



## ECI DAY 2015 GENERAL REPORT

### OPENING SESSION

#### **Henri MALOSSE, president of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**

Mr Malosse referred to the shortcomings of the ECI legislation and the problems encountered by organisers in the first years.

The President announced that the EESC was offering organisers of registered ECIs the opportunity to have the text presenting their ECI translated, thus addressing one of the most pressing problems for new ECIs. He made a couple of suggestions:

- that both the EESC and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) could issue an exploratory opinion on the future revision of the ECI regulation,
- that the EESC could give visibility to those failed ECIs, which reached a certain threshold, in order to promote the idea further, possibly in the form of an own-initiative opinion

The President presented the [European Passport to Active Citizenship](#) published by the EESC. This new booklet presents the different existing tools at the local, national and European levels for citizens to make their voices heard.

#### **Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission**

Mr Timmermans briefly presented the Commission's evaluation report on the ECI's first three years of operation, focussing especially on the follow-up given by the Commission to successful initiatives.

He briefly cited some practical problems that a potential revision of the ECI regulation could address, including:

- the problems linked to the lack of a legal personality for the organising committee,
- the timeline constraints,
- the apparent difficulties in hosting the online collection system (and the Commission's offer to continue hosting the system until a market solution is available).

The Commission launched a study to further improve the ECI. He thanked the EESC for offering its translation services.

Responding to criticisms that the Commission took a legalistic approach to the matter, he committed himself to doing everything possible to make ECIs succeed and to enhance their political impact. He did stress, however, that there would always have to be rules to ensure that the tool worked properly, and the Commission would have to stick to these.

### Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman

The European Ombudsman presented the findings of the recently presented report on shortcomings of the ECI regulation and its handling, to which the European Commission should formally respond by the end of May. Her main concerns included:

- non-transparent and inconsistent reasons for rejecting ECIs,
- she suggested that the European Commission should articulate its views on the value of the general debate generated by an ECI,
- she asked the European Commission to explain better its political choices as regards the response to a successful ECI,
- she urged the Commission to find a solution to rectify the problem that some EU citizens were excluded from signing an ECI due to technical loopholes and the claim that it was impossible to verify their signatures if they lived outside their home Member State.

The ensuing debate with participants, moderated by Bruno Kaufmann of People2power, discussed, among other things, the formalistic procedure and legalistic approach of the Commission, the arguments for refusal of a proposed ECI, possible remedies in the form of an enhanced dialogue with ECI organisers before formal registration, the current wording of Article 11(4) that prohibits ECIs aiming at a treaty change, the role of 'political champions', e.g. multipliers in the Member States, in communicating about the ECI, as well as possible solutions allowing all Union citizens to sign an ECI, regardless of their place of residence.

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## ECI Review: how to renew and reset?

### PANEL 1: THE USER PERSPECTIVE

**Chantal Cutajar**, ECI "An end to front companies"

**Adriano Varrica**, ECI "Stop vivisection"

**Madi Sharma**, Member of the EESC's ECI ad hoc group

**MOVEBG**, civil platform for collaboration and common action for shaping public policies

The first panel focussed on the **user perspective** and brought together three ECI organisers who briefly outlined the concerns of their individual ECI. The debate focussed around the following topics: the importance of having powerful political relays in Member States, the quirks of the ECI regulation that sets most ECIs up for failure, the need for more

specific advice to organisers before starting their ECIs, the necessary budget to run an ECI (pros and cons of sponsors), the strong role of volunteers, the importance of better communication of ECIs (for example holding official press conferences in Brussels), as well as enhanced IT support from the Commission services, the role of increasing momentum once signatures start coming in.

Via Skype, MoveBG, which ran the ECI on media pluralism, explained the successful Bulgarian ECI campaign, where they managed to gather the necessary minimum number of signatures.

## PANEL 2: The Member State perspective

**Lionel Antunes**, Luxembourg Member of the Commission's ECI expert group

**Pauli Pekkanen**, Finnish Member of the Commission's ECI expert group

The second panel dealt with the **Member States' perspectives**, for example in running the online collection system (Luxembourg) and the signature verification process (Finland).

As the Commission currently hosts the online collection system on their servers in Luxembourg, the Luxembourg authorities suggested certain easy changes in the implementation regulation to simplify procedures and avoid problems, for example a timeline review to give organisers a full year to collect signatures (e.g. move the preparation of the online collection system and the certification ahead of the formal registration date).

Concerning the verification of signatures, Finland presented its system (that is also used in parallel for national initiatives) and added that the different sets of personal data required across the 28 Member States make standardisation difficult.

## PANEL 3: The European Institutions' perspective

**Beatriz Becerra**, MEP, PETI rapporteur on ECI

**György Schöpflin**, MEP, AFCO rapporteur on ECI

**Inga Reine**, Chair of the General Affairs Council working group

**ManaBalss.lv**, MyVoice: public participation platform in Latvia

The third panel gave its view on the **European Institutions' perspective**, including that of the Latvian Presidency of the Council, as well as the European Parliament's perspective. **György Schöpflin**, MEP and rapporteur of the AFCO Committee, briefly outlined his proposals, warning about a risk of demobilisation of citizens, if the ECI rules were not to be simplified. He promised to feed the ECI Day's suggestions into the report he is currently preparing for the AFCO committee. He suggested the creation of a kind of digital European citizenship.

**Inga Reine** from the Latvian Council Presidency focused her attention on how to improve the existing instrument, saying that the Council would work on a possible revision of the regulation.

Via Skype, ManaBalss.lv presented a Latvian e-petition platform that had met with considerable success, with 35% of the Latvian population having visited the website.

**Beatrice Becerra**, MEP and rapporteur on the ECI in the PETI committee, suggested the long-term creation of a European register and underlined the importance of a one-stop shop at the EU institutions for citizens, be it to learn about the ECI, to contact the ombudsman or to launch a petition.

The following debate focussed, *inter alia*, on the possible lowering of the signature age to 16.

#### PANEL 4: The support perspective

**Andris Gobins**, member of the EESC's ECI ad hoc group

**Assya Kavrakova**, director of the European Citizen Action Service

**Christophe Rouillon**, member of the Committee of the Regions

**ClicknSign**, participatory democracy platform

The fourth panel focussed on the **necessary support structure** for ECIs but also on the need to enhance the dialogue between citizens and institutions, and on the role of a possible helpdesk.

**Ms Kavrakova** (ECAS) presented her organisation's ECI support centre, which *inter alia* provides legal expertise, and asked for more transparency concerning the Commission's admissibility check, and the margins of interpretation. An enhanced role of the Commission in the pre-registration phase was necessary.

Via Skype, ClicknSign presented its petition platform as a tool to engage better with citizens.

### Participatory Workshop Session

In the afternoon, the participatory workshop session was held in an open space format. Participants proposed workshop themes and created the ECI DAY 2015 Matrix Agenda. For each workshop session, participants came up with one recommendation. The recommendations were then put to a vote, in the closing session, in order to prioritise them. Recommendations are listed below in order of votes received.



## ECI DAY 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS

53 Votes

Rapporteur: Elisa Bruno (ECAS)

**"The admissibility check should be done by a jury outside the European Commission. The ECI legal officers of the Commission should have a clear mandate and facilitate public debate."**

49 Votes

Rapporteur: Sophie Von Hatzfeldt (Democracy International) and Elisa Bruno (ECAS)

**" We need an ECI app to facilitate signing of ECIs, inform about new ECIs / news / events and to enable debate beyond the ECI deadline (email to keep people informed)."**

48 Votes

Rapporteur : Pawel Głogowski (ECI Campaign)

**"More awareness, more recognition from the institutions, more citizens' participation. "**

43 Votes

Rapporteur: Marina Škrabalo (EESC)

**"Stepping up the EESC's support for ECIs: matchmaking, translations, promotion and visibility"**

43 Votes

Rapporteur: Sophie Von Hatzfeldt (Democracy International)

**"To have real impact, the European Commission should be obliged to propose a legislative proposal within 1 year at the latest. The European Parliament should draft a report on the topic and vote on it."**

43 Votes

Rapporteur: Vita

**"Communication is key to making us stronger. Participation is innovation"**

39 Votes

Rapporteur: Philippe Grosjean (New Deal 4 Europe)

**"The European Commission cannot be judge and jury on the ECI. The legal service of the European Parliament should decide on eligibility (with appeal to the European Court of Justice.) The European Commission should provide logistical support and other resources to all ECIs equally"**

37 Votes

Rapporteur: Pierre Yves Njeng (Afropean Project)

**"Think globally (universally). Act inclusively (everyone is different)."**

36 Votes

Rapporteur: Antonis Triantafyllakis(AEGEE)

**"The EU should create an official debate platform (Forum) connected to the ECI, where future ECI campaigners can openly discuss and develop their ideas."**

36 Votes

Rapporteur: Stanislas Jourdan (Unconditional Basic Income)

**"Creating an independent Helpdesk providing support to ECI organisers, including legal advice, translations, IT support, campaigning tips, access to facilities in Brussels etc..."**

36 Votes

Rapporteur: Bernard Daelemans (N-VA)

**"We are looking forward to seeing what the European Court of Justice decides regarding the ECI appeal on "Stop TTIP". This is a very important decision that should be carefully examined".**

34 Votes

Rapporteur: David Garrahy (European Youth Forum)

**"A common age of 16 would simplify ECIs and engage more young people in politics. Let us ask why it is linked right now to the European voting age! The possibility of an EU register of citizens could be helpful but difficult."**

33 Votes

Rapporteur: Paul Smits and Aleksandra Kluczka (AEGEE)

**"In order to achieve clarity on the possible scope of the Treaty as it applies to ECIs, the European Court of Justice should evaluate a controversial case."**

31 Votes

Rapporteur: Stanislas Jourdan  
(Unconditional Basic Income)

**"Allow ECI organisations to collect email addresses from signatories, in order to contact citizens who wish to be kept updated."**

Rapporteur: Paul Smits and Aleksandra Kluczka  
(AEGEE)

23 Votes

**"In order for citizens to be able to address the issues that matter to them, the EC should implement a parallel tool for citizens to share their proposals for all areas of (potential) EU action."**

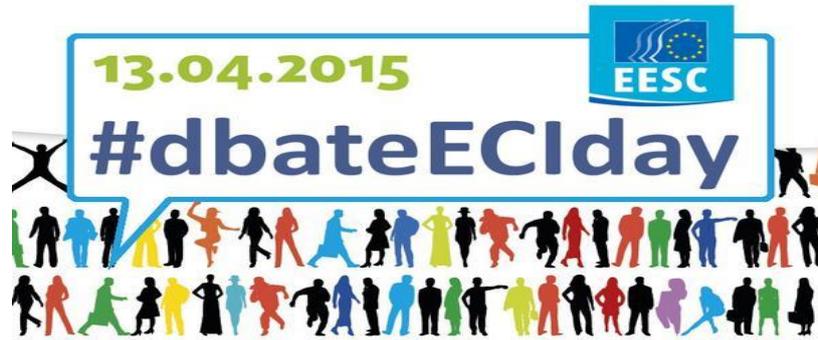
Rapporteur: Wilfried Derflinger (Republic of Austria)

17 Votes

**"Culture of mutual support"**

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## Social Media Report



With more than 1400 Tweets using the different hashtags created for the event the debate happened as much online as in the EESC premises.

### Main questions raised via Twitter

**#dbateECIday** Regardless of signatures collected have users experienced any unexpected/unintended positive consequences of organising an ECI?

In pursuit of "straightforward & uniform" signing rules as demanded by **@EUombudsman** can't we have a common signing age of 16? **#dbateeciday**

**@TimmermansEU** 1.6mn Europeans say **#stopTTIP** but **@EU\_Commission** rejects our ECI Will U make ECI really answer Citizens concerns? **#dbateECIday**

Is the **#ECI** set up to fail? Have the EP and the **@EU\_Commission** done enough to make the ECI relevant? Enriching debate now at **#eciday2015**

How to engage young people in debate & citizen initiatives? Anne-Marie Sigmund **@GroupIIIIEESC** explains **@youreurope** at **#ECIday2015**

Launch pan-EU debate to directly involve citizens in **#ECI** reform to ensure strong awareness understanding buy-in **#dbateECIday** **#ECIDAY2015**

Is the ECI about making citizens "feel" more listened to?! Or to give democratic power to citizens & actually change policies? **#dbateECIday**

"How can we improve participatory governance at European level?" Interesting debate at the **#eciday2015** **#EESC**

Thank you **@MadiSharma1** on **#ECIDAY2015** panel. When will **#ECI** organisers get more resources and visibility from **@EU\_Commission**? **@SeeRap**

Launch pan-EU debate to directly involve citizens in **#ECI** reform to ensure strong awareness understanding buy-in **#dbateECIday** **#ECIDAY2015**

## Panelists key messages relayed on Twitter

### Frans Timmermans

ECI is a political instrument. I pledged at my @Europarl\_EN hearing to engage in political dialogue. I remain committed to that. #eciday2015

@MalosseHenri puts #EESC services at #ECIs' disposal to translate them into the 23 official EU languages #eciday2015

one new proposal from #ECIDAY2015 "need to have a press-conference organised by the #EC when the #ECI is registered" from Chantal Cutajar

### Henri Malosse

ECI is the driving force that can enable European construction to take off again!

Bruno Kaufmann: How to bring in more initiatives? Still a lot to do! @kaufmannbruno #eciday2015

Beatriz Becerra @beatrizbecerrab @EP\_petitions proposes to create an European ID card & register #eciday2015

@MalosseHenri ask the @EU\_Commission to involve the @EU\_EESC for an opinion on the ECIs collecting more than 1million signatures #ECIDAY2015

Reforming the ECI is vital for European democracy #ECIDay2015 w/ @AKavrakova

#EESC member @MadiSharma1 points out the necessity of having an #ECI helpdesk, as proposed by @EU\_EESC #eciday2015

Frans Timmermans I will listen carefully to ideas and proposals to improve the European Citizens Initiative #eciday2015 @EU\_EESC

Inga Reine: Great potential to use public pressure to push for reform.

There are limits to what the EU Commission can do- support from champions at Member States is vital, says Emily O'Reilly

## Twitter pictures – ECI DAY 2015 from behind the scene

#ECIday2015 on 13 April: Review-Renew-Reset! Follow live <http://europa.eu/!jW66Xw> & tweets here. Your voice counts!



@MalosseHenri puts #EESC services at #ECIs' disposal to translate them into the 23 official EU languages #eciday2015

@EU EESC #eciday2015 Full room to make the voices of citizens heard !



Ideas to make active citizenship in Europe more efficient discussed now #eciday2015 #dbateECIday Speak out now!

@MalosseHenri announces #ECIDay2015 translation help&demands entire Article11 progress.



Nice to see the #ecitable is useful!  
[#eciday2015](http://www.ecas.org) available at <http://www.ecas.org>

VVB inv ICEC legt EU-ondervoorzitter Frans Timmermans op de rooster ivm EU inconsequentie



Watch the EESC's video to promote the ECI DAY:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.fr.events-and-activities-eci-day-2015-videos>



[Frans Timmermans](#)

Spoke to [@euronews](#) after the [#eciday2015](#) yesterday. Here's their video report on the [#ECI](#)

<http://www.euronews.com/2015/04/13/do-eu-petitions-work/>



The ECI Day 2015 was organised by the European Economic and Social Committee in partnership with:

- [Committee of the Regions](#)
- [European Citizens' Action Service](#)
- [Democracy International](#)
- [Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe](#)
- [The ECI Campaign](#)
- [Swissinfo](#)
- [People2power](#)

Please find all ECI DAY related information [here](#).

Download the European Passport to Active Citizenship [here](#).

For any information about the EESC's activities on ECI please contact us on: [citizensinitiative@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:citizensinitiative@eesc.europa.eu)