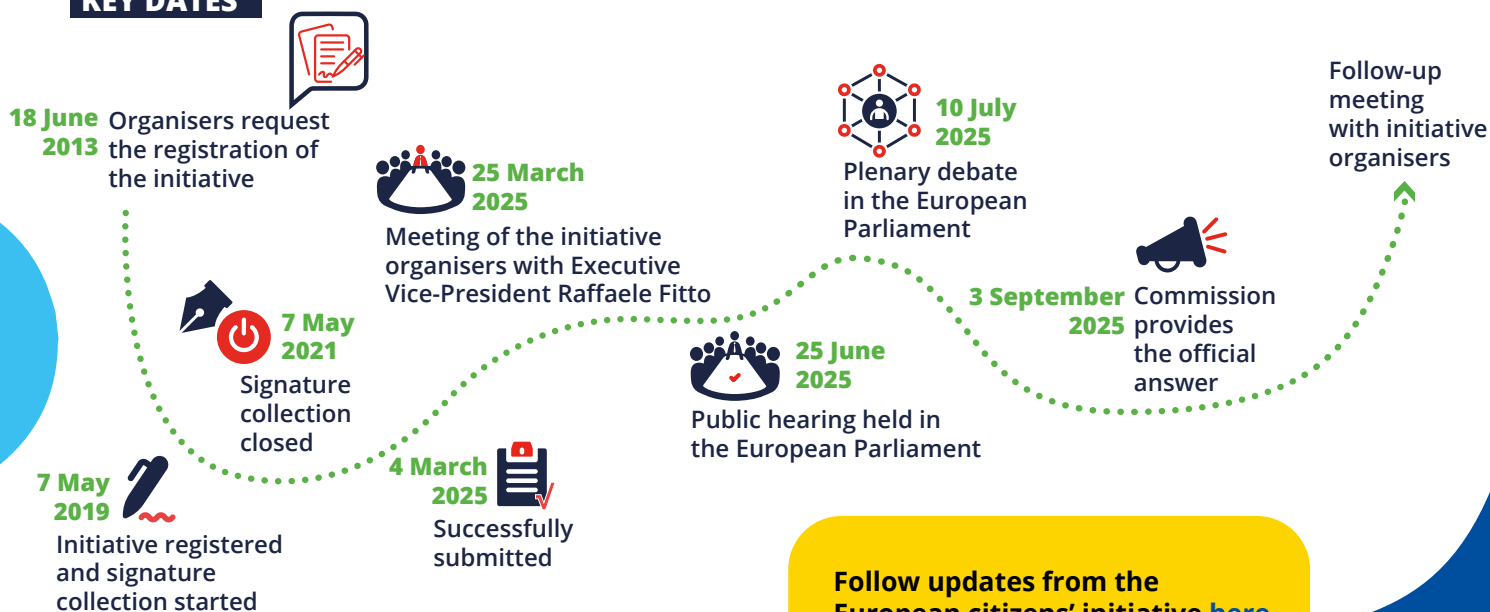
The Commission presented its official reply on 3 September 2025, in which it states that:

- The Commission maintains vigilance in ensuring non-discriminatory access to Union funding within cohesion policy, standing ready to use all the tools at its disposal to enforce equal treatment throughout the implementation of cohesion Policy.
- Furthermore, for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, the Commission has proposed a strengthened and modernised cohesion and growth policy that ensures adequate mechanisms are in place in Member States to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights throughout the

implementation of the national and regional partnership plans, as well as respect for the principles of the rule of law. Where a Member State fails to fulfil these conditions, the Commission will withhold the corresponding payments.

The Commission found that it lacks competence to define or recognise 'national regions' or to alter national administrative boundaries. Furthermore, the Commission does not consider further legislative changes necessary as the applicable Treaties and legal framework already provide sufficient protection of national minorities, in addition to ample possibilities for providing support to expand the list of regions in Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as regional disadvantages are primarily determined by structural and economic factors, rather than cultural or linguistic specificities.

KEY DATES



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