



Citizens' Initiative: Europeans embrace the chance to set the EU's agenda

Europeans gained a new opportunity to influence the EU's agenda when the European Citizens' Initiative came into force on 1 April. Ten initiatives have been registered so far, with the initiators hoping to get the one million signatures necessary for them to call on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal. Among the issues included are youth exchange programmes, better access to water and the phasing out of animal testing.

The Citizens' Initiative was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and gives EU inhabitants who have the right to vote in European Parliament elections the opportunity to have their say on the EU's agenda. The initiative is a unique tool to strengthen openness and democracy in Europe. The first Citizens Initiative was registered on Europe Day on 9 May. So far ten initiatives have been registered by the Commission, but one of these has already been withdrawn.

The nine initiatives that were still collecting signatures on 14 August deal with the following topics:

- Responsible waste management
- Common education goals
- Phasing out animal testing
- Voting rights for EU citizens living in another member state
- Protection of human embryos in research, development aid and public health
- Access to water
- Roaming fees
- Increased mobility
- EU climate and energy package

To be considered an initiative must be backed by at least one million EU citizens, from at least seven of the 27 member states within 12 months of the registration date. It must also fall within the Commission's remit.

The Commission is not obliged to propose legislation based on an initiative, but must explain why if it decides not to. If the Commission does come up with a proposal, it will then follow the normal legislative procedure, which usually means it must pass through the European Parliament and Council before it becomes law.

Find out more about how the whole process works with the help of our multimedia application "Citizens' Initiative explained", by following the link on the right.