

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Secretariat-General

The Deputy Secretary-General

Brussels, **21 -12- 2016**

Ms. S. von Hartzfeldt (Democracy
International)
Mr. M. Efler (Mehr Demokratie)
Mr. C. Berg (The ECI Campaign)

Dear petitioners,

Let me thank you for addressing the petition on the European Citizens' Initiative to the European Commission and, more generally, for your constructive commitment in favour of a more participatory Europe.

We fully share the objective of making the EU more democratic and of bringing it closer to its citizens, which is one of the key priorities of this Commission. Rebuilding citizens' trust in the EU is one of the critical challenges for Europe today. And by promoting active participation of citizens in EU agenda-setting and policy-shaping, the ECI as a new instrument of pan-European participatory democracy has certainly an important role to play in this regard.

It is against this background, and with all due consideration, that I took note of the petition signed by more than 40 000 citizens requesting the Commission to revise the Regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative.

The Commission attaches utmost importance to the ECI and is fully aware that more must be done so that this instrument can achieve its full potential. Only four years after its date of application, the Commission does not plan to propose a revision of the ECI Regulation at this stage. However, we continue to reflect on the future of the ECI and on how to make it work better. I am grateful for the suggestions you make in this context.

The Commission has already taken many concrete steps within the current legislative framework. In particular, we have improved the registration procedure for new initiatives, providing greater transparency and giving organisers more time to set up their online collection systems before starting to collect signatures. In addition, we have improved the user-friendliness of the Commission's online collection software provided free of charge to organisers of ECIs. We have also improved the assistance our services are offering to the organisers as regards the setting up and certification of their online collection systems. We continue to offer free of charge hosting in order to reduce organisers' costs.

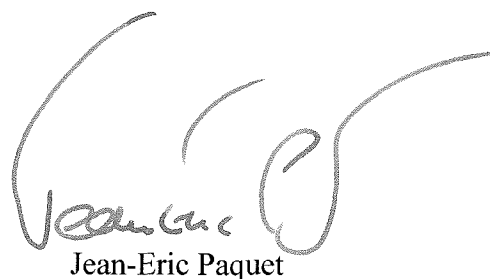
The Commission remains fully committed to improving the ECI's implementation and will continue to take action to foster greater and more effective use of the tool. We have

just launched two studies, one to assess the scope for simplifying Member States' personal data requirements for citizens who want to sign an ECI, and another on the possibility for signatories to support an ECI in a simplified way, using electronic identification tools such as eID. We are also working on the possible simplification and streamlining of the technical specifications for online collection systems. Finally, we are reflecting upon how to increase awareness of the ECI and how to ensure a more effective dialogue and public debate on ECIs having reached the necessary thresholds.

Before concluding, let me also emphasise that the Commission Work Programme for 2017, which we adopted on 25 October, announces a proposal for introducing minimum quality requirements for reused water as well as the revision of the Drinking Water Directive, both initiatives following up to the European Citizens' Initiative "Right2Water".

I look forward to continuing our constructive cooperation with a view to improving the way the European Citizens' Initiative works, making it more accessible and ensuring that it encourages citizens' participation and contributes to the emergence of pan-European public debates.

Sincerely yours.



Jean-Eric Paquet