**A reform of the European citizens’ initiative**

**(to the outline of the draft Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council)**

The main changes recommended for the institution of the European citizens’ initiative, based on the new draft act submitted on 12 January:

* Statements of support can be collected for no more than 6 months (instead of 12 months) from the time the proposed citizens’ initiative is registered
* The signatories of the citizens’ initiative have to originate from at least two Member States (the previous requirement was that they had to originate from at least a quarter of all Member States)
* It is important not to change: the number of signatories in the participating Member States at the time the proposed citizens’ initiative is registered has to equal at least the minimum values specified in Annex I to the Council Regulation.
* The European Commission shall, within four months of the submission of the initiative, set out in a communication its legal and political conclusions on the citizens’ initiative, the action it intends to take, if any, and its reasons for taking or not taking that action (this period is currently 3 months)
* As, within the meaning of the change it would be sufficient to collect the one million signatures from just two Member States instead of seven, the citizens’ committee to be set up by the organisers of the citizens’ initiative would consist of two persons from each of the two participating Member States who reside in the given Member States. If at least five Member States participate, the citizens’ committee has to contain at least one person residing in each of the Member States (according to the current rule, the organisers shall form a citizens’ committee of at least seven persons who are residents of at least seven different Member States; the number of persons currently depends on the number of Member States)
* Under the amendment, the proposed citizens’ initiative may not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission’s powers to develop proposed legislation in protection of the European Union and EU citizens that cannot be effectively handed at the Member State level (currently: it may “not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission’s powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties”)
* It is important that the European Commission shall continue to maintain an open-source software incorporating the relevant technical and security features necessary for compliance with the provisions of the Regulation regarding the online collection systems, to thus support online collections under the initiative.

The proposed amendments to the citizens’ initiative is justified by making this legal institution quicker and easier to apply; however, by increasing the time available to the Commission to adjudicate from three to four months, it also provides an opportunity for the Commission to make circumspect decisions.

The main goal is to bring this important tool and institution of direct democracy closer to European citizens.