



**TAKE
THE INITIATIVE**
European Citizens'
Initiative
your tool to shape European policy

FACTSHEET

MYTH AND REALITY

The European Citizens' Initiative is an opportunity to get directly involved in the European democratic process, allowing you to have a greater say in EU policies that affect your life.



MYTH 01

If there is no legislation, there is no point:

REALITY

1. Even if an initiative doesn't produce legislation, it can still raise awareness and foster debate around issues.
2. It helps build networks at regional, national and EU level.
3. It puts issues on the radar of policymakers and can result in other meaningful follow-up actions.



MYTH 02

The refusal rate at registration is very high:

REALITY

1. 90% of proposed initiatives have been registered since 2015! And since January 2020, when the new rules started to apply, no initiative has been refused¹.
2. Registration is refused only if the initiative falls manifestly outside the Commission's powers or is abusive, frivolous or contrary to EU values.
3. The Commission has improved the support provided to organisers via an independent advice service ([ECI Forum](#)) and allowed partial registration of initiatives, in an effort to reduce the refusal rate.

¹ status: October 2021



MYTH 03

The European Citizens' Initiative is just lip service on the part of the Commission:

REALITY

1. The European Citizens' Initiative is one of the main tools for citizen involvement in EU policy-making. The European Commission takes all successful initiatives seriously and clearly explains the reasoning for its decisions on follow-up measures.
2. For a successful initiative, the Commission:
 - arranges a meeting between the organisers and the Commissioners responsible,
 - co-organises a public debate with key stakeholders in the European Parliament,
 - agrees and publishes a formal response.
3. With the new rules in place since 2020, it is easier to engage with the tool. There is also more time for the follow-up process, more meaningful awareness-raising and a public debate before the Commission adopts its reply.



MYTH 04

The follow-up has been disappointing for the initiatives that reached the required support:

REALITY

Following the **'End the Cage Age'** initiative, the Commission committed to table, by the end of 2023, a legislative proposal to phase out, and ultimately prohibit, the use of cage systems for all animals mentioned in the initiative.

Following the **'Minority Safe Pack Initiative'**, the Commission:

Assessed that a wide range of measures addressing several aspects of the initiative's proposals have been taken since it was originally presented in 2013. While no further legal acts were proposed, the full implementation of legislation and policies already in place provides a powerful arsenal to support the initiative's goals.

The **'Ban Glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides'** initiative resulted in:

1. A Commission proposal for a Regulation on transparency and sustainability of EU risk assessment in the food chain. The Regulation was adopted by the European Parliament and Council in June 2019. This new legislation came into force in March 2021.
2. Increased audits and engagement with Member States since 2017, to ensure compliance with the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive.
3. Harmonised risk indicators, established in the [Commission Directive 2019/782](#), in force since September 2019.

Following the **'Stop Vivisection'** initiative, the Commission:

1. Acknowledged a need to accelerate progress in the area of replacing, reducing and refining the use of animal testing.
2. Committed to increase the support to the development and validation of alternative approaches.

The **'Right to Water'** initiative:

1. Prompted a proposal of the Commission for the revision of the Drinking Water Directive to improve access to water and ensure access for vulnerable and marginalised groups. The revised Directive entered in force on 12 January 2021.
2. Resulted in the European Commission advocating to maintain universal access to water and sanitation as one of the Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations' 2030 Agenda.
3. Contributed to the explicit reference to 'the right to water' in the European Pillar of Social Rights.



MYTH 05

The tool is overly complicated and difficult to use:

 **REALITY**

1. New rules, based on feedback from users, that apply as of 2020 make it easier to set up, register, organise and support initiatives.
2. With the new rules, the registration process has been improved and more support is offered to organisers via the [ECI Forum](#).
3. The amount of personal data required to support an initiative has been reduced and detailed [guidance for organisers](#) is available.
4. Organisers do not need to set up their own online collection tool, but can use the one managed by the Commission, with very high security features. The Commission constantly improves its user-friendliness, including good accessibility via mobile devices. Support via eID is also allowed under the new rules.



MYTH 06

Nobody knows about the European Citizens' Initiative:

 **REALITY**

1. The [Flash Eurobarometer 485](#) survey indicates that 3 out of 4 (75%) citizens are aware of their right to participate in a European Citizens' Initiative.
2. An information campaign on the ECI (#EUTakeTheInitiative), with actions at EU and Member State level, aims to make more citizens aware of their right to start or support an ECI.
3. Everybody has a role to play in making the Initiative a success – so spread the word!