

Gather a million signatures and ask the EU to pass a new law

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[Countries will verify the signatories' details](#)

The European Commission will in future have to consider drafting a new EU law if so requested by at least one million EU citizens, now that Parliament has approved the ground rules for the "citizens' initiative" laid down by the Lisbon Treaty. MEPs also made the procedure much more user-friendly than initially proposed.

"Today the European Union is opening itself up to participatory democracy. The citizens now have the same right of political initiative as we have here in Parliament and in Council. Now it is up to our citizens to act", said rapporteur Alain Lamassoure (EPP, FR) in the debate preceding the vote, in which his report was approved by 628 votes to 15 with 24 abstentions.

Co-rapporteur Zita Gurmai (S&D, HU) added "the citizens' initiative is a unique opportunity. For the first time citizens can now get together and let us know if we are doing our job properly. We need this badly".



Citizen' initiative: 1 million signatures and 2 smiles for two of the rapporteurs, Zita Gurmai (Hungary) and Alain Lamassoure (France).

How will it work?

Once the legislation is in place, a "citizens' committee" consisting of people from at least one fourth of the Member States (i.e. currently seven States) will be able to register an initiative with the Commission. After the Commission has made an initial admissibility check, they can start collecting signatures either on paper or online.

The required million signatures must be collected within 12 months. A minimum number of signatures needs to be gathered in each Member State for them to count towards the seven mentioned above, ranging from 3750 signatures in Malta to 74,250 in Germany.

Member States will verify the signatories' details. For this purpose, each State will decide which information is needed and most will require an ID card number. All signatories must be citizens of the European Union and old enough to vote in European elections.

At the end of the process, the Commission will decide within three months if a new law can be proposed, and it will have to make its reasons public.

Key achievements of the MEPs

Parliament's main aim was to make the procedure as simple and user-friendly as possible, to avoid causing frustration to the public. Its key demands have been accepted. Thus, for example, the admissibility check will now be carried out at the outset, rather than after 300,000 signatures have been collected.

The minimum number of Member States from which signatures must be gathered was lowered from one third to one fourth, and a proper follow-up will now be guaranteed to all initiatives backed by one million signatures, including a public hearing.

Finally, thanks to MEPs, the Commission will help the organisers of an initiative by providing a user-friendly guide, by setting up a point of contact and by providing online collection software free of charge.

Next steps

The Council is expected to adopt the new legislation formally within a few weeks. After this, the Member States will have one year to enact the necessary national legislation. People should thus be able to launch citizens' initiatives from the beginning of 2012.

Further information :

[Questions and answers on the citizens' initiative](#)

