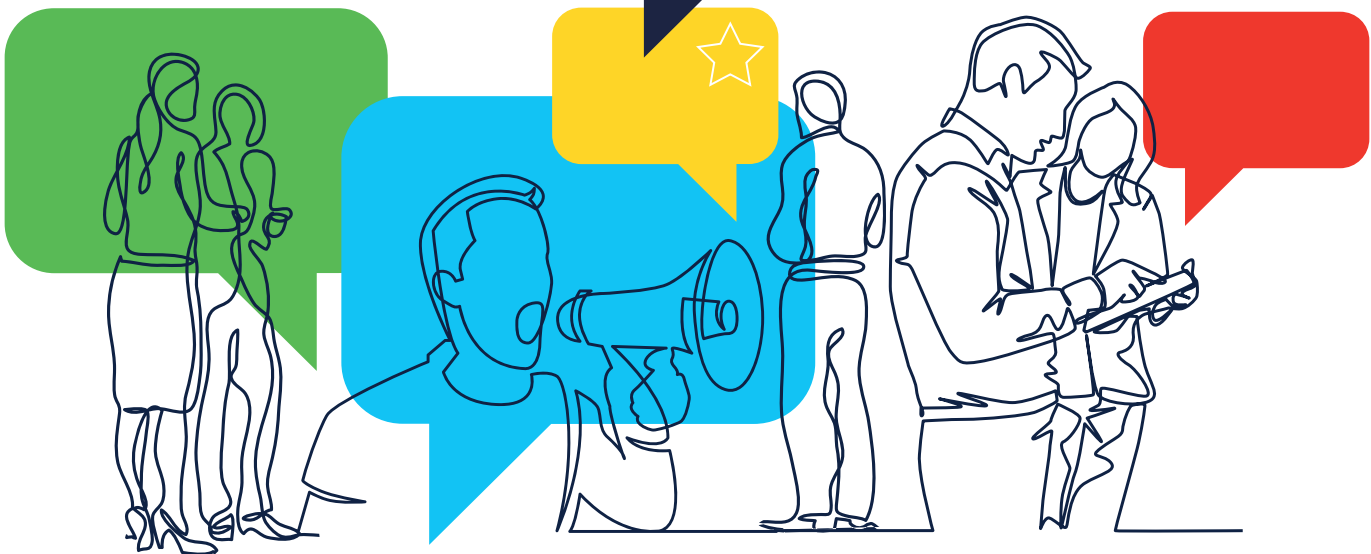




**EUROPEAN CITIZENS'
INITIATIVE FORUM**

WELCOME PACKAGE



| Table of Contents

I. Introduction	3
II. Getting Started: What you need to know to successfully carry out a European citizens' initiative	4
Overview of the European Citizens' Initiative Process	4
Getting your initiative registered	
Seek Advice – Need Guidance on Your ECI? Ask the Experts!	5
Collecting Signatures and getting them verified:	6
Understanding the central online collection system	7
The ECI Forum tools available to help you succeed.....	8
Ready to Launch Your ECI? Explore the Learning Resources!	8
Bringing the ECI Forum to You: The Welcome Session.....	9
From Novice to Pro: Become an Expert on the ECI with the Online Course	9
III. Join the European Citizens' Initiative Community and Stay Informed	11
European Citizens' Initiative Facebook Group.....	11
ECI Forum Discuss Page.....	11
ECI Forum Connect Page.....	11
Want to Share Your ECI Journey?	12
Write a Blog Post!	12
Be Featured in an ECI Forum video	13
IV. How to register to the ECI Forum using two-factor authentication	14

| I. Introduction

Introducing the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Forum Welcome Package** for organisers of European citizens' initiatives.

The ECI Forum is the support centre and an online collaborative platform (available in all 24 official EU languages) that provides advice and information to all potential and current organisers of European citizens' initiatives before, during and after the process of launching and implementing an initiative. This package is structured into four sections, each dedicated to equipping you with the essential knowledge and tools to navigate the ECI process.

This Welcome Package has been developed by the ECI Forum team, led by the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) on behalf of and under contract with the European Commission.

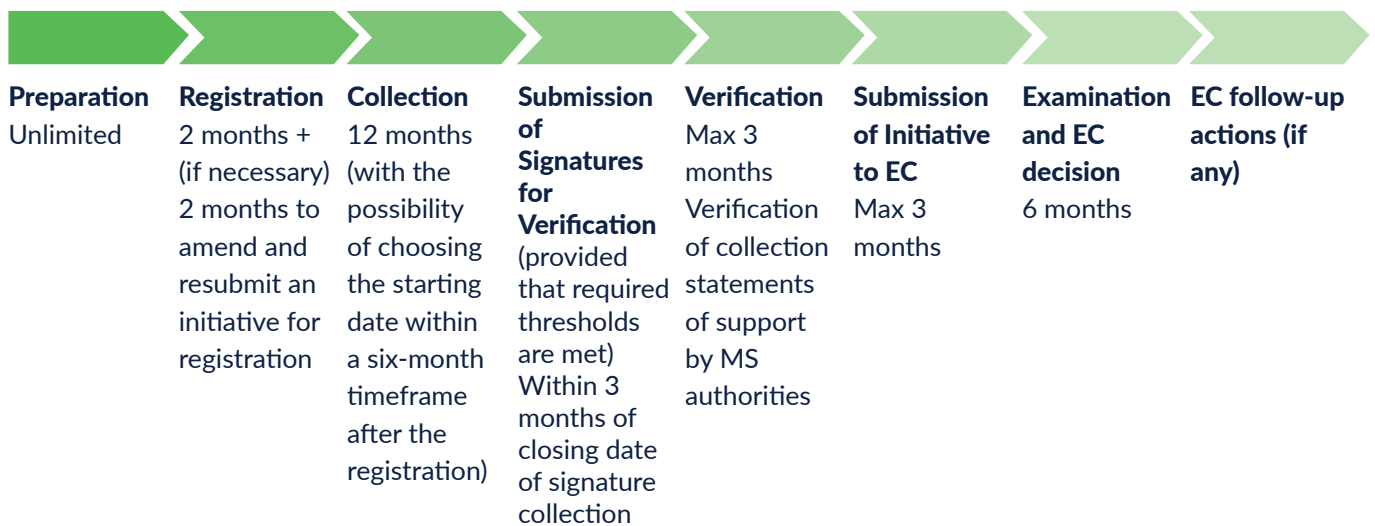


II. Getting Started: What you need to know to successfully carry out a European citizens' initiative

Overview of the European Citizens' Initiative Process

The goal of a European citizens' initiative is to reach at least 1 million signatures, including a minimum number in at least seven Member States, in 12 months.

Timeline of an ECI:



| Getting your initiative registered:

| Seek Advice – Need Guidance on Your ECI? Ask the Experts!

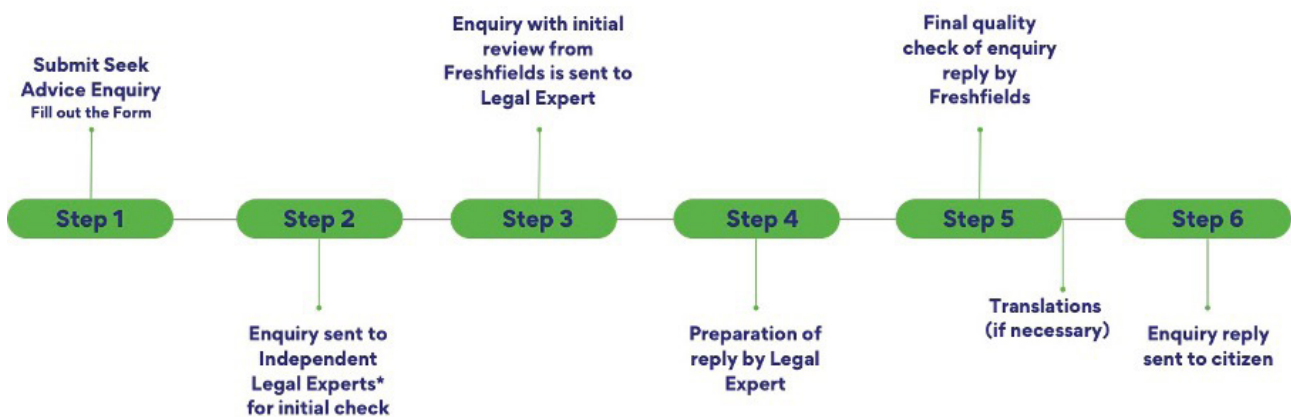
Through the Seek Advice service, the ECI Forum provides tailor-made and independent advice to potential or current organisers of the European citizens' initiatives. This advice is free to all registered users of the Forum. Experts of each topic (Legal, Campaigning, Fundraising and Other) provide answers to each enquiry submitted through the Seek Advice service. You receive the answer to your Seek Advice enquiry within a maximum of eight working days.

By asking questions and requesting guidance, you can gain valuable insights to enhance your citizens' initiatives. This function empowers you to make informed decisions and refine your strategies.

Please note - To access the Seek Advice feature you need to register to the ECI Forum.

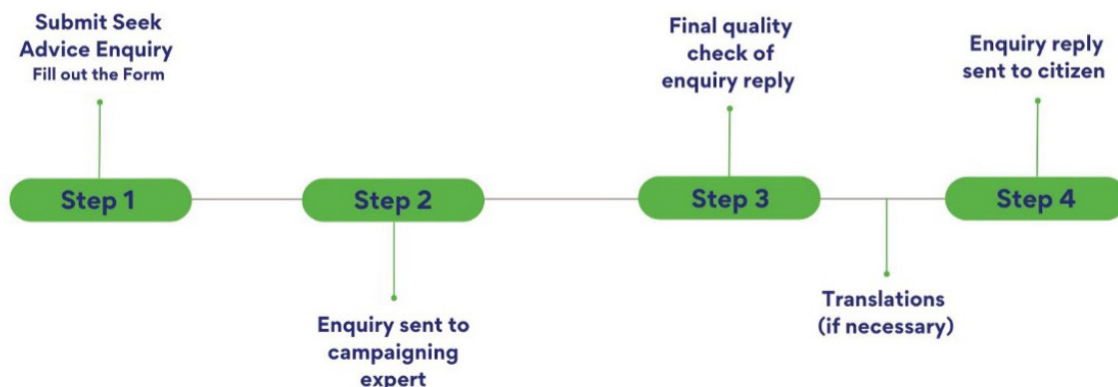


Seek Advice Process for Legal Enquiries

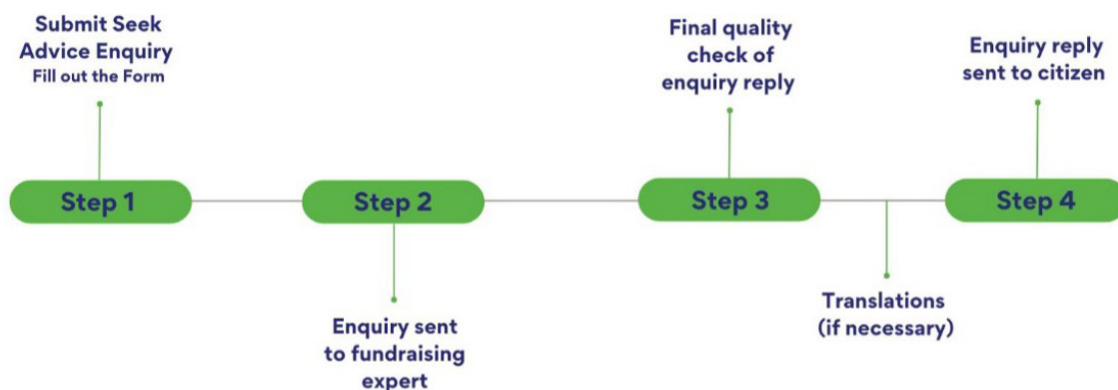


*This legal advice is provided by Freshfields is a legal firm that assists with the legal enquiries for the ECI Forum

Seek Advice Process for Campaigning Enquiries



Seek Advice Process for Fundraising Enquiries



| Collecting Signatures and getting them verified:

Remember - Signatories need to be EU citizens (nationals of EU Member States) and old enough to vote in European Parliament elections (age 18 in most Member States) – unless the Member State has decided to lower the minimum age for initiative signatories to 16 and has informed the Commission about it. See the [list of age and data requirements](#).

For valuable insights into the verification process and avoiding invalid signatures, read the blog post titled "[National Authorities Take on How to Ensure Your Signatures Get Verified](#)", featuring interviews with national authorities.

Discover the [Success Stories](#) of initiatives that collected more than one million signatures and received the Commission's reply. You can also read more about their strategies in these two blog posts:

- [European Citizens' Initiative Secrets of Success Revealed: Insider Tips on How to Get 1,6 Million Signatures and Surpass the Threshold in Twenty-One EU Member States;](#)
- [Anatomy of a miracle: how the last 20 days of the Stop Finning EU campaign became a gamechanger.](#)

| Understanding the central online collection system

The central online collection system is a tool provided by the European Commission to ECI organisers to collect statements of support online. As of 2023, it is the only system that organisers of new initiatives can use to collect statements of support online.

Want to learn more about the central online collection system (COCS)? Explore the following resources on the ECI Forum:

- Video – [The European Citizens' Initiative Central Online Collection System Explained](#)
 - Jérôme Stefanini, IT Project Officer responsible for the Central Online Collection System, highlights how the system works and its advantages
- Guidance Note - [The Central Online Collection System](#)
- Webinar recording- ['Collecting Signatures Online - What you need to know about the Central Online Collection System with testimonials from successful ECIs!', 2023](#)
 - Practical information and guidance on collecting signatures online with a focus on the Central Online Collection System from IT Project Officer responsible for the system, Jérôme Stefanini, and ECI organiser of successful ECI 'Stop Finning – Stop the Trade', Nils Kluger.

| The ECI Forum tools available to help you succeed

To have access to all features of the ECI Forum, you need to register, by following this link: https://citizens-initiative-forum.europa.eu/register_en. For more information about the registration process, refer to Section IV.

The ECI Forum has four objectives: Learn, Seek Advice, Discuss, and Connect, reflected in its structure. For the latest updates on major events or milestones related to the ECI, check out the European Commission's [calendar and news section](#).

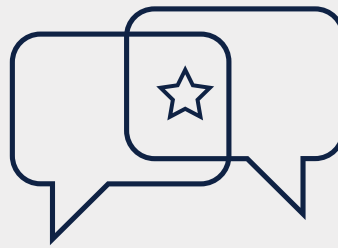
Learn



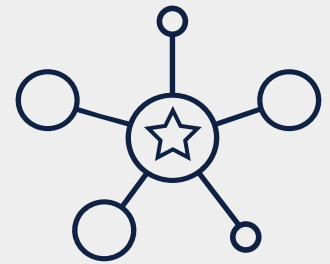
Seek Advice



Discuss



Connect



| Ready to Launch Your ECI? Explore the Learning Resources!

In the [Learn](#) section of the ECI Forum, you can find all the resources you need to manage your ECI, such as guidance notes, success stories, webinar recordings, and other learning materials.

You can find them in these subsections:

- [How to Draft and Submit an Initiative](#)
- [How to Organise a Campaign](#)
- [How to Raise Funds](#)
- [How to Look for Partners](#)
- [How to Collect Signatures](#)
- [Success Stories](#)



Under each subsection, you will find relevant webinar recordings and videos to further enhance your understanding of the topic. If any questions pop up while going through these materials, send your questions through the Seek Advice function to be answered by a relevant expert.

Additionally, the ECI Forum also publishes a yearly ECI Infographic, presenting interesting data and figures about all previous ECIs including where successful initiatives collected the most signatures, funding, reaching the thresholds in Member States, and more. The infographic can be found on the [homepage](#) of the Forum.

| Bringing the ECI Forum to You: The Welcome Session

Once your initiative is officially registered by the European Commission, the ECI Forum invites you for an individual online Welcome Session, which includes an overview of the signature collection process, the support tools available and campaigning advice. Wondering how to fundraise and develop a successful campaign to reach one million signatures? Want to learn more about the formalities of the ECI process? The Welcome Session is your opportunity to ask any questions you may have about your initiative before the start of your campaign.

| From Novice to Pro: Become an Expert on the ECI with the Online Course

Do you want to launch a European Citizens' Initiative but need more information about the process? Enrol in the online course 'Essential Skills for European Citizens' Initiative Organisers', where seasoned experts guide you through the intricacies of developing successful initiatives. This course is ideal for current and potential organisers, engaged citizens, researchers, and activists keen on enhancing their understanding of the European Citizens' Initiative as a participatory democracy tool on the EU level.

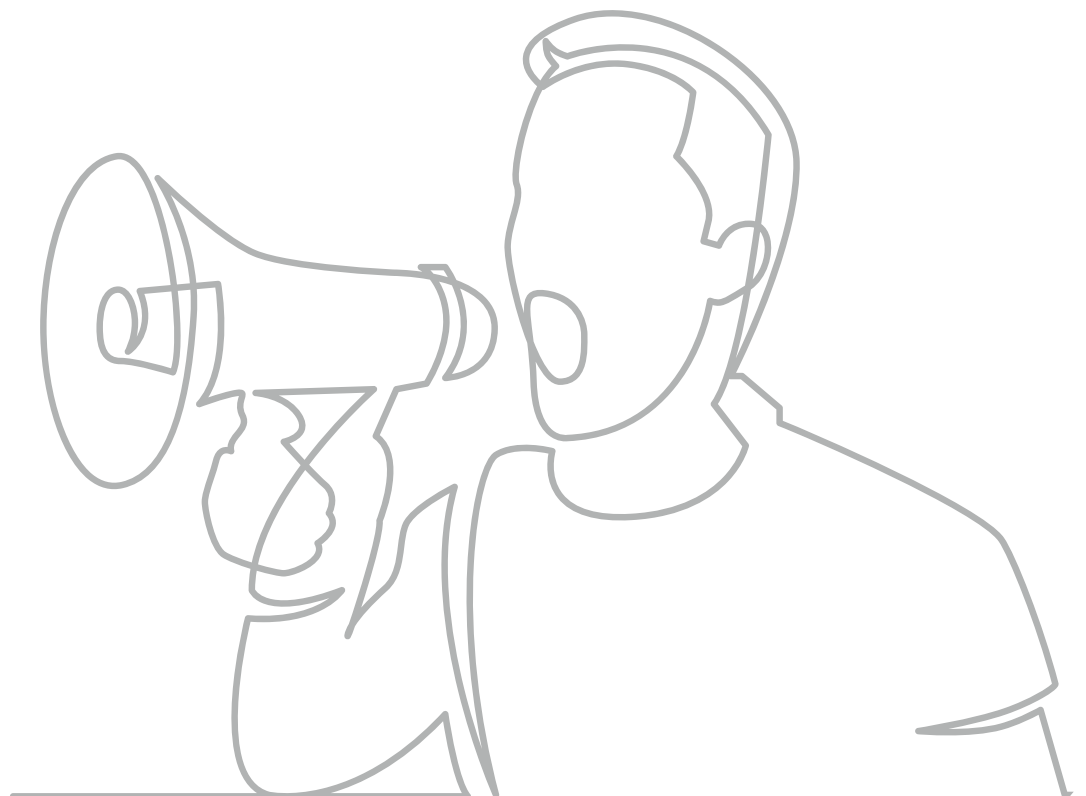


The online course '**Essential Skills for European Citizens' Initiative Organisers**' focuses on practical aspects of the European Citizens' Initiative such as:

- Understanding the areas of Commission competences and managing the registration process;
- Successful online and offline campaigning;
- Signature collection;
- Data protection requirements;
- Building pan-European support networks;
- Fundraising;
- Advocacy, and;
- Follow up actions.

Visit the online course here: <https://academy.europa.eu/courses/essential-skills-for-european-citizens-initiative-organisers>.

If you have lingering questions, submit an enquiry via the Seek Advice function—note that the online course is not a substitute for the personalised support provided through these channels.



III. Join the European Citizens' Initiative Community and Stay Informed

| European Citizens' Initiative Facebook Group

We have introduced a new way to connect and interact with organisers, stakeholders and interested citizens through the European Citizens' Initiative Facebook Group!

Join the group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/eciofficialgroup>.

This group enables members to stay informed, share information, news and events concerning the European Citizens' Initiative in general and specific initiatives.

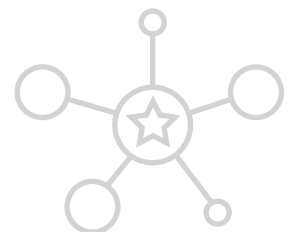
| ECI Forum Discuss Page

With the Discuss page, we encourage ECI Forum users to share their views, insights and experiences. Discuss potential topics of ECIs and any other aspects with other users of the Forum.



| ECI Forum Connect Page

Directly connect with registered users on the Forum through the Connect page. As a registered user to the Forum, you can use this page to search the database by country and area of interest and to send messages to users with whom you want to contact as a potential co-organiser or for advice.



| Stay Informed: Your Guide to ECI News and Events

Staying well-informed about the ECI is paramount for active participation and impactful contributions. To ensure you're up to date, we encourage you to subscribe to the ECI official newsletter, where you'll receive timely updates about new initiatives, Commission's replies, blogs, events, and new materials directly in your inbox.

Additionally, exploring the [European Citizens' Initiative official website](#) provides a comprehensive resource hub, while regularly checking the [events calendar](#) ensures you never miss out on important events related to the ECI. You can also see the list of past events; recordings are available for some events.

| Want to Share Your ECI Journey?

| Write a Blog Post!

The ECI Forum provides a platform for ECI organisers to share their experiences and insights at different stages of the initiative process through [informative blog posts](#), fostering a valuable exchange of knowledge within the ECI Forum community.

Organisers have the opportunity to write three blog posts for the ECI Forum: at the start, in the middle of the collection period, and at the end of the collection period (lessons learnt). The blogs are featured in the monthly ECI newsletters (with over 130 000 subscribers!). It is a great way to spread the word about your initiative to the ECI community.

If you are interested in writing a blog post, please contact the ECI Forum Team: eciforum@ecas.org. On the [learn page of the Forum](#), you will find the blog templates, guidelines and data protection and copyright declaration.



| Be Featured in an ECI Forum video

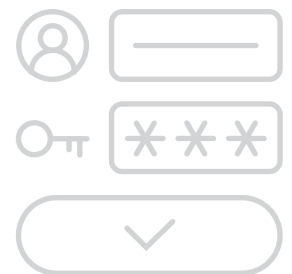
The ECI Forum is looking for ECI organisers to participate in video interviews to be featured on the Forum. If you are interested in sharing your experience as an ECI organiser, please contact the ECI Forum Team: eciforum@ecas.org.

IV. How to register to the ECI Forum using two-factor authentication

To use many of the functionalities of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) Forum (join discussions, find partners, submit enquiries, etc.), you need to [register and log in](#). You will be redirected to EU Login service, which is used to authenticate on the ECI Forum. If you do not have an EU Login yet, you can create one [here](#). For detailed information about the EU Login and two-factor authentication process, refer to the [user guide](#).

What is EU Login?

EU Login is the European Commission's user authentication service. It allows authorised users to access a wide range of European Commission web services using a single email address and password. To access the ECI Forum, you may need to complete the two-factor authentication using EU Login.



What is two-factor authentication?

Depending on the security level required by the application you are accessing, single-factor (email + password) or two-factor (username + password + challenge) authentication might have to be provided. For the ECI Forum, the two-factor authentication is required, so you will need to set up an additional verification method from the available options:

- EU Login Mobile App PIN code
- EU Login Mobile App QR code
- Mobile phone + SMS
- Security Keys (SK) and Trusted Platforms (TP)

The EU Login Mobile App is an application you can install on your mobile device from the Google Play Store (Android) or the App Store (iOS). Using the EU Login Mobile App in combination with the password provides additional security.



What do I do if I encounter technical issues?

If you encounter issues accessing your EU Login account, you can register an incident with the EU Login External Support team. To report an incident, contact the EU Login External Support between 8:00 and 17:00 CET via EU-LOGIN-EXTERNAL-SUPPORT@ec.europa.eu.

For more information on contacting the EU Login support team, you can refer to their [contact page](#).

