



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

The Secretary-General

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Dear European citizens' initiatives organisers,

Thank you for your letter of 19 February 2021 addressed to Vice-President Věra Jourová calling for ordinary and extraordinary measures to ensure European citizens' full access to information on European Citizens' Initiatives. Vice-President Jourová has asked me to reply to your letter.

We fully understand the challenges posed by the current pandemic to citizens' initiatives. As you acknowledge in your letter, after the start of the pandemic the Commission has taken swift action to support organisers of citizens' initiatives, allowing for the extension of the time limits for collecting signatures to the benefit of the initiatives you represent.

In order to increase the level of awareness about the European Citizens' Initiative, we have enhanced our communication efforts since 2018, when the European Commission launched the '#EUTaketheInitiative' campaign. Since the start of the communication campaign, targeted events and promotion have been carried out in 17 Member States. In 2020, due to the pandemic, planned events were replaced by very well attended EU-wide online events (the [ECI Week](#), webinars, training for Europe Direct Information Centres) coupled with digital promotion and the setting up of the [ECI Ambassadors](#)' programme. Journalists have been invited to participate in several events.

In parallel, tailor-made assistance to (potential) organisers of citizens' initiatives is provided through the [ECI Forum](#). Finally, where appropriate, information sessions on the ECI have also been part of visits of journalists and citizens from Member States to the European Commission.

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The impacts of the enhanced communication efforts have been positive. A recent Eurobarometer study¹ has found that an average of 75% of EU citizens are aware of their right to participate in a European citizens' initiative. We have also seen positive trends in the number of initiatives submitted for registration and successful initiatives reaching the threshold of more than 1 million signatures of support. Moreover, attendance at events and traffic to the dedicated web presence has equally gone up.

Raising awareness on this important tool of participatory democracy will remain a priority in 2021 and beyond. To reach a satisfactory level of awareness, we want to work in partnership with all EU institutions and bodies, civil society organisations, local and regional multipliers. We count in particular also on our ECI Ambassadors, who come from a range of organisations active at local and national level, to contribute and spread the word and foster debate about the ECI.

Organisers of initiatives also play a crucial role in raising awareness about the ECI. It is your stories, linked to topical issues faced by citizens, that can attract the interest of journalists and help increase the coverage of the ECI in the media. It is precisely why we are consistently featuring content about initiatives and associate organisers in our communication tools and actions: the ECI Forum, the monthly ECI newsletter, social media promotions, events, while remaining neutral towards the content of specific initiatives. We value your continued commitment and partnership to make the European citizens' initiative a tool better known by EU citizens.

The Conference on the Future of Europe, to be launched very soon, will also offer an excellent opportunity to citizens and civil society organisations such as yours to join the pan-European debate and to organise bottom-up events, debating the causes you care about and putting forward proposals that are important for the future of our Union. The Commission has committed to following up on the outcomes of the Conference, wherever possible.

As you can see, many actions in preparation will provide opportunities for you to bring the information about the initiatives you are promoting to the forefront. If you would like to further discuss the specific matters you raise on the ECI, please contact my colleagues in the ECI team of the Secretariat-General to arrange for a meeting via sg-eci-info@ec.europa.eu.

Yours faithfully,

Ilze JUHANSONE

c.c.: Ms Ladmanová, Member of Cabinet of European Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová

¹ [Flash Eurobarometer 485 'EU Citizenship and Democracy'](#), July 2020