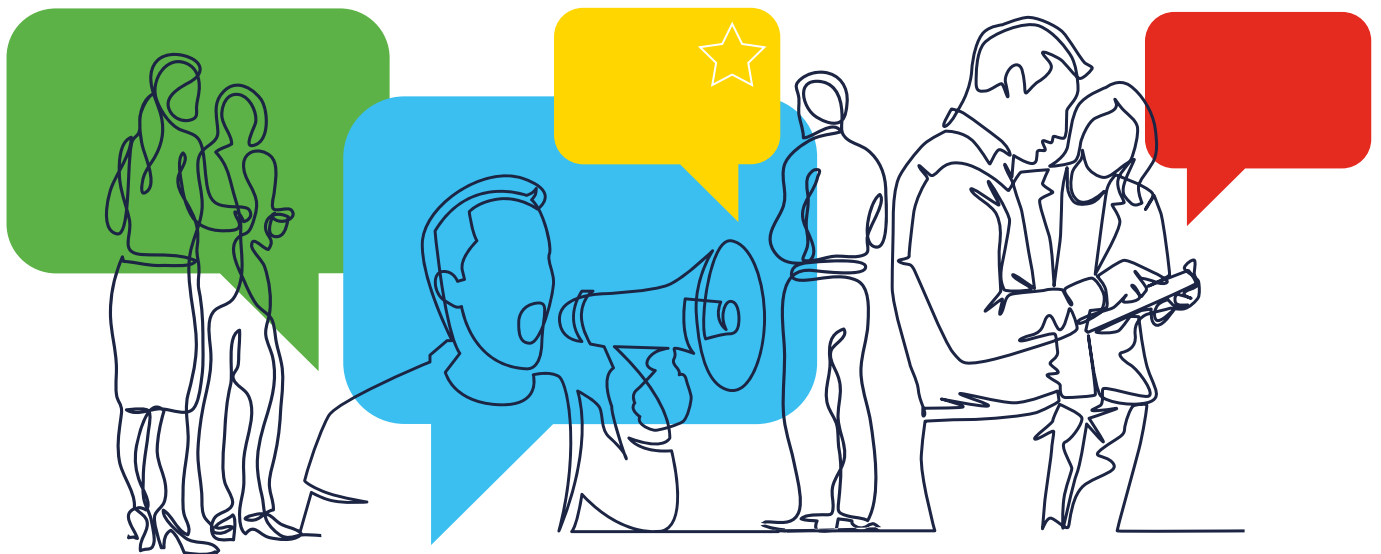




# EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

## Procedural steps



**LEARN** - DISCUSS - CONNECT - SEEK ADVICE

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*Do you have an idea for EU legislation?*

*Does the European Commission have competence to propose such legislation?*

*Launch your initiative!*

# 1

## The first supranational instrument of participatory democracy

The European Citizens' Initiative is a participatory democracy tool that directly connects European citizens with the EU institutions. The European Citizens' Initiative allows EU citizens to contribute to the EU's agenda.

EU citizens can only invite the European Commission to propose legislation within its areas of competence, on subjects for which the EU can act. The Commission is not obliged to propose legislation as a result of a successful initiative and may decide to follow up with other forms of measures to reach the initiative's objectives.

What is more, if the organisers of an initiative succeed in collecting 1 million signatures, they have the right to meet with representatives of the Commission to present their proposal, and to explain it at a public hearing at the European Parliament which should assess the political support for the initiative.

Whatever the Commission decision might be, a successful initiative is always an opportunity to create debate and forge alliances across Europe. If the Commission decides to propose legislation, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU will co-decide (or in some cases, only the Council will decide).

Similar schemes exist at national level (for example in Austria, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain). But the European Citizens' Initiative is unique as the first formal tool of transnational participation in the world. And the threshold for submission is proportionally much lower than at national level – the 1 million statements of support required represent only 0.2 % of all EU citizens.

Thanks to the European Citizens' Initiative, EU citizens now share with the European Parliament and the Council the right to request the Commission to propose new legislation.

The rules governing the European Citizens' Initiative can be found [online](#).

This guidance note gives an overview of the different steps in the European Citizens' Initiative procedure, providing links to relevant sources of more detailed information.



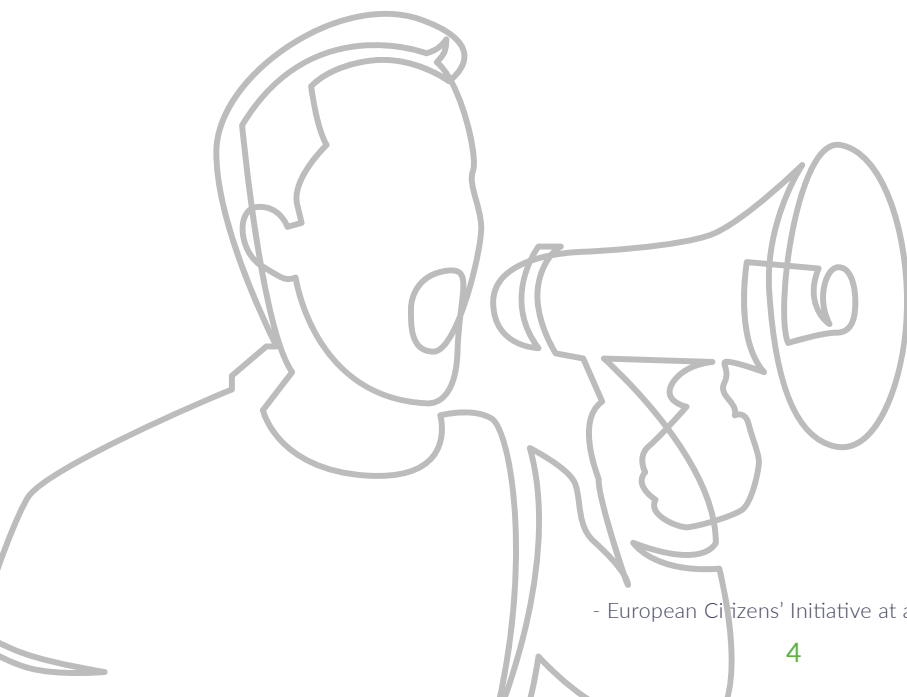


## New rules from January 2020

In September 2017, the European Commission proposed a major revision of the regulation governing the European Citizens' Initiative. The new regulation on the European citizens' initiative was adopted in April 2019, for **entry into application in January 2020**.

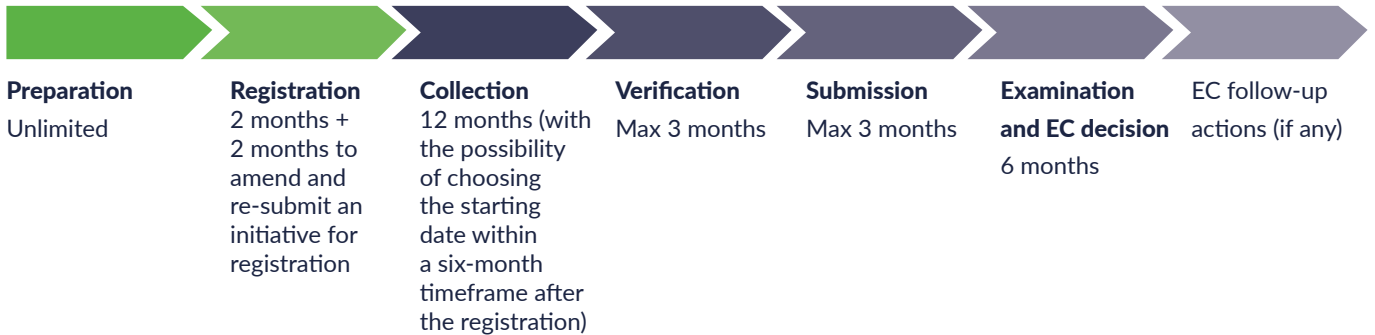
Main innovations in the new rules:

- A **revised** and more user-friendly timeline for organisers
- **All EU citizens can support** regardless of their place of residence
- Lowering of the age of support to **16** (if Member States decide so)
- Preparation → **online collaborative platform** and option for organisers to set up a legal entity
- Registration phase → two-stage procedure allowing organisers to revise their proposal if needed
- Partial registration accepted and **free translation of the content of the initiative** (including its annex) in all EU languages provided by the European Commission
- Collection → **flexible start date** and **only two possible forms** to collect signatures
- **One central online collection system** provided by the Commission for free (with the option for organisers to build their own, for initiatives registered **until end of 2022 only**)
- **Contact points** available in each Member State to provide, free of charge, information and assistance to groups of organisers
- Examination phase → **six months** allowing for a more inclusive public hearing and more time for the Commission to consult stakeholders and analyse the initiative.



# 2

## Preparation and registration



### Preparation

#### EU and European Commission competences

Once EU citizens have an idea for EU legislation, the next step is to check that the EU can act in the policy area addressed by the idea (agriculture, education, social policy, environment, and so on) and that the European Commission has competence to make proposals in that area, as defined by the Treaty.

For further information on EU competences, please refer to the guidance note on **How to draft an initiative**. The SEEK ADVICE function of the European Citizens' Initiative Forum can provide you with tailor-made assistance during the preparation phase of an initiative.

#### Group of organisers

In addition to verifying that the Commission has competence to act, a group of organisers must be established to launch the initiative as its official organiser.

The group must comprise at least seven EU citizens old enough to vote in the European Parliament elections and living in at least seven different EU Member States (it is not their nationalities that count, but their places of residence). Contact persons – one representative and one substitute – will be designated: they can be from among the group of 7 members living in



### Tips

- General questions about the EU? Europe Direct has answers.
- Plan your campaign carefully in advance. The sooner you start with the preparation, the better your chances of success!
- Start looking for partners who can help you to launch, finance and promote your initiative. Strong, broad alliances are key for the success of the initiative. Refer to guidance notes on **How to look for partners** and **How to raise funds** for further information.
- Examine past and current European citizens' initiatives on the official register.
- Contact Members of the European Parliament who have worked on the issues raised in your initiative.
- Find a high-profile 'ambassador' for your campaign.

7 different countries or be 2 different members of the wider group. For each initiative, the Commission will publish the names of all members of the group of organisers in the official register of the European Citizens' Initiative, as well as the email addresses of the contact persons.

It is possible to create a **legal entity**, in accordance with the national law of a Member State, specifically for the purpose of managing an initiative. Information about this legal entity must be provided when requesting the registration of the initiative.

## | Registration

### Filling in the registration form

In order to get a proposed initiative registered, the representative of the group of organisers needs to set up an **organiser account** with his/her email address and fill in the required fields. The main content of the proposed initiative must not be longer than 1200 characters (spaces not included). An annex of 5000 characters (spaces not included) maximum may also be added.

### Confirmation and publication

Within **two months** of the request, and if all the conditions are met, the Commission will adopt a decision on the registration of the proposed initiative. On that date, the Commission will make the initiative public in the register and send a confirmation to the organisers.

However, if an initiative falls manifestly outside the framework of the Commission's powers while all other conditions are met, the Commission will inform the organisers within **one month** of the submission of the request. In such case, the organisers may **amend and re-submit the initiative** in conformity with the requirements. The organisers can also maintain or withdraw their initial initiative but need to inform the Commission of their choice within **two months** of the receipt of the Commission's assessment. The Commission will then take a final decision within **one month**.

The Commission can decide to **partially register** an initiative, in cases where only part or parts -including its main objectives- of the initiative do not fall manifestly outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union.



Do you need a more tailor-made service?

The SEEK ADVICE of the European Citizens' Initiative Forum is here to help.



## Tips

- Your organiser account will help you manage your initiative. You can find there information on the next steps, manage the various submissions and stay in contact with the European Commission.

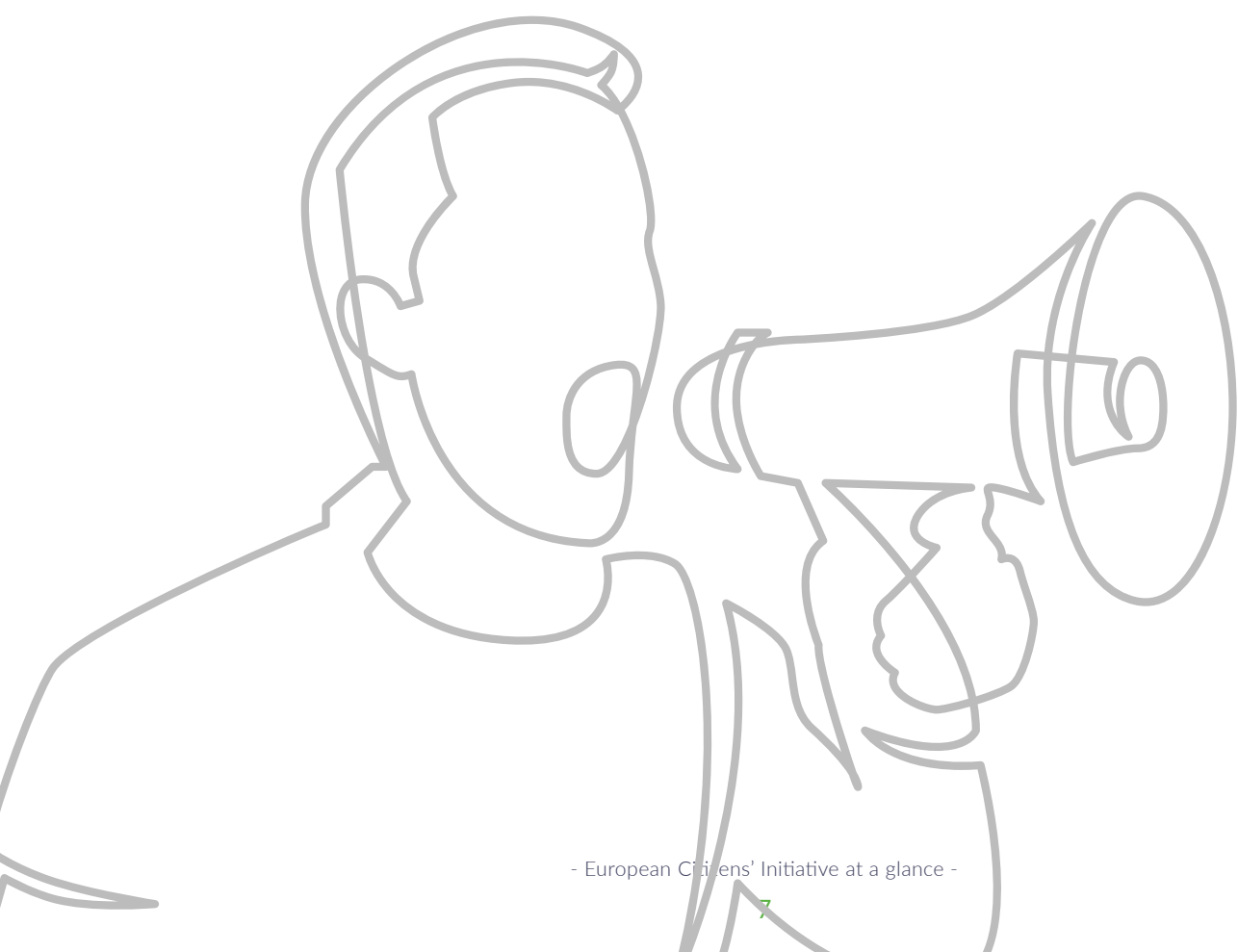
The European Commission will then provide the translations of the initiative's 1200-character description and the 5000-character annex.

Information related to all sources of support and funding worth more than EUR 500 per year and per sponsor received during the campaign has to be provided regularly throughout the procedure.

If the Commission refuses to register the initiative, it will inform the organisers of its reasons and of any possible remedies available.

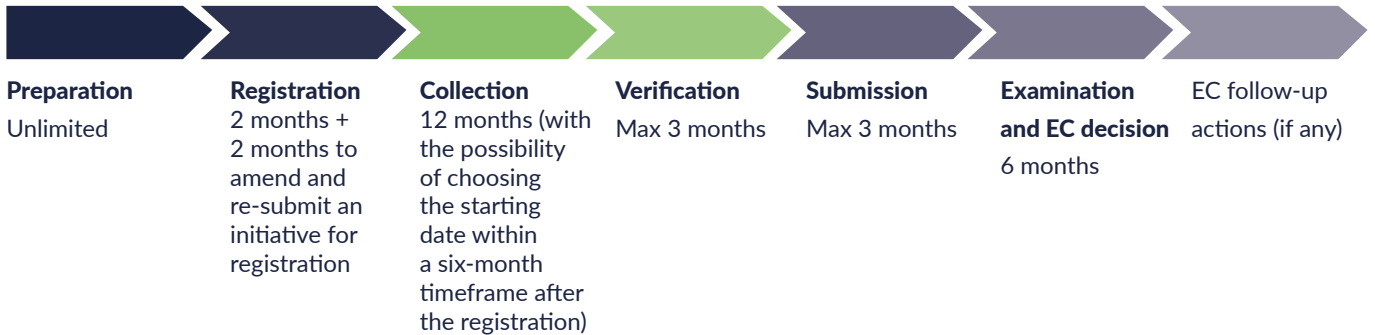


More information on preparation and registration can be found on the [European Citizens' Initiative Forum](#) and on the [European Citizens' Initiative website](#).



# 3

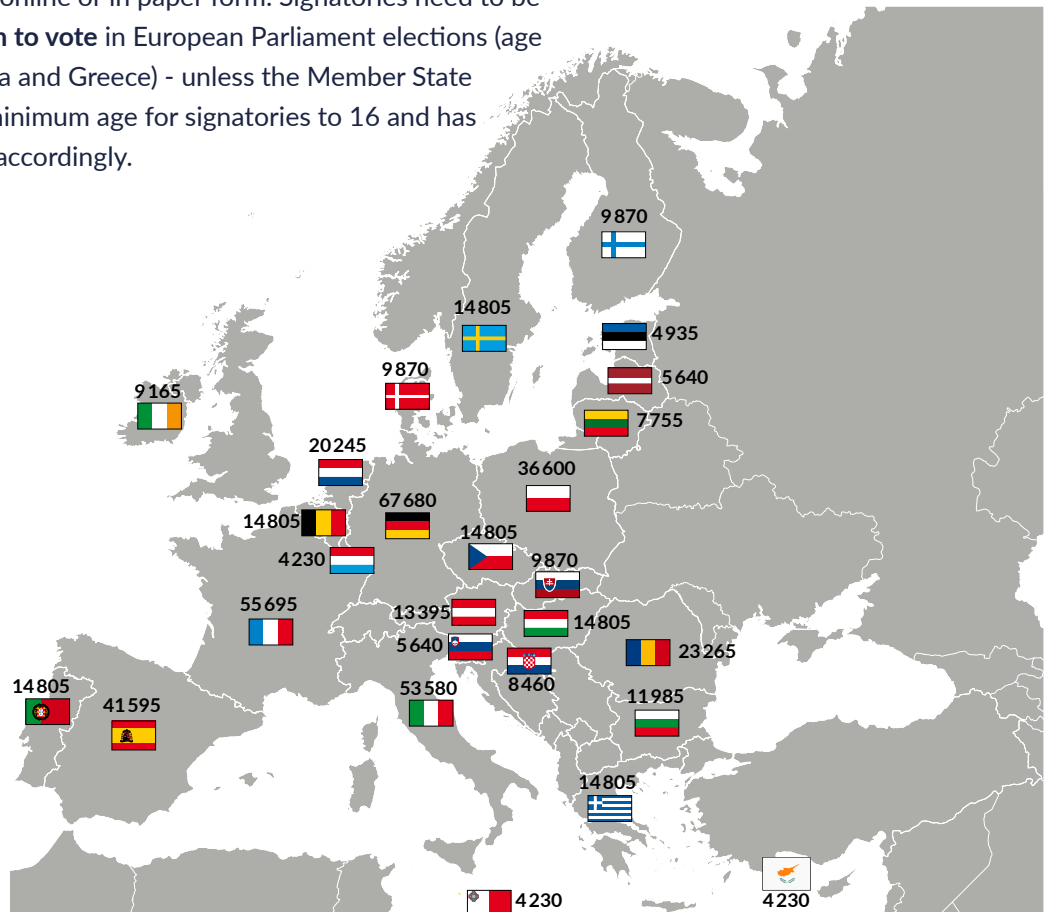
## Collection of statements of support



The organisers have **12 months** to collect at least 1 million statements of support, including a minimum number in at least seven Member States (see map below). The **organisers can choose the date** from when they will start the collection of the statements of support (the 'collection period'). The date must be **not later than six months from the registration** of the initiative and the Commission shall be informed of that intention at least 10 working days before that date.

Statements may be signed online or in paper form. Signatories need to be **EU citizens** and **old enough to vote** in European Parliament elections (age 18 except for Austria, Malta and Greece) - unless the Member State has decided to lower the minimum age for signatories to 16 and has informed the Commission accordingly.

Threshold per country for initiatives registered since 1 February 2020.  
For more information, please see: [https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/communication-material\\_en](https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/communication-material_en)





For the paper form, signatures must be collected using specific forms that comply with the models set out in [Annex III](#) of the European Citizens' Initiative [Regulation](#)) with the content of the initiative corresponding to the text published in the register. If the initiative has been partially registered, the forms must also include the scope of the registration as described in the Commission registration decision.

Throughout the procedure, organisers must make sure they comply with [data protection legislation](#).

## | Online collection system

For the purpose of online collection, the Commission provides -free of charge- a **central online collection system**.

The guidance note on **How to prepare and run campaigns** provides more information.



### Important:

Individual online collection systems are possible only for initiatives registered until the end of 2022.

For further information on the collection phase, please refer to the guidance note on How to collect statements of support.



## Tips

- Prepare the action and campaign plans which are needed at all levels – EU, national and local.
- Describe the topic of your initiative clearly and connect it with everyday life cases to enable citizens to identify with it.
- Campaign in national languages to facilitate citizens' engagement.
- Establish a strong link between local and national politics and your initiative; align your initiative with ongoing policy discussions.
- Use personal contacts and your partners' networks to widen the campaign.
- Strong local and national teams are key for the success of the initiative.
- Volunteers are the most important and powerful resource, rely on them! They should be able to explain both the initiative and how the European Citizens' Initiative works. To explain the instrument and how it works, don't hesitate to make use of the [communication materials](#) made available in all official EU languages by the European Commission.
- Communicate! Maintain morale by regularly updating everyone involved on the progress of signature collection.
- Focus the campaign on countries where the topic is well known and popular.
- Use social media and other communication tools to promote the initiative. Make intelligent use of the press.
- Pay attention to signature collection targets in each country.
- Use the collection of signatures on paper when attending festivals and events where large groups of people are gathered at the same location. This is also a good way to recruit new volunteers.

## | Verification

Once the collection period is closed (at the end of the 12 months or earlier if the organisers wish so) and if the necessary statements of support have been collected, organisers have **three months** to submit the statements of support for verification.

The organisers must ask the competent national authorities of each Member State in which statements of support have been collected to certify their validity.

The Commission will take care of the submission for the statements of support collected online through the **central online collection system**.

The Commission will also make available a **secure file exchange service** to transfer statements of support to the relevant competent authorities in Member States. All statement of support (both electronic or scanned versions of the statements of support collected on paper) can be uploaded in an encrypted form onto the system.

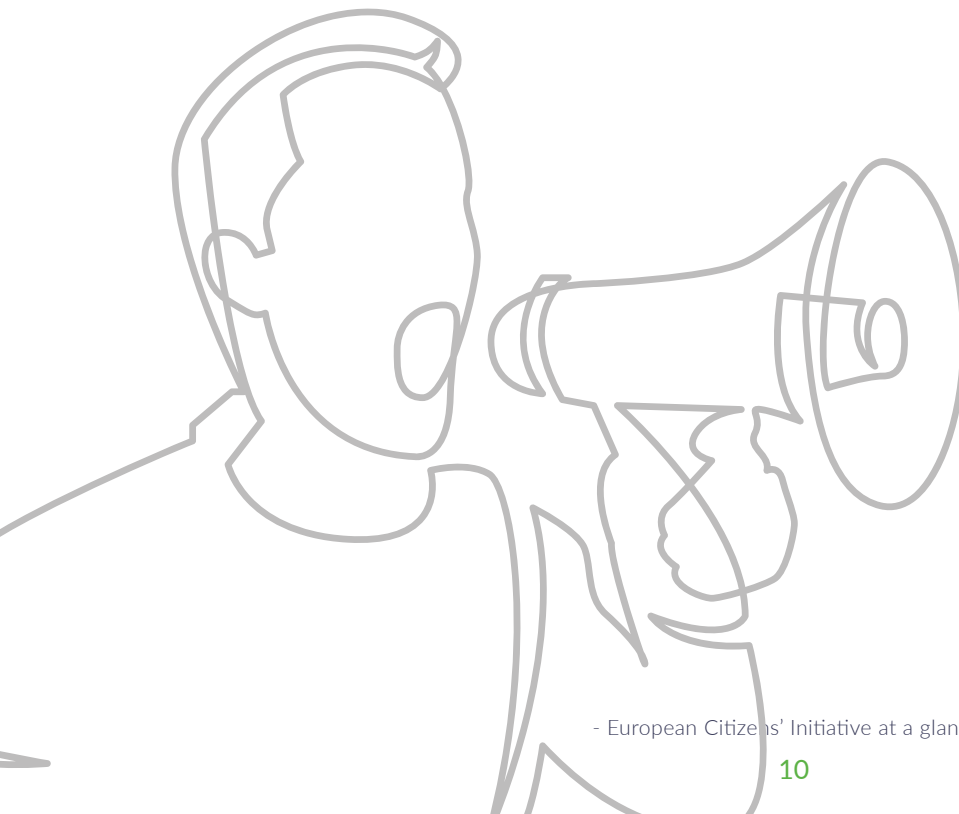
Statements of support needs to be submitted to each competent authority in the responsible Member State using the form set out in Annex V of the regulation.

Competent national authorities will issue a certificate within **three months**.



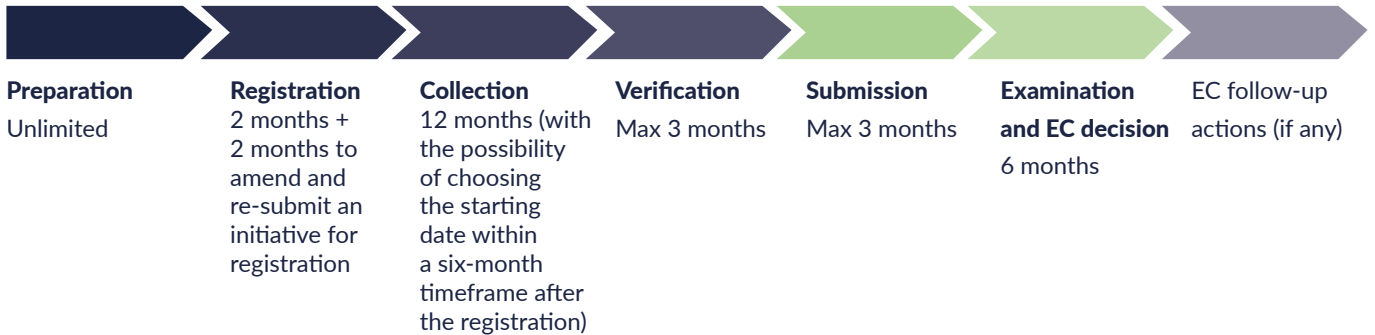
### Tips

- Some signatures are likely to be found invalid by the competent national authorities. To be on the safe side, collect extra signatures in each country.



# 4

## Submission, examination and Commission decision



### Submission

Once they have obtained the last certificate from the competent national authorities, the organisers have **three months** to submit the initiative to the European Commission. The organisers have to submit through their organiser account the specific form set out in Annex VII together with the copies, in paper or electronic form, of the certificates obtained in the verification phase.

### Examination

#### Publication and Meeting with the European Commission

When the Commission receives a valid initiative, it shall publish a notice to that effect in the register and transmit the initiative to the relevant European institutions and to the national parliaments.

Within **one month** of the initiative's submission, the organisers will meet with representatives of the Commission to explain their initiative in detail.

#### Public hearing at the European Parliament

Within **three months** of the submission of the initiative, the organisers will also have the opportunity to present their initiative at a public hearing in the European Parliament. The European Commission will attend the hearing and the European Parliament needs to ensure a balanced representation



### Tips

- Choose the most knowledgeable individuals for both the meeting with the Commission and the hearing at the European Parliament to speak with a strong voice in Europe.
- Rehearse! Make sure the representatives are convincing and clear when presenting the initiative.

of relevant public and private interests. Following the public hearing, the European Parliament may hold a plenary debate and adopt a resolution in order to assess political support for the initiative.

### European Commission decision

Within six months of the publication of the initiative and after the public hearing, the European Commission will announce its decision by means of a Communication explaining which actions it intends to take, if any, and why. The Communication will also set out the envisaged timeline for these actions.

The European Parliament will assess the measures taken by the Commission as a result of its communication.



## Tips

- Be patient! The Commission's preparation of a legislative proposal can be a lengthy process. Follow the different stages (e.g. consultations, impact assessment, etc.) and continue to promote your ideas.
- Be ready! The Commission follows up on an ongoing basis and, as far as possible, maintains the link with organisers

## Other ways of influencing the European Union

If after reading this note you think that the European Citizens' Initiative is not the appropriate tool for you, have a look at [these other mechanisms](#) for making your voice heard at EU level.

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