

Workshop “European Citizens’ Initiative for the Next Generation” groupwork summaries

Group “Improving the ECI legislation”

Rapporteur Paweł Głogowski (ECI Campaign)

During the workshop participants proposed number of reform proposals, which are listed below:

- 1) European Commission should decide on registration of an ECI after the signatures collection period.
- 2) Any successful ECI should proceed to a regular legislative procedure.
- 3) Data requirements should be harmonised, so that all EU citizens can sign.
- 4) ECIs should have the ability to propose also non-legislative initiatives.
- 5) European Commission’s decision on rejecting an ECI should be more transparent.
- 6) European Parliament should manage the ECI procedure.
- 7) EU institutions should have access to full list of all EU citizens. (?)
- 8) Juridical and financial responsibility of the citizens’ committee should be clearer.
- 9) EESC should play a bigger role in the ECI procedure.
- 10) European Parliament should change its’ internal statute in order to increase its’ participation in the ECI procedure.
- 11) European Commission should help in the translation of ECIs.
- 12) Legal pre-check of the European Commission should not exist.
- 13) European Commission should be obliged to help citizens to start an ECI.
- 14) ECI organisers should have the possibility to collect e-mail addresses.
- 15) ECI organisers should have the possibility to pick the starting date of their campaign.
- 16) There should be a common budget among all EU institutions regarding the ECI.
- 17) More transparency regarding ECI funding is needed.
- 18) Treaties change through ECI should be clarified.
- 19) There should be a funding support for the ECI organisers.
- 20) ECI citizens committee should be fully reimbursed for travel expenses to the EP hearing.
- 21) European Commission should be obliged to provide an Online Collection System.
- 22) Members States validation procedure should be more transparent.

Group “Involvement of Youth in ECI organisation”

Rapporteur Paulo Gaspar (ECI End Ecocide in Europe)

The group discussion was focused on different questions that concern the involvement of young people in the organisation of an ECI: How to encourage more young people to join ECI? Once involved what are the main problems faced? How can this involvement be successful?

Regarding the first question “How to encourage more young people to join ECI?“, it was consensual the need of more **information** about ECI and about the European institutions in general. Besides, **Age** (minimum 18 except Austria) and all the **Personal Data** required in order to face bureaucracy need to be reviewed because these two elements are factors that discourage many young people to be part of the organisation of an ECI.

Then, different challenges and possible solutions were referred:

Challenges	Solutions
Lack of information about ECI/ EU system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- More Education about Europe and ECI’s at schools- Spaces for discussions which can promote youth participation (for example, Youth Councils)- The European Commission should invest on the visibility of ECI
Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be simplified- Guides for young people
1 million signatures in 1 year is hard to achieve on a volunteer-basis and without any organisation or structure supporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- More time
Distrust on institutions Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- More involvement of the European Parliament as the representative of the citizens

Group “Getting young people to vote for ECIs”

Rapporteur: Katerina Tsakanika (ECI End Ecocide in Europe)

Analysis of 4 points regarding the issue:

1) Age Limit for participation to voting procedures: Lowering to 16 years

The Referendum of Scotland was a positive paradigm having above 90% turn out –one of the biggest percentages recorded ever in the UK.

2) Online versus Offline participation of Young citizens

Unlikely with other age-groups, young citizens do not need direct contact –face to face communication- with the campaigners in order to vote. Since, the majority of them are quite familiarised with social media –mainly, facebook, twitter-.

3) Motivation for Youth Participation to European Citizen Initiatives

There is a challenge in making themselves motivated and to be further involved. Ownership and opportunity for action is what will urge them to vote.

Main barriers: lack of information and connection with the objective of the campaign

The proposed solution is for the campaigners to present an issue big enough for the Youth to care, that has a direct effect on their everyday life and/or that may affect their friends and family.

Burning issues for youth: education, internship standards, wage loss, lack of social protection

4) Approach Young Citizens: How the communication should be oriented?

Young citizens don't necessarily see all the information provided, so it is necessary to provide them with digestible information adding elements such as videos and infographics, which can prove to be valuable in attracting their interest.

The messages themselves should be interactive, creative, modern and smart, explaining the actual topic to the audience in terms that are understandable, using local language and slang.

Young people look for a compelling story to share with friends that urge for action. The latter, the action, is the fundamental key-message that needs to appear.

Finally, in order to attract more young citizens many campaigners did public calls using social media, that it be facebook, twitter and mailing lists. Universities, campuses, local community centres, youth clubs and forums can be great means of access to a bigger population and of redistribution of the campaigner's information (spread).

Group “Challenges in volunteer-led ECIs”

Rapporteur: Lilia Tamamdzhieva (ECI End Ecocide in Europe)

Main challenges identified (mainly in the example of End Ecocide ECI):

Finding Expertise

Legal Constraints

Internal communication

External Communication

Social Media

Funding

Finding Expertise

- Find volunteers depending on the skills = finding expertise
- Manage them

Legal constraints:

- Liability issues (personal liability for what you do in all countries) – you can be sued for the same thing at the same time i.e. if data is lost
- No rules that protect personal liability, so it is arbitrary (do not know how fines are decided)
- There us no evaluation of the process, no evaluation channel for how the ECI works

Funding

- Linked to finding the needed expertise and legal constraints – cannot receive donations as informal group of people
- Donations without NGO: private bank account in one country; Paypal and put account on the website; stops people from donations when they don't get receipts
- No option to make EU NGO and EUR bank account – you need to function according to local laws of 28 states
- Applied for EU funds (Youth in action); 63.000 (75%, with 25% co-funding); received the money in that personal private bank account;
- No NGO - makes it difficult to get money from institutions
- Arranged for an official document which they give to PayPal and they don't have the donation ceiling anymore
- Half of the whole budget went on travel

Internal communication:

- Self manage – need to find way to engage volunteers
- They did volunteers trainings; trained the country coordinators
- 7 people (the steering committee) – first meeting and distributes the tasks (internal comm, external comm, overall coord.&volunteers management, funds, social media and IT,

- translations); high fluctuation => tasks changed and people changed: realized that social media needed to be split (only Fb and twitter); have EU level and then country coordinators
- Have to give them exact tasks (org event in your city, do a flashmob etc)
 - Easily to attract them if there is smth negative – initially attracts them but this does not mean they really get involved; one needs to also propose solutions. Keep on board by keeping busy and ACKNOWLEDGE volunteers. EDUCATE into a sense of RESPONSIBILITY.
 - Transferring knowledge within the group if you have fluctuations it's another challenge
 - A question which has raised some discussion is how to motivate volunteers without the MANAGEMENT concept
 - Fb group works only for a while
 - Using various tools for their internal communications – nevertheless people need to feel ownership to continue doing it
 - Help citizens feel the ownership
 - Educate them to become activists, to feel responsible no matter what
 - Get a small group which encourages each other; get someone in your town;
 - Mailchimp – very passive, they don't reply;
 - What happens when the volunteer work is not enough (for the organisation).

Solutions

Best project management tools, where to find info about grants

Database of volunteers who got involved in ECIs

Provide platform of ECIs to exchange information

Full acknowledgment, gratify their work publicly;

We welcome your help (avoid the word “needs”)

Management vs facilitator vs coordination (pay attention to vocabulary)

Have a tool kit (one place to find resources and also to exchange views)

Have something that one can relate to

Community work, feel part of a community

Volunteers coordinator super important. Finding precise tasks

Face-to-face meetings

Engage people

FUNDING – database of tools from the Commission, covering relevant and suitable grants

Finding expertise and volunteers: ECI to exchange volunteers database (The United Nations

Volunteers programme for inspiration

<http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2010/UNV%20Executive%20Board%20Report%202010.pdf>).

Fluctuation => keep them motivated / attitude / overviewer / good comms / tool kits (for them to find info), make them feel ownership

Personal liability - ECI committee to change the rules, make it easier for young people and informal groups run ECI's more smoothly, provide with the necessary information, source database how to start and prepare.

Group "Social media and online campaigning"

Rapporteur: Stanislas Jourdan & REinder Rustema (The ECI Campaign)

One of the key starting points was the fact that several campaigners felt disappointed with the result of their facebook activity, having the impression of a very low engagement. We tried to identify some key practices that could help making better use of social networks.

- The combination of online and offline is key for a success campaign. Online allow you to reach more people and maintain a relationship with your followers. Offline event confirm that you exist. It is important to make the offline part visible online so that others see and want to engage.
- Offline events / meeting allow you to break the circle of online social networks and create more random connection with new people.
- Don't 'overfocus' your message. There could be thousands of arguments or stories relevant for your campaign. Allow & encourage people to tell theirs stories and arguments.
- A campaign is a 'wild ride', there is no way you can control everything. You will be always late. What you can do however is to monitor everything what's happening, analyse key facts, and try to iterate what you are learning.
- Paid advertising campaign do not work by itself. However, some budget can help to leverage your best online stories.