**The European citizens’ initiative didn’t work out - in the future, let’s let the EP decide!**

The essence of the European citizens’ initiative is to request the European Commission to propose legislative proposals in cases where the EU has the competence to enact legislation. A citizens’ initiative has to be supported by at least 1 million EU citizens from at least 7 of the 28 Member States. The minimum number of signatures has to be collected in each of the 7 Member States.

The institution was **established by the Treaty of Lisbon**. The rules and procedures of the citizens’ initiative are laid down by an EU Regulation (**Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council**), which was adopted on 16 February 2011. The regulation entered into force on 1 April 2012 and is directly applicable in all Member States.

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1179/2011 of 17 November 2011 sets forth the detailed technical rules applicable to online collection systems. Chapter IV of Act CCXXXVIII of 2013 on Initiating Referendums, the European Citizens’ Initiative, and the Referendum Procedure lays down the rules necessary for implementation of the Regulation in Hungary.

The possibility was welcomed by citizens and civilians and was considered an innovative tool for participatory democracy upon its 2012 introduction. However, the excellent idea did not work out in practice. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that it failed: in the first three years, i.e. **between the spring of 2012 and the spring of 2015,** **only three of 51 citizen’s initiatives managed to collect the one million signatures required** due to bureaucratic obstacles and the European Commission’s attitude. **Of these three, only two received official responses from the Commission.** This is due to the fact that **the European Commission**, which **is both the recipient and the adjudicator** of the submitted initiatives, **continuously impeded those since it was torn by a conflict of interest** and is protective of its own legislative role; additionally, suspicions arose in a number of cases that **there were political motivations behind the rejections of the European Commission, which can be considered the EU’s “government”.**

According to the position worded by Gyula Winkler, a Hungarian EP Representative from Transylvania, **the European Parliament is the forum that is responsible for performing this task**, i.e. **it has to assist European citizens in freely exercising their rights via the tools provided by the European citizens’ initiative** to return the strength to the initiative that so many had hoped it would have from the outset. It is easy to find proof for Winkler’s thought: the EP’s members are representatives directly elected by Europeans to represent the interests of their own citizens while the Commission, in theory, represents the entirety of the Union; one is a directly elected institution and the other is a college consisting of delegated members that is much further removed from citizens. This is worth mulling over and amending Article 11 of the Treaty of Lisbon accordingly.