



**ECI DAY 2020**  
**Today and Beyond | 25.02.2020**



**Olga Kikou**

***"Acting for the cause, understanding how the institutions work"***

**MAIN STATEMENT: The European Citizens' Initiative is a powerful tool to mobilize citizens, if proven to effectively deliver real change.**

The End the Cage Age ECI arose out of the **animal advocacy movement**, one of the most dynamic movements in Europe and worldwide, with many NGOs and active citizens. Over **360 million farm animals** spend all or part of their short lives in cages. As people become more aware of how animals are raised and treated, they join forces to call for an end to the cruel practices of the past. Public opinion polls on the attitudes of Europeans towards animal welfare show that an overwhelming majority of EU citizens expect higher standards. The TFEU recognizes animals as sentient beings and requires MS to pay full regard to animal welfare. Some **basic legislation** exists for farm animals setting very minimum standards. However, this is not enough.

Progress has been slow. The legislative process to improve existing laws is usually very lengthy and can take over a decade for new rules to come into place by which time they're already outdated. Even then, we have **incremental change**, setting minimum standards, **not substantive reforms** needed to ensure a life free of suffering, free of pain and misery.

We used the European Citizens' Initiative instrument to overcome the '**disconnect**' between what citizens expect regarding our treatment of animals and existing policies that govern farming standards which allow for cruel practices to continue. We mobilized citizens and formed a Network of **170 NGOs** across Europe calling for an End to the Cage Age.

We live in the digital age, when online petitions are so common. We have all signed them and continue to do so. These petitions however deliver mixed results, at best. There is also the so-called '**petition fatigue**'. From my own personal experience, I used to sign many more petitions in the past. However, I did not really see results. It's easy to become **disillusioned** when you don't see results. We told citizens that the ECI is not like other petitions, it is an instrument to make the EU institutions respond and follow up with needed reform.

In partnership with





**ECI DAY 2020**  
**Today and Beyond | 25.02.2020**



The ECI enabled us to take citizens through a **learning journey**. One that involved making them aware of the issues surrounding the cruelty of cages, but also, the ECI gave us the opportunity to make citizens more aware of the **European Project** to learn more about how the EU works, how to become involved in matters that affect their lives, to use this instrument to strengthen democracy by encouraging citizen participation and active engagement.

Over the course of the last years, we used many resources, people, funds, planning, time, research for alternative non-caged systems. It matters **how it all ends up!** What the end result is. If the ECI enables us to get animals out of cages and reduce the suffering, then this immense effort will be worth it.

In partnership with

