

European Citizens' Initiative: Advocacy Handbook

Empower citizens to be active in the EU

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At a glance: Welcome to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) handbook

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is a unique participatory democracy tool that allows EU citizens from different Member States to call on the European Commission (EC) to propose legislative changes on issues that matter to them.

Taking part in European democracy is every EU citizen's right. EU citizens can sign European citizens' initiatives or start one of their own.

To launch a citizens' initiative takes at least 7 EU citizens, living in 7 different Member States, who are old enough to vote in the European elections.

They choose a topic that they care about, from any field where the European Commission has power to propose legislation and submit a proposal. The Commission checks the legal admissibility of the idea and decides whether to register the initiative.

If registered, the initiative is posted on the ECI website, translated into all EU languages, and the organisers can start collecting signatures. They have one year to gather 1 million verified signatures – demonstrating that other Europeans also care about the idea. If enough signatures are collected, the European Commission high-level representatives will meet with the organisers and, after a public hearing organised by the European Parliament, decide on what follow-up actions, if any, to take.

The initiative should be in line with EU values and the rights protected in the [EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights](#).

EU citizens who wish to start an initiative can consult the European Citizens' Initiative Forum, a space to get practical information and advice about the ECI. Learn more on the [ECI website](#).

Since 2012, some 1 000 EU citizens have started more than 100 European citizens' initiatives, collecting nearly 20 million signatures of support throughout the EU. Ten successful initiatives have already received an answer from the Commission, and several are collecting signatures. Find them all [here](#).

Upon reading this handbook you will:

- Know why it is important to inform citizens about the ECI
- Discover tools and materials to help explain the ECI
- Be ready to help spread the word about the ECI – join us and use your voice to promote the ECI among your networks.

Why the European Citizens' Initiative?

The ECI offers EU citizens a chance to be directly involved in the European democratic process and gives them a greater say in EU policies.

As European citizens, we all share common values and, even if we live in different countries, we can be passionate about the same issues. Through the ECI, citizens can join other people from across the EU to rally around an issue that they care about, start a debate and influence EU policies.

How to make people aware of the citizens' initiative?

We want as many people as possible to become aware of the ECI and be able to use it to promote the causes that they care about – including the citizens in your area!

The following ideas are actions that you could easily incorporate into your organisation's existing communication activities:

- Include a short article, interview, or blogpost about the ECI on your website and in your newsletter. You can take inspiration or re-use information from the monthly ECI newsletter. You can also consider involving organisers of campaigning ECIs or [ECI Ambassadors](#) from your country.
- Publish videos, with subtitles in your language, explaining how the ECI works and highlighting its key benefits on your website and social media channels.
- Use your social media channels to share a few posts about the ECI, using ready-made materials. Don't forget to add the campaign hashtag: **#EUTakeTheInitiative**. You can repost any ECI news available on the [ECI official Facebook group](#). The ECI team is also ready to help share any available material to make the promotion seamless. Just drop us an email with your request and we will be ready to help!
- Create a news flash on your website each time a new initiative is registered or starts collecting signatures.
- Add an ECI banner to your website.
- Incorporate information about the ECI into relevant events that your organisation hosts and request printed material to use and distribute. The printed material is available in all official EU languages and can be shipped to you for free.
- If you work with secondary schools or youth groups, use the 'EU Democracy in Action' educational toolkit for inspirational learning and group-work.

Key dates to communicate about the European Citizens' Initiative

1 April	Anniversary of the ECI Regulation going into effect
March	ECI Day event (exact date changes every year, follow updates through the ECI newsletter or website)
9 May	Europe Day (a good moment to encourage people to sign citizens' initiatives)
15 September	International Day of Democracy (a good moment to encourage people to sign citizens' initiatives)
Reminder during the school year	Promote the ECI educational toolkit for secondary schools

ECI key messages

Make people more aware of the ECI as a mechanism for civic engagement. Encourage them to discover the open initiatives and sign the ones they support. You can use these pre-prepared sentences to showcase the initiatives in your network or adapt them as relevant. Don't forget to use an ECI image from the [website](#).

When people ask...	You can say...
<i>'What is the ECI?'</i>	<p>The European Citizens' Initiative is a participatory democracy tool that gives EU citizens the right to have a say in EU policies that affect them, by proposing ideas for new laws.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU citizens have the right to sign any open citizens' initiative or start one with others. • A group of 7 EU citizens can propose a change they want to see in the EU, then they have 1 year to collect 1 million signatures of support. • If 1 million valid signatures are reached – the organiser group meets with lawmakers and gets an official response from the European Commission.
<i>'Why should I care about the ECI?'</i>	<p>The ECI brings new ideas to the attention of EU policymakers.</p> <p>The ECI gives you and other EU citizens the right to take action on issues that you care about – and you can help organisers by supporting their ideas. Have your say by signing initiatives that you support.</p>
<i>'How can I get involved with the ECI?'</i>	<p>As an EU citizen, you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign an ongoing initiative • Support an initiative (volunteer time, promotion, etc.) • Start a new initiative • Raise awareness about the ECI
<i>'What can I achieve by starting/ supporting an ECI?'</i>	<p>The European Citizens' Initiative helps bring causes that you care about to the EU level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spark a debate • Raise awareness • Trigger policy change in the EU <p>Organising a citizens' initiative helps you build communication, negotiation, advocacy, etc. skills and expands your network.</p>
<i>'What impact has the ECI had? Examples of Success'</i>	<p>Thanks to the ECI...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to clean drinking water is protected in the EU (Right2Water) • Authorisation processes of food-related products such as pesticides, additives or packaging materials are transparent; no more secret industry studies. (Ban glyphosate) • More debates on future policies (e.g. Ban biometric surveillance, Healthy soils) • There is a plan to reduce animal testing in research, education, and training (Save Cruelty Free Cosmetics) • The Commission committed to launch an impact assessment on the ban of the import, export and transit of loose shark fins (Stop Finning - Stop the Trade)

For more information on the citizens' initiatives that received a response from the Commission, see the ['Success Stories' on the ECI Forum](#).

Tools and materials to promote the ECI

In the section below, you will find different tools and materials available to explain/illustrate the ECI. Materials can be viewed online, and some are also available as physical handouts.

The ECI team is ready to ship printed materials to you, per your request. Please indicate: the name of the material(s) you want to distribute, the language needed, quantity, the shipping details and phone number of the contact person, and the ideal deadline to receive the shipment.

Send your request to: SG-ECI-COMMUNICATION@ec.europa.eu

Logo

If you want to post about the ECI, contact the ECI team to request the official ECI logo (in your language) by email:

SG-ECI-COMMUNICATION@ec.europa.eu.



GIFs

GIFs (a format for image files that supports both animated and static images) are available in all EU languages and can be used for ECI promotion. They are fun, informative, and easy to use. You can download different GIFs in your language under the [social media section](#).



ePoster

This poster is made for digital screens (such as on a TV screen, in community buildings or at a bus stop). It can also be printed.



Videos

There are several videos available for download to raise awareness about the ECI. Download them [here](#).

ECI Ambassador video (2024) – available from November 2024



The ECI: Your right as an EU citizen (2022)



European citizens have the right to take part in European democracy with the citizens' initiative. This video explains how citizens can help shape the future of the EU by launching or signing an initiative (long and short versions).

What is the ECI? Take the Initiative (2018)



Do you have an idea about how to tackle a challenge facing Europe? Do you feel that your voice alone is not loud enough to be heard? With the ECI, you can join other Europeans, to make and support concrete proposals in areas of the European Commission's powers.

What can you achieve with the ECI? (2021)



4 initiative organisers define their European citizen's initiative with one word.

1:49 [long version](#) | 0:15 [short version](#)

How much power do you have? (2018)



Engaging animation raising awareness of the European Citizens' Initiative.

How many Europeans does it take...? (2018)



A short (23sec) video, with a humoristic reference, to promote the ECI. Tip: tag a friend with a cause you care about.

Sample social media copies

Reminder: use the campaign hashtag #EUTakeTheInitiative (always used in English; not translated)

Be sure to hyperlink to part of the ECI website (tailored to your language) - we recommend the [homepage](#) or [‘find initiative’](#) page.

For sample images, visit the [social media section](#) of the ECI website.

Main message	Sample text for the post / information to give (1 bullet point = 1 idea for a post)
General awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calling all EU citizens! Make your voice heard with the European Citizens’ Initiative. Learn more today and sign proposals that you support. [add hyperlink, tailored to your language]• Turn your ideas into action and have a greater say in the European policies that affect your life! Learn how you can get more attention for a cause that’s important to you with the European Citizens' Initiative.• The European Citizens’ Initiative is your tool for having a say in EU policymaking. Discover how you can support initiatives that you care about.
Sign open initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have the power to shape EU policies! Check out all the European citizens’ initiatives open for signature collection and sign the ones you agree with. [add hyperlink, tailored to your language]• [xx] number of citizens’ initiatives are looking for support. Check them out to see which topics you agree with and sign.• European citizens’ initiatives are citizens’ proposals for new EU rules. Check out the ones that are open now and sign those that you support.• Use your right to sign European citizens’ initiatives! Different organiser groups are trying to collect 1 million signatures so they can talk with EU policymakers about their ideas. Learn about on-going initiatives and decide which ones you want to sign via the ECI website:
New citizens’ initiative registered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The European Commission registered a new European citizens’ initiative. Learn about the organisers’ objectives: [add hyperlink]• A new European citizens’ initiative was registered! Starting now, organisers have 6 months to launch the collection of 1 million signatures from at least 7 EU countries. If the initiative reaches this threshold, the Commission will examine the proposals and meet with the initiative organisers, before deciding whether or not to take action.• The European Citizens’ Initiative – have your say on the EU’s policy agenda. A new initiative was registered. Discover the organisers’ proposals and check out all open initiatives: [add hyperlink, tailored to your language]

Europe Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know how you will celebrate #EuropeDay on 9 May? Why not take part in the European Citizens' Initiative? It is your right as an EU citizen! Sign open initiatives that you support. [add hyperlink, tailored to your language] Did you know that EU citizens have the right to sign open European citizens' initiatives? Take part in shaping the Europe you want to live in this #EuropeDay.
School year starting/ reminder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school year is starting soon! Looking for fresh material to use with your students? The ECI Educational Toolkit equips students with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be active and engaged EU citizens. Check it out! [tailor link to your language: https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/schools/eci-educational-toolkit_en]

Quizzes

An online quiz that helps citizens know more about the ECI. You can access it [here](#); it consists of 6 questions and is available in all EU languages.

A comedy quiz to learn about the ECI while participating physically at an ECI event. It is in the form of 7 cards/questions and can be played by visitors who spin a wheel of fortune, pull numbers out of a bowl... the options are up to your creativity.

Postcard

A 2-sided ECI postcard is available for download in all EU languages, click [here](#) to download it. You can also order printed versions in your language and display them in your info centre or public space. To receive printed postcards in your language for free, please contact the ECI with your request.



Website banners

Three sets of web banners, available in all official EU languages, can be downloaded in various dimensions. You can place the banner on your website, newsletter, or email when raising awareness about the ECI.

(728x90)

(250x250)

(300x600)



General Factsheet

A general factsheet about the European Citizens' Initiative is available for [download](#). It is translated into all EU languages and can be requested in a printed version.



ECI Guide

This comprehensive [guide](#) on the European Citizens' Initiative (2024 edition) is available for download in all EU languages from the EU Publications Office. You can also request printed copies of the guide for distribution in your organisation's public spaces or at relevant events.



For teachers and youth: 'EU Democracy in Action' toolkit for secondary schools

The '**EU Democracy in Action - Have Your Say with the European Citizens' Initiative' educational toolkit** has been developed to equip students in the last years of secondary school with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be active and engaged EU citizens, including practical knowledge about the ECI. The toolkit consists of four thematic units, each with a different focus, moving from more general information about the EU to specific information and activities related to the ECI.

The toolkit can be used flexibly in civics lessons or where a topic-based approach is used. It includes a teacher's and student's pack, presentations, videos and a final quiz, and is available in all the official EU languages. It can also be used by youth organisations to animate debates about active EU citizenship. You can access the toolkit [here](#).



Other resources

Additional resources that we recommend:

- ECI Forum infographic – country- and initiative-specific data about citizens' initiatives, signatures collected, the organisers, finances and more. Updated yearly before the summer. [Home | European Citizens' Initiative Forum \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eu-portal/en/eu-citizens-initiative/eu-citizens-initiative-infographic)
- ECI Forum [Blogs and Success Stories](#) – to help get first-hand perspectives, advice, and lessons from citizens' initiative organisers and other members of the ECI network.

Looking for a broader perspective? The ***Have Your Say Portal*** explores the various tools available to EU citizens to contribute to EU policies. In addition to the ECI, there are Public Consultations and Feedback opportunities, or citizens can join a debate as part of the Citizens' Engagement Platform: https://have-your-say.ec.europa.eu/index_en

Find out more

Website	European Citizens' Initiative (europa.eu)
Facebook	Follow updates and post your activities linked to the ECI on European Citizens' Initiative Official Group
Newsletter	Subscribe to newsletter European Citizens' Initiative (europa.eu) (monthly; machine translation into official EU languages)
Resources for organisers of initiatives	European Citizens' Initiative Forum (europa.eu)
Local contacts	National Contact Points: Contact points at national level (europa.eu) ECI Ambassadors: European Citizens' Initiative Ambassadors (europa.eu) Europe Direct centres: EU around me
Queries	For queries or to request printed materials, contact: SG-ECI-COMMUNICATION@ec.europa.eu