

BACKGROUND INFO:

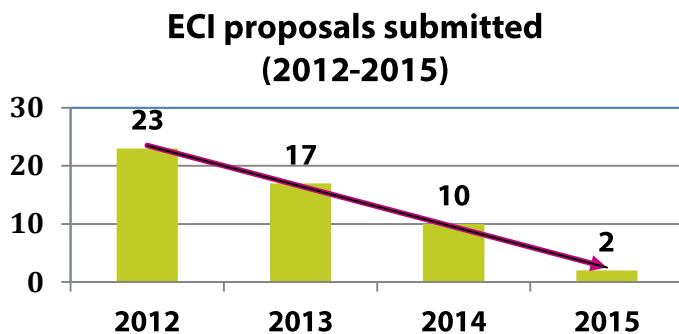
23/09/2015

Revision of the European Citizens' Initiative

Important steps, dates and documents

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) was implemented on 1 April 2012 as a politically innovative instrument that offers citizens the possibility to launch legislative proposals at EU level. The first three years of experience have revealed major flaws of the ECI, including technical problems, legal limits, difficulties to mobilise signatures, low awareness of the ECI and negligent political response.

In total, 52 ECI proposals have been submitted to the European Commission, 40% were refused registration, only three managed to fulfil all requirements to be successfully submitted to the Commission ('Water as a Human Right', 'One of us' and 'Stop Vivisection'), and so far none have led to a legislative proposal. Since 2012 the number of submitted ECIs has been progressively decreasing. While 2012 saw 23 ECIs be submitted, in 2015 there have been only two ECI proposals. See detailed information on all 52 ECIs at <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>.



Review process and positions

The [EU regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative](#) foresees a review every three years to analyse the implementation of the ECI with a view to necessary improvements. The first review is prescribed for 2015.

Commission's position on ECI

The European Commission issued a report on 31 March 2015 reviewing the implementation of the ECI. While the report understood the major technical and legal obstacles in starting and running ECIs, the Commission has been slow in recognising the political significance of the ECI. See the [Commission's Report on the Application of the Regulation on the Citizens' Initiative](#).

Parliament's position on ECI

The European Parliament, in return, has been convinced that the ECI requires greater improvements to make it viable and to unleash its political potential. The Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the Parliament (AFCO) wrote on 19 March a draft report including its stance on the ECI and its vision for necessary revisions. See the [Parliament's Draft Report on the European Citizens' Initiative](#).

Members of AFCO subsequently submitted amendments to the draft report, suggesting further revisions to the ECI. See [AFCO's amendments](#). On 21 September, the coordinators of AFCO condensed these amendments to form around 80 compromise amendments. Parliamentarians sitting on AFCO will vote on these amendments on 28 September. All Members of the European Parliament will vote on the final report in the plenary sitting of the Parliament in late October or early November (date still to be confirmed).

Position of the Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union expressed its opinion on the ECI in the [Item Note of the Council](#) on 11 June 2015. The Council proposed measures to address the flaws of the ECI, however while some delegations expressed the urgent need to address the ECI's shortcomings, other delegations queried about the downside of a revision of the ECI.

The positions adopted by the EU institutions will form the basis of the ensuing negotiations between the Commission, Parliament and Council. A final agreement regarding a revision of the ECI will be made at the beginning of 2016.

Opinions of other EU bodies

Other EU bodies have also written opinions regarding the necessary revisions to the ECI. The [European Ombudsman](#) issued an own-initiative inquiry regarding the Commission's role and responsibility concerning the ECI on 4 March. The [Committee of the Regions](#) adopted a Draft Opinion on the ECI on 22 June. The [European Economic and Social Committee](#) recognises itself as facilitator and institutional mentor with regard to the ECI.

Campaign of Democracy International

The ECI is the fruit of advocacy and campaign work led by Democracy International together with a coalition of 110 civil society actors and 41 members of the European Parliament in the context of the Convention on the Future of Europe (2001-2002). Consequently, the ECI was adopted in the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 11.4).

In the current review of the ECI regulation, Democracy International developed concrete recommendations for an improvement of the ECI and engaged in lengthy dialogues with representatives of the EU institutions regarding a meaningful reform. See [Democracy International's recommendations](#), which flowed into the Parliament's report and amendments, the Council's position and the Committee of the Regions' opinion.

Simultaneously, Democracy International has run campaign initiatives to encourage broader debate regarding the future of the ECI. In an [ECI petition](#) calling for a meaningful reform of the ECI to strengthen direct democracy in Europe, Democracy International collected more than 20.000 signatures. In preparation to AFCO's vote on the report and the amendments, Democracy International launched an [email drive](#) encouraging citizens to write to their MEPs and pressure them to vote for a revision of the ECI. Over 80.000 emails have been sent to the members of AFCO.

Upcoming dates

28 September 2015	EU Parliamentarians on AFCO to vote on ECI report and compromise amendments
26-29 October or 23-26 November 2015 (tbd)	European Parliament plenary discussion and vote on ECI report
December 2015 (tbd)	European Commission new report on ECI
January 2016	Negotiations between Commission, Parliament and Council on revision of ECI
Early 2016	Final decision on revision of ECI