



Letter to the organisers opening own-initiative inquiry OI/9/2013/TN into the functioning of the European citizens' initiative (ECI) procedure

Strasbourg, 18/12/2013

The European Ombudsman's own-initiative inquiry OI/9/2013/TN into the functioning of the European citizens' initiative (ECI) procedure

Dear Madam or Sir,

The European citizens' initiative (ECI) right has been up and running since April 2012. You represent the organiser of one such initiative (which is either open, closed or has been declared obsolete because it has been withdrawn or obtained insufficient support).

The ECI should make an important contribution to the empowerment of European citizens. I intend to follow-up on my predecessor's commitment to pay particular attention to the way in which this new right is implemented by opening an own-initiative inquiry.

The objective of the inquiry is to encourage and support efforts to improve the citizens' initiative procedure. As the first step I am inviting input from the organisers of open, closed and obsolete initiatives. Subsequently, I will address the European Commission and possibly other bodies regarding the matter.

I would therefore appreciate it if you could take the time to answer the following questions:

- Do you consider the citizens' initiative right to be sufficiently well known among the general public so that citizens feel confident in signing initiatives? If not, what, in your view, could be done to raise awareness?
- Please give your view on the information and guidance the Commission provided to you as an organiser of an initiative (on the Commission website, in direct contacts etc.).
- Please give your view on the functionality and usefulness of the Commission's software for collecting signatures online. In particular, please consider issues such as hosting of the online collection system and the online system's accessibility for visually impaired persons.
- The Commission extended the deadline for the first initiatives to collect signatures because of problems getting the online collection system up and running. Please comment on whether you consider that this extension of the deadline was sufficient and applied in a fair manner.
- Please give your view on the functionality and usefulness of the paper form to be used for collecting handwritten signatures.



- Do you have any concerns or comments in relation to the treatment of personal data provided by citizens signing an initiative (either online or on a paper form)?
- Do you have any concerns or comments as regards the possibilities (or lack thereof) of tracking the number of signatures obtained throughout the collection period?
- What is your experience as regards the contacts with different national authorities in relation to your initiative (for certification of the online collection system and certification of the number of valid statements of support)?
- What changes to the ECI Regulation would you consider useful, if any?
- Please provide any other information or suggestions, in succinct form, that you would consider useful for improving the citizens' initiative procedure.

I would be grateful to receive your comments by no later than 31 March 2014.

Your comments will be forwarded to the Commission and I may decide to publish them online. If you consider that your name should not be published and/or that your comments should not be made publicly available, please state so and explain the reasons.

Yours sincerely,

Emily O'Reilly