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| **No 45/2017** | **21 September 2017** |

**EESC plenary gives floor to proponents of European Citizens' Initiative *"ban glyphosate"***

A few weeks beforethe European Commission was to vote on a ten year renewal of the glyphosate licence (October 4), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) offered a forum for discussion during its plenary on Wednesday. Two of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) proponents, **David Schwartz** from WeMove.org and **Herman van Bekkem** from Greenpeace, were invited to present the goals of their initiative.

President **Georges Dassis** emphasised the importance of the European Citizens' Initiative for Europeans to engage in EU policy making. As a bridge between the EU and European citizens, the EESC considers it essential to provide a forum where successful initiatives can be presented. *"In this particular case it is even more important to listen to the ECI proponents, as there is still no common position at European level on whether to ban glyphosate or not"*, said Mr Dassis.

The proponents of the ECI to ban glyphosate which is the fourth successful since its launch in 2011, reported that they collected over 1.3 million signatures within only 5 months, making it also the "quickest" ECI ever. They believed that the EU's goal should be a pesticide free future and called for a CAP reform which includes toxic free methods.

The question of a possible ban on glyphosate has indeed been dividing public opinion all over Europe, as was shown by a [debate](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/news/glyphosate-ban-question-dividing-europe) organised earlier this year by the EESC's NAT section.

Glyphosate has not been the object of recent opinions by the Committee. The various statements of EESC members during the debate reflected European society's diverging views on this sensitive issue, not least because of the controversial results of impact studies. **Brendan Burns**, the President of the EESC's NAT got to the heart of the issue: *"No one wants unhealthy chemicals in our environment or food. However, the debate we organized on 5 April at our section meeting, with ECI promoters and an equal number of pro- and anti-glyphosate representatives as speakers, demonstrated that there is no consensus on the environmental and health effects of glyphosate."*

EESC-President **Georges Dassis** concluded: *"We are not scientists, but obviously we have to accept studies, provided these are objective studies. People should definitely be placed above the interests of multinational corporations, and 1.3 million Europeans cannot be ignored. It is the EU's very duty to respond to its citizens in a solution-oriented way based on real scientific arguments."*

**Background:**

The European Citizens Initiative "Ban Glyphosate" was only registered in January this year, gaining more than 1.3 million supporting signatures in only 5 months. This ECI proposes a **ban on glyphosate**, a **reform of the pesticide approval procedure** and **EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use**.

At the annual ECI-Day organised by the EESC on 11 April 2017, EC Vice-President Timmermans announced a revision of the ECI rules in order to make it simpler and allow more citizens to participate in European policy making. As a follow up, the Commission presented the [new ECI proposal](http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/files/ECI_2017_Proposal_Annexes_en.pdf) on 13 September 2017 as part of the package accompanying the State of the Union.

The ECI was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and launched as an agenda-setting tool in the hands of citizens in April 2012, with the entry into force of the ECI Regulation, which implements the Treaty provisions.

Once formally registered, an ECI allows one million citizens from at least one quarter of EU Member States to invite the European Commission to propose a legal act in areas where the Commission has the power to do so.

If – and only if – a registered ECI receives the signatures of one million validated statements of support from at least seven Member States, the Commission must decide whether or not it will act, and explain the reasons for its choice.

**For more information, please contact:**

Silvia Aumair

E-mail: press@eesc.europa.eu

Tel: +32 2 546 8141

**@EESC\_PRESS**

[VIDEO: How has the EESC made a difference](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.videos.41081)

*The European Economic and Social Committee is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The Committee has 350 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union. It represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.*

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