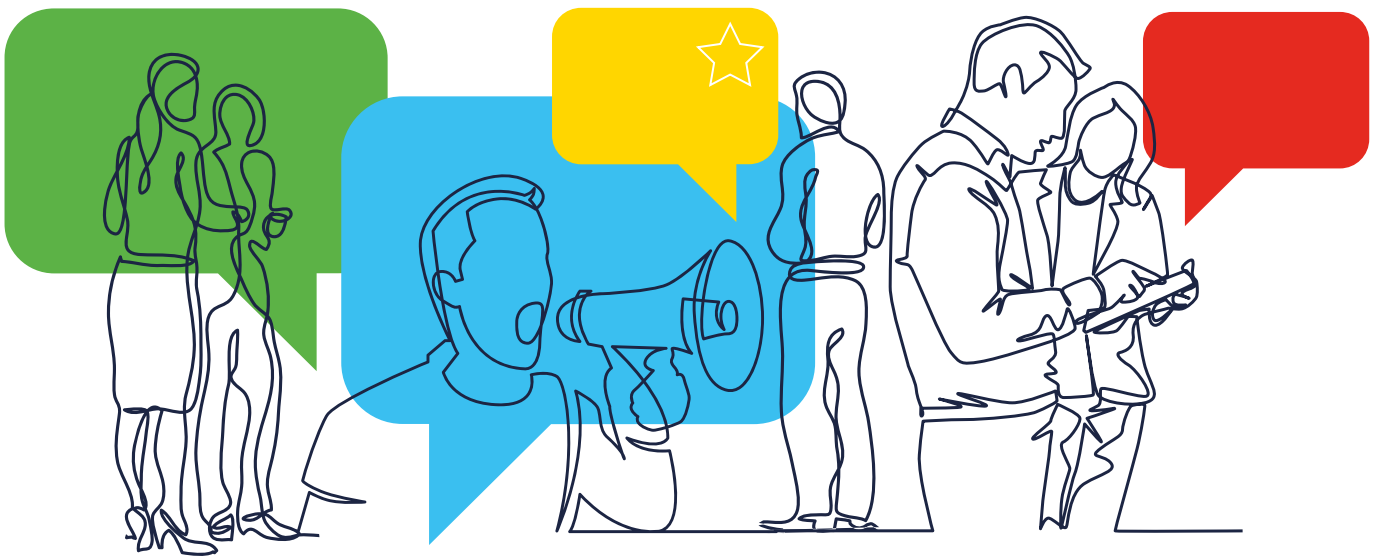# EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE FORUM

European Citizens' Initiative Supporting Tools

LEARN - DISCUSS - CONNECT - SEEK ADVICE

EUROPEAN
CITIZENS'
INITIATIVE
FORUM

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1
European Citizens' Initiative Supporting Tools

Through the European Citizens' Initiative, citizens of the EU can shape European policy-making by asking the European Commission (the Commission) to propose legislation on a matter of its competence. In order to do that, organisers of citizens' initiatives need to collect statements of support from at least 1 million citizens in at least seven EU Member States over the course of 12 months, with minimum threshold reached in at least seven EU countries.

Collecting more than one million statements of support from EU citizens across the Union within 12 months may seem challenging at first. In order to facilitate the work of the organisers and to help them succeed, the Commission has put in place specific supporting tools: the European Citizens' Initiative website, the European Citizens' Initiative Organiser Account, the Central Online Collection System, and the European Citizens' Initiative Forum.

2
The European Citizens' Initiative website

The European Citizens' Initiative website provides brief and practical information on what the European Citizens' Initiative is. Citizens are also guided on how to register an initiative. The website is also the entry point for creating an organiser account, which is necessary for citizens **to officially request the Commission to register their initiative**.

On the public homepage, you can **find the ongoing and past initiatives**. Each initiative is listed and can be searched for (by keywords, policy area/category, or status of the initiative). You can find out where initiatives stand in the process of collecting statements of support, the contact details of the organisers and links to the websites of the respective initiatives.

You can go through the process of organising a European citizens' initiative by visiting the Step-by-step section. The journey is organised in 6 steps: (1) Get Started, (2) Get Your Initiative Registered, (3) Get Support, (4) Get Statements of Support Verified, (5) Submit Your Idea and (6) Get an Answer.

The European Citizens' Initiative website also provides you with information about the overall regulatory framework. Citizens can get an overview of the applicable rules and information about the implementation of the initiative at national level and the roles and the responsibilities of EU Member States throughout the process.

The latest developments on the European Citizens' Initiative are summarised on the News page of the website. The Calendar gives you access to upcoming and past events related to the European Citizens' Initiative.

FAQs

Review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section to find out the answers to approximately 80 questions that have been raised in the past. The FAQs cover almost all aspects of the European Citizens' Initiative (from getting started, to collecting signatures and submitting an initiative).

'Spread the word' section

Have a look at the communication material available in all EU languages that can help promote your initiative by explaining what the European Citizens' Initiative is. And discover the ECI Ambassadors who help bring the information about the European Citizens' Initiative closer to citizens.

3
European Citizens' Initiative Organiser Account

The European Citizens' Initiative website is also the starting point for citizens to launch an initiative. In order to do so, you have to go to the 'How to start an initiative' section, sub-section "Launch your initiative" and then click on 'Organiser account'. If you are a first-time user, you will have to set up an 'EU login' new account with your email address (which will be visible on this website once the initiative is registered) and fill in the required fields.

Once you log in, you will access the registration form for your initiative. To register an initiative, organisers must complete the following five steps on the registration form:
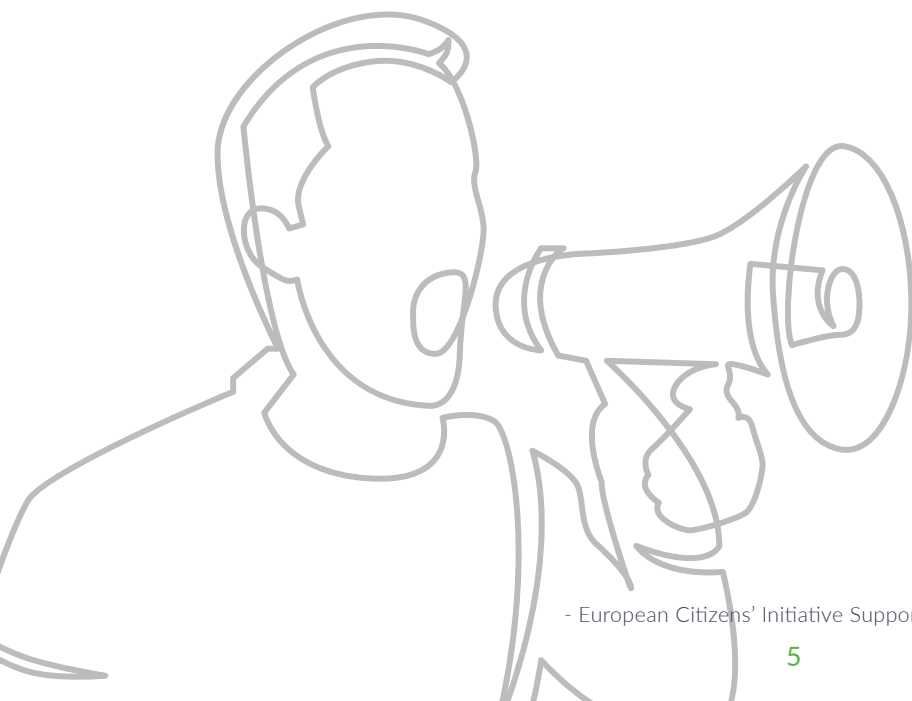
1. provide the necessary information on the composition of the group of organisers;

2. provide the necessary information on the initiative they seek to register (language, title, objectives, relevant provisions in the EU Treaties, additional information);

3. indicate any support and funding, already available at the time or request for registration;

4. accept the procedures and conditions and;

5. review and submit the registration request.

For further information on this step, refer to the guidance note on How to Draft and Submit an Initiative.

> **!**
>
> ## Important:
>
> If your initiative meets all the requirements except it is not in an area where the Commission has powers, you will receive a reply within 1 month already. You would then have up to 2 months to send your updated version to the Commission (or you could decide not to continue with this initiative).

Once the European Commission registers your initiative, its status will become 'registered' in the Organiser Account and more options will appear and be available to you. Most importantly, in the account you will be able to see where the initiative stands in the process (collection of signatures, verification etc.) and practically manage it.

The organiser account allows the following actions:

- report any additional funds and support you receive;

- replace one or more members of the group of organisers;

- access all the details of your initiative as well as the related fields translated by the Commission in all the EU 24 languages;

- contact the European Commission directly;

- modify the contact details of the organisers;

- get statistics;

- customise your initiative's collection page in the Central Online Collection System;

- send emails to all your supporters.

!

Important:

The account also allows you to generate forms for the collection of statements of support on paper in all EU languages and for all Member States.
If you have already indicated in the account the start date of collection of the signatures, this will be automatically displayed in the forms.

4
European Commission Central Online Collection System

The European Commission Central Online Collection System (COCS) provides you with a number of features that simplify the collection of signatures and allow you to keep track of the progress of your campaign. The COCS enables citizens to easily support an initiative and provides organisers with a few options to manage their campaign. The tool also streamlines both data collection and its verification by the National Authorities of EU Member States.

You can **select the statement of support forms** according to the language and nationality of the signatories of EU Member States. The COCS also **groups statements of support automatically**, in line with the Member State's requirements for verification. The system also provides you with the possibility to **export the statements of support** as data files to be sent directly to the relevant authorities for verification. The COCS offers as well the possibility to the citizens to support initiatives using their eID (for the nationals of Member States that offer an eID compliant with the eIDAS regulation).

From your organiser account, **you can customise your initiative's page on the Central Online Collection System** and access the statistics of statements of support collected per country. From your organiser account you can also contact your supporters who have left their email addresses for this purpose.

Mandatory use

From 01 January 2023, organisers will only be able to use the Central Online Collection System.

| Reasons to use the Central Online Collection System

- **Minimum preparation** (turnkey solution).

- **Free** of charge.

- **No certification** needed (the system already complies with technical and security standards; to use the system, you just sign an agreement with the Commission).

- **Quick setup** (to use the system, simply inform the Commission 10 working days before starting the collection of statements of support, via your organiser account).

- In some countries, supporters of your initiative can use **e-identification** to give their support.

- The system is fully accessible for people with **disabilities**.

- You can also use the system to collect **supporters' e-mail addresses** (for ongoing communication with them about the initiative).

- The Central Online Collection System will **continue evolving** offering new features.

- The Central Online Collection System is hosted in European Commission premises in its **secured hosting environment dedicated to handle sensitive data**. All latest security patches on every component of the applications are applied as soon as possible.

- The Central Online Collection System **ensures end-to-end encryption** between the moment the data enters into the application until the moment they are decrypted by the Member State's competent authority responsible for verification of statements of support.

- The **technology** used to encrypt data in the Central Online Collection System is based on non-open source HSM/KMS solution that could not be offered in a context of an open source solution.

For further information on the collection phase, please refer to the guidance note on How to Collect Signatures.
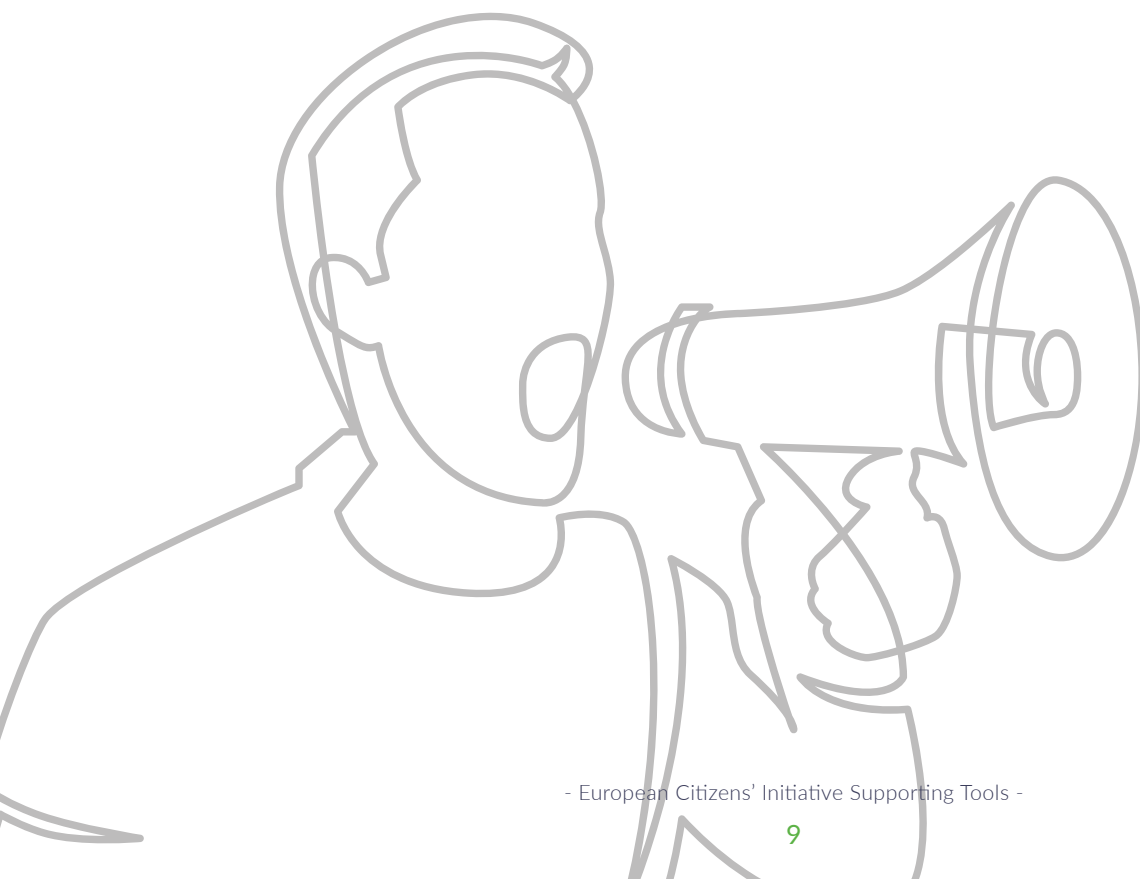
5
File exchange service

The file exchange service provides successful initiatives with the possibility to **directly transfer their collected statements of support to the National Authorities** for verification after the collection has ended. This can be done with one single application for all Member States' authorities.

The service allows for the exchange of electronic statements of support as well as scanned paper versions. This service simplifies the interaction between organisers and the 27 Member States. You have to **inform the Commission within two months of the end of the collection period** whether you wish to upload statements of support collected on paper form using this system.

The European Commission provides organisers with an encryption tool. This tool ensures full protection of the signatories' privacy when submitting the statements of support. Organisers can encrypt the respective files before uploading, so that only the Member States' authorities can access the data.

6
The European Citizens' Initiative Forum

The European Citizens' Initiative Forum is a collaborative online platform that provides practical support to organisers throughout their European citizens' initiative's journey. The Forum offers information, help and collaborative tools in four different sections: 'Learn', 'Discuss', 'Connect' and 'Seek Advice'. The Forum is available in all official EU languages.

| Learn

The 'Learn' section provides different types of information to potential and current organisers to facilitate the registration and implementation of European citizens' initiatives in terms of:

- Collecting signatures
- Drafting and submitting an initiative
- Looking for partners
- Organising a campaign
- Raising funds

The learning material is provided in the forms of guidance notes, success stories, webinars and videos.

Guidance notes sum up the most important aspects of a respective topic in a concise and comprehensive way. They are provided as pdf documents, which makes them easy to circulate within your network, and are available in all official EU languages.

Success stories have been created in close cooperation with the organisers of successful European citizens' initiatives. Citizens can learn about the organisers' strategies, challenges, lessons learnt and experiences when implementing their initiatives. Success stories are available in all official EU languages.

Webinars are open to the public and feature guest speakers specialised in specific issues related to the European Citizens' Initiative. The Forum's webinars are interactive and provide the possibility for participants to ask questions. Recordings and presentations are available on the respective webinar pages. Check out the 'Learn' page to stay informed about future webinars. The working language of the webinars is English, and all webinars are free of charge.

The **Videos** uploaded are either video testimonials by former organisers or explanatory videos that provide further information about a specific topic or the European Citizens' Initiative more generally.

| Discuss

The 'Discuss' section facilitates your exchanges with other citizens on topics related to the European Citizens' Initiative. These exchanges could be an opportunity to test ideas for a specific European citizens' initiative. The 'Discuss' section is a very helpful tool to learn more about the thoughts and opinions of your fellow citizens on your idea. Some discussions also cover procedural questions about the European Citizens' Initiative. Discussions are regularly checked by the Forum moderators who may provide feedback, when appropriate.

| Connect

The 'Connect' section allows you to directly connect with fellow EU citizens – based on your interests and countries of residence.

Remember that to start a European citizens' initiative, you need at least seven EU citizens that reside in seven different Member States. The 'Connect' section is where you can find your partner!

| Seek Advice

The 'Seek Advice' section provides tailor-made advice on the European Citizens' Initiative and its legal, campaigning and fundraising aspects.

You can submit an enquiry in any of the official EU languages and you will receive expert advice in the language of your enquiry within a maximum of eight working days after submission.