

Citizens' views about the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)

Surveys report

1. Introduction and sample

In preparation of the first review report of [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/788](#) on the European citizens' initiative¹ (the ECI Regulation) the Secretariat-General of the European Commission carried out two surveys targeting citizens between September 2022 and February 2023:

- i. A survey covering general aspects of the ECI functioning. This survey was promoted widely through the ECI newsletter, social media promotions and ECI multipliers, including other EU institutions and generated 4007 replies.
- ii. A survey covering the general aspects of the ECI functioning and specific questions related to users' satisfaction with the ECI website. This survey was promoted as a pop-up on the ECI website and generated 3264 replies.

In all, **7271 respondents** replied to the surveys. While the number of respondents per Member State mostly proportionately reflects the size of their population, some Member States are over or underrepresented in the responses.

Table 1: overview of respondents by Member State

Member State	Answers	Population
Austria	3.15%	2.01%
Belgium	3.88%	2.60%
Bulgaria	1.88%	1.53%
Croatia	1.54%	0.86%
Cyprus	0.25%	0.20%
Czechia	1.46%	2.35%
Denmark	0.98%	1.31%
Estonia	0.34%	0.30%
Finland	1.82%	1.24%
France	10.37%	15.19%
Germany	20.95%	18.63%
Greece	3.15%	2.34%
Hungary	4.87%	2.17%
Ireland	1.71%	1.13%

Member State	Answers	Population
Italy	18.36%	13.21%
Latvia	0.54%	0.42%
Lithuania	0.76%	0.63%
Luxembourg	0.26%	0.14%
Malta	0.48%	0.12%
Netherlands	3.69%	3.94%
Poland	1.75%	8.43%
Portugal	3.44%	2.32%
Romania	3.71%	4.26%
Slovakia	0.92%	0.47%
Slovenia	0.88%	1.22%
Spain	7.58%	10.62%
Sweden	1.31%	2.34%

Table 2: overview of respondents by age

Age group	Answers
55 to 64	23%
45 to 54	21%

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/788](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens' initiative (OJ L 130, 17.5.2019, p. 55).

65+	20%
35 to 44	15%
25 to 34	11%
18 to 24	7%
16 to 17	1%
Below 16	1%

2. General aspects on the functioning of the ECI

2.1. Attitudes towards the ECI

Overall, respondents consider the ECI as a very positive feature of European democracy:

- 96% of respondents consider that having such a tool is either very or somewhat important;
- 79% reported feeling more empowered because of the ECI.

Respondents indicated as the most significant benefits of the ECI: a sense of common goal and belonging, and bringing EU-value to any issue.

Chart 1: ‘In your view, how important is it to have a tool such as the European Citizens’ Initiative available to EU citizens?’

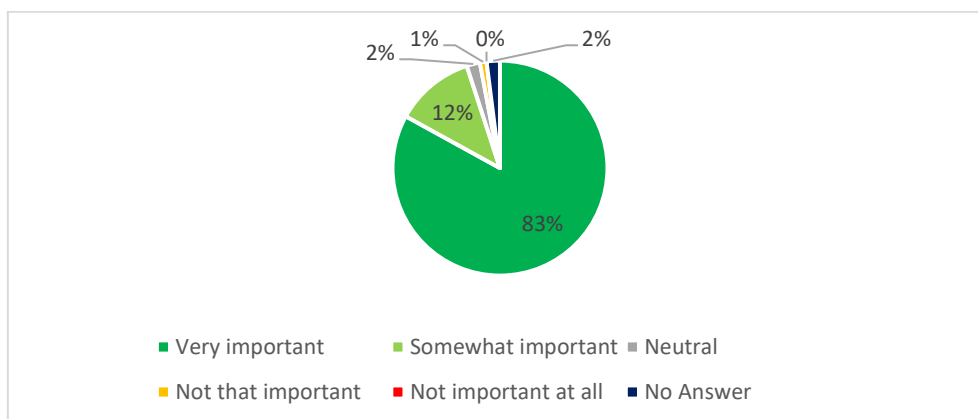
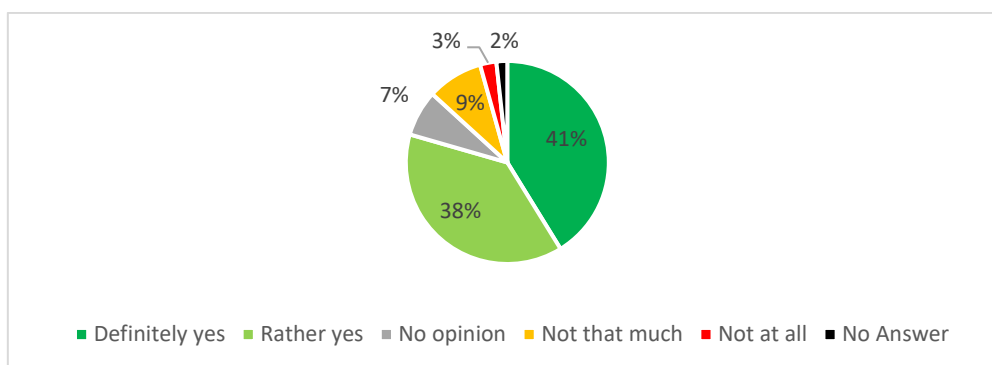


Chart 2: ‘Do you feel more empowered knowing that a tool such as the European Citizens’ Initiative is available to you as a citizen of the European Union?’



Respondents were asked for their opinion as to what would make the ECI work even better. One of the issues mentioned very often was the limited influence of a successful ECI;

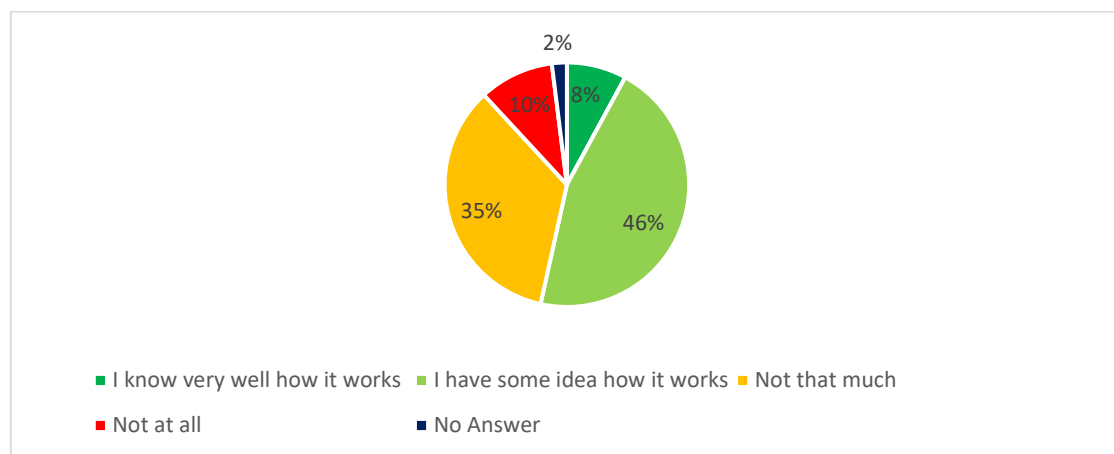
respondents considered that even if an initiative obtains the required number of signatures, it might not lead to action. Several respondents suggested ways of making ECIs more effective, such as by triggering an automatic referendum on the subject-matter of the ECI, or by introducing a requirement for legislative follow-up in relation to successful ECIs.

2.2. Awareness and knowledge

Most respondents were familiar with the functioning of the ECI:

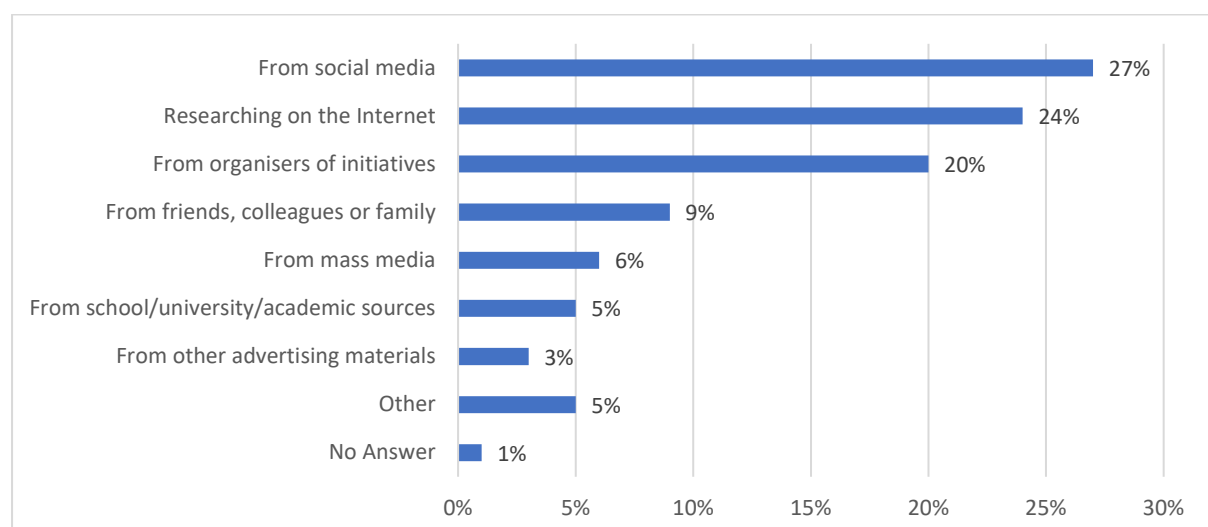
- 54% said that they either know very well how the ECI works or have some idea how it works;
- only 10% said that they are not at all familiar with how the ECI works in practice.

Chart 3: ‘How familiar are you with how the European Citizens’ Initiative works in practice?’



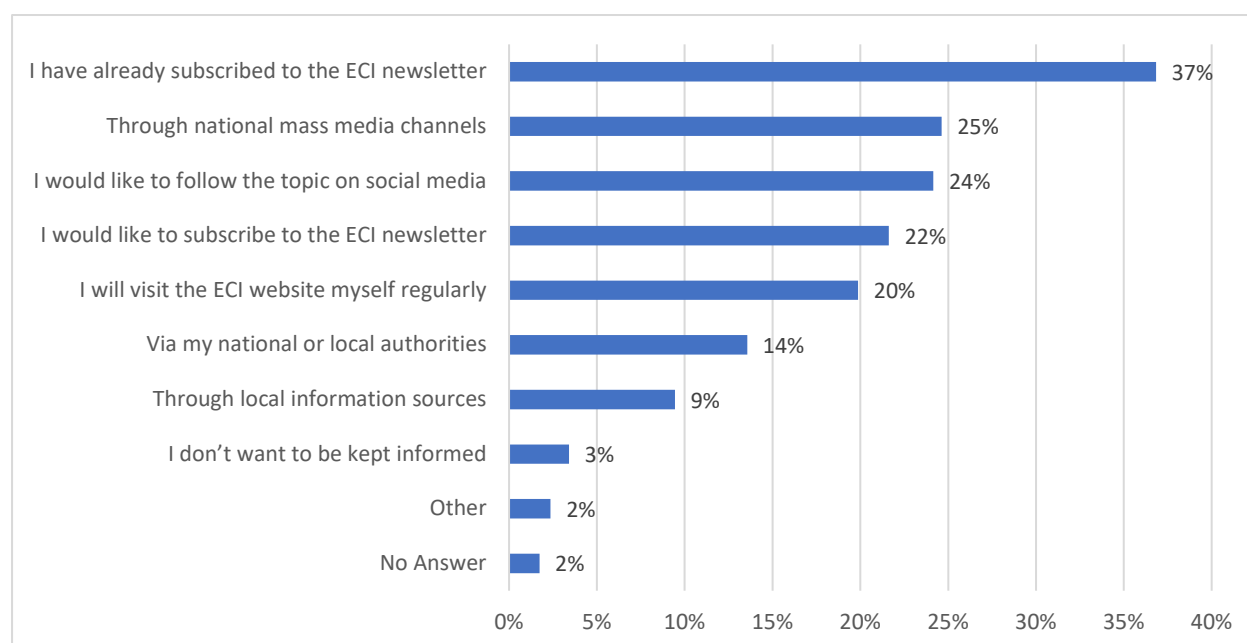
Respondents reported having learnt about the ECI from social media, the internet and organisers of initiatives. The distribution among these main sources of information is fairly equal and together they cover 71% of the responses.

Chart 4: ‘How did you learn about the existence of the European Citizens’ Initiative?’



As regards being kept informed about the ECI, 37% of respondents reported having already subscribed to the ECI newsletter, and 22% indicated that they would like to do so. With respect to exposure on mass media, 25% of respondents indicated a wish to be kept informed about the ECI through national mass media channels (while only 6% had learned about the existence of the ECI from mass media). Other channels through which respondents want to be kept informed about the ECI include social media (24%), the ECI website (20%) and national or local authorities (14%). The social media platforms that were mentioned the most are Facebook and Instagram, with (the former) Twitter and Mastodon also mentioned often.

Chart 5: ‘How would you like to be kept informed about the European Citizens’ Initiative?’

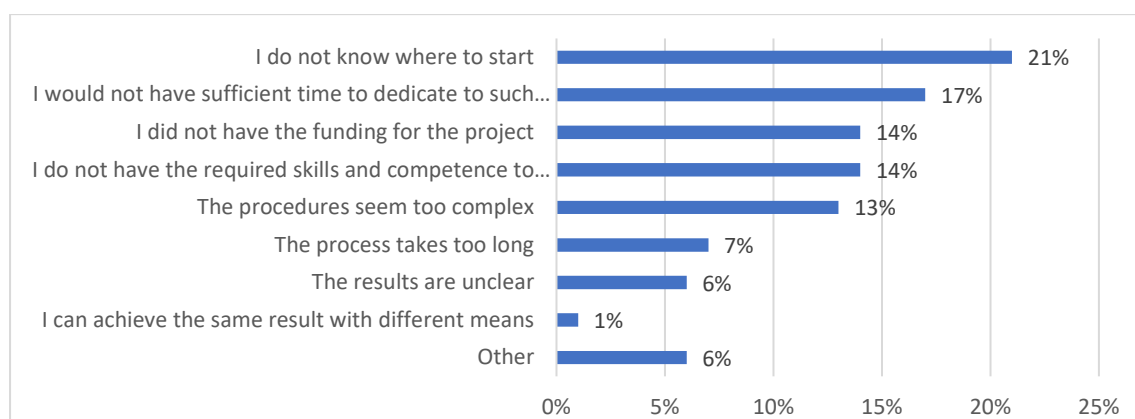


Respondents also had the possibility to voice their opinions on the ECI. Their most common concern was the lack of awareness of the ECI among the public. In this respect, respondents would like to see the ECI promoted more and having more media exposure. They also expressed wishes that the ECI newsletter would be available in their own language.

2.3. Starting an ECI

19% of respondents had considered starting an ECI themselves, and 2% started one. Out of those who had considered starting an ECI but did not follow through with the idea, 21% said that they did not know where to start. Another important reason was lack of time (17%). In the open-ended answers several respondents cited similar reasons: lack of time, lack of knowledge, lack of resources, a feeling that it would be difficult to see any results.

Chart 6: ‘Why did you not start a European citizens' initiative?’



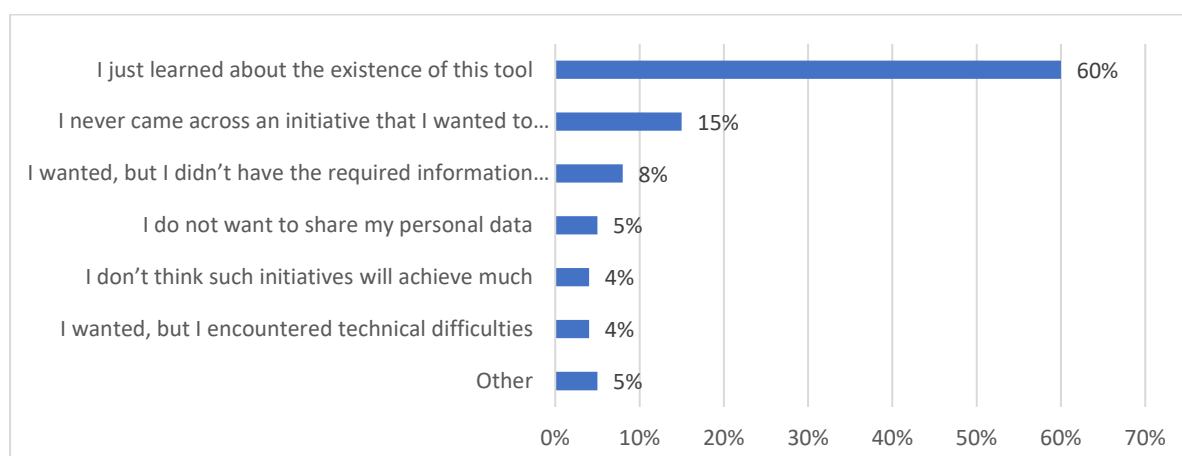
In terms of suggestions for improving the ECI, many respondents called for more support to the organisers of ECIs. This would include both financial support and other resources. They consider that obtaining 1 million signatures is not equally available to all due to resource constraints that most people would face.

2.4. Supporting ECIs

60% of respondents had signed an ECI. Out of these, 74% reported having followed the progress of the initiative after their signature, while 13% said that they did not know how to do so.

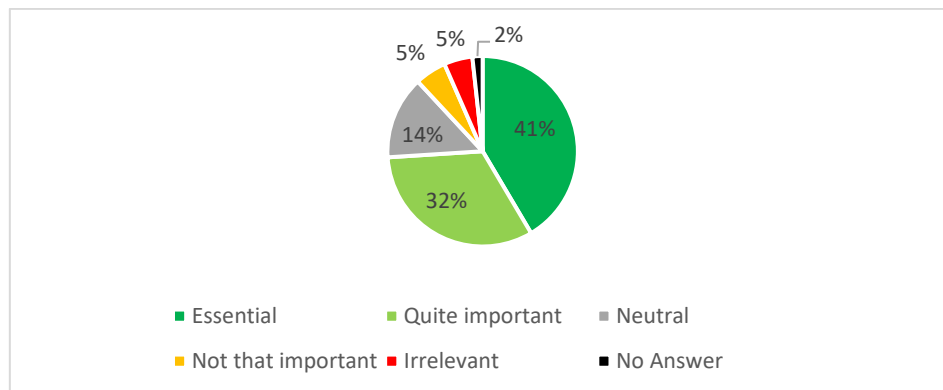
Regarding those that did not sign an ECI, the most common reason for not supporting any initiatives yet was ‘I just learned about the existence of this tool’ (60% of those who reported never having signed an ECI); followed by ‘I never came across an initiative that I wanted to support’ (15%), and ‘I did not have the required information at hand (8%)’. Only a small minority of respondents mention concerns related to the use of their personal data (5%).

Chart 7: ‘Why have you not signed a European citizens' initiative?’



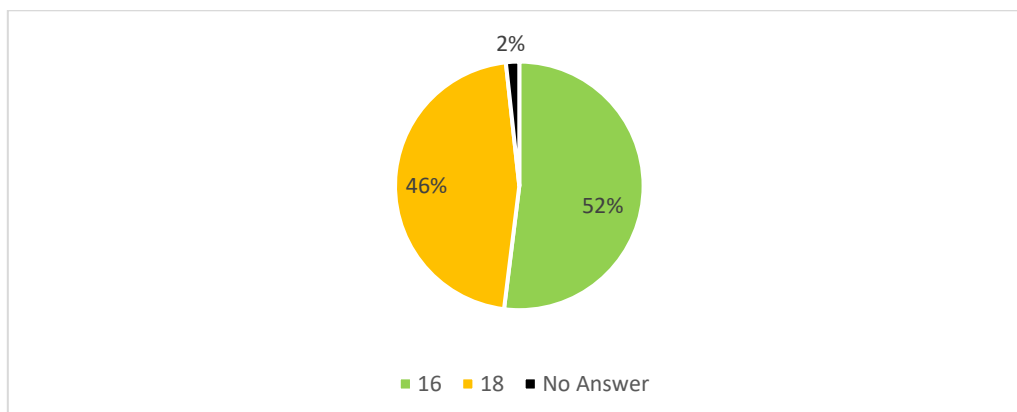
The vast majority of respondents felt that the use of digital solutions for electronic identification to sign ECIs was important. 73% considered it essential or quite important, whereas only 10% thought it was not that important or irrelevant.

Chart 8: ‘How important is it to be able to use digital solutions for electronic identification such as eID or electronic signature for supporting initiatives?’



Regarding the minimum age for signing ECIs, the survey presented two options: 16 years of age and 18 years of age. The answers were quite evenly matched, as 52% of respondents are consider 16 as the appropriate minimum age for supporting ECI, whereas 46% preferred 18 to be the minimum age.

Chart 9: ‘In your view, as of what age should citizens be allowed to sign European Citizens’ Initiatives?’



Respondents were also able to give free suggestions about the ECI. Many respondents consider that the threshold of 1 million signatures is too high and some wish the minimum age to support ECIs to be lowered or abolished all together.

Many respondents mentioned that they could not remember whether they had already supported an ECI, and that there was no way of checking that. For example, one respondent mentioned that they did not sign an ECI as the system requires confirming that this is the first time that they are giving support to the specific initiative, and they could not be sure that they had not already done so. Many respondents expressed the wish for a system that would allow citizens to see a list of ECIs they had already supported, and that would give them updates on the progress of the ECIs they had signed.

3. ECI website

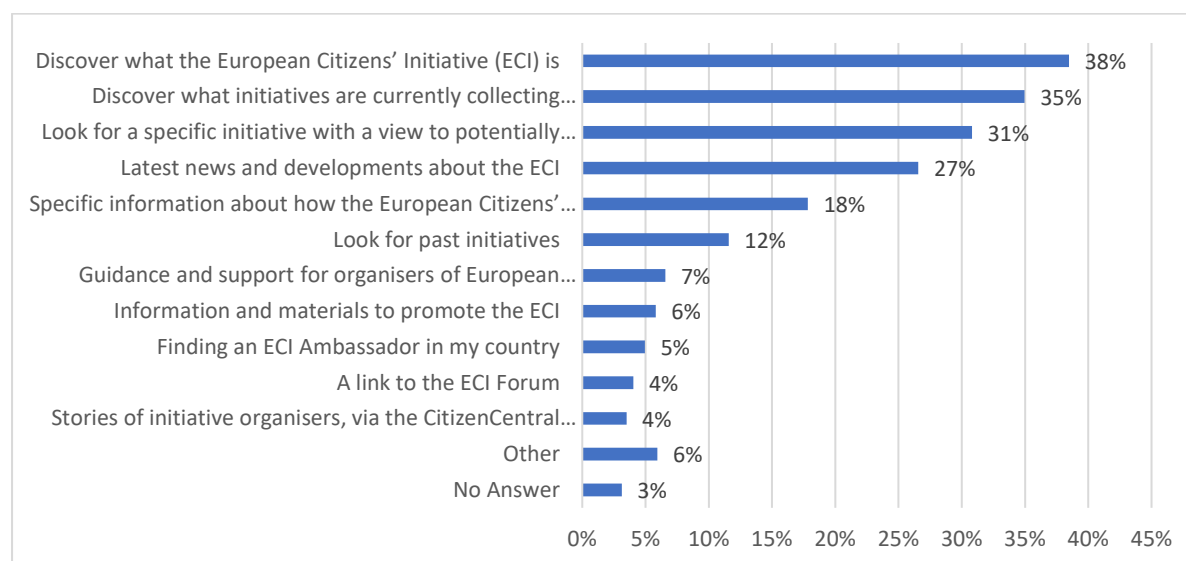
87% of the respondents to the website version of the survey, were visiting the website in a personal capacity and 10% did so for professional purposes (43% of professionals reported academic purposes, while 18% said that they work in related matters in public sector institutions).

85% of the respondents found what they were looking for on the ECI website. The most common reasons to visit the website were:

- to discover what the ECI is (38%);
- to discover which initiatives are currently collecting signatures (35%);
- to look for a specific initiative with a view to potentially signing it (31%).

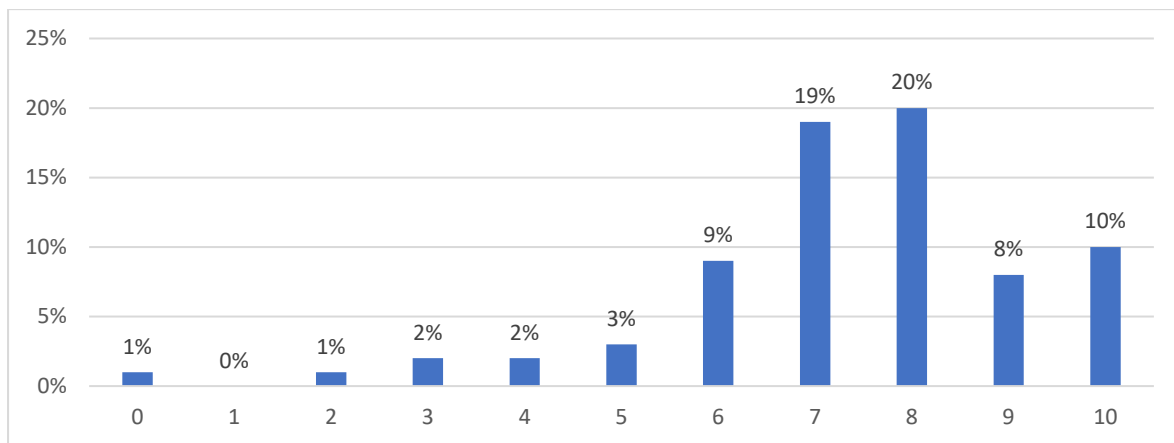
Similarly, in the field where respondents could freely indicate their reason for visiting the website, several mentioned finding information about the ECI instrument or finding an initiative to support. Many of them already knew about a specific initiative that they wanted to sign, whereas some had a topic in mind on which they hoped to find an initiative.

Chart 10: ‘What were you looking for on the ECI website?’



58% of the respondents gave the ECI website a score of 7 or higher, with an average score of 7.3 (out of 10).

Chart 11: ‘What is your overall satisfaction with the ECI website?’



As regards, accessibility, 4% of respondents reported having a disability that makes it difficult to work online. Out of that group, 27% encountered difficulties while using the ECI website. Issues mentioned included the site being difficult to use for dyslexic people, and the CAPTCHA being difficult for people with poor vision.