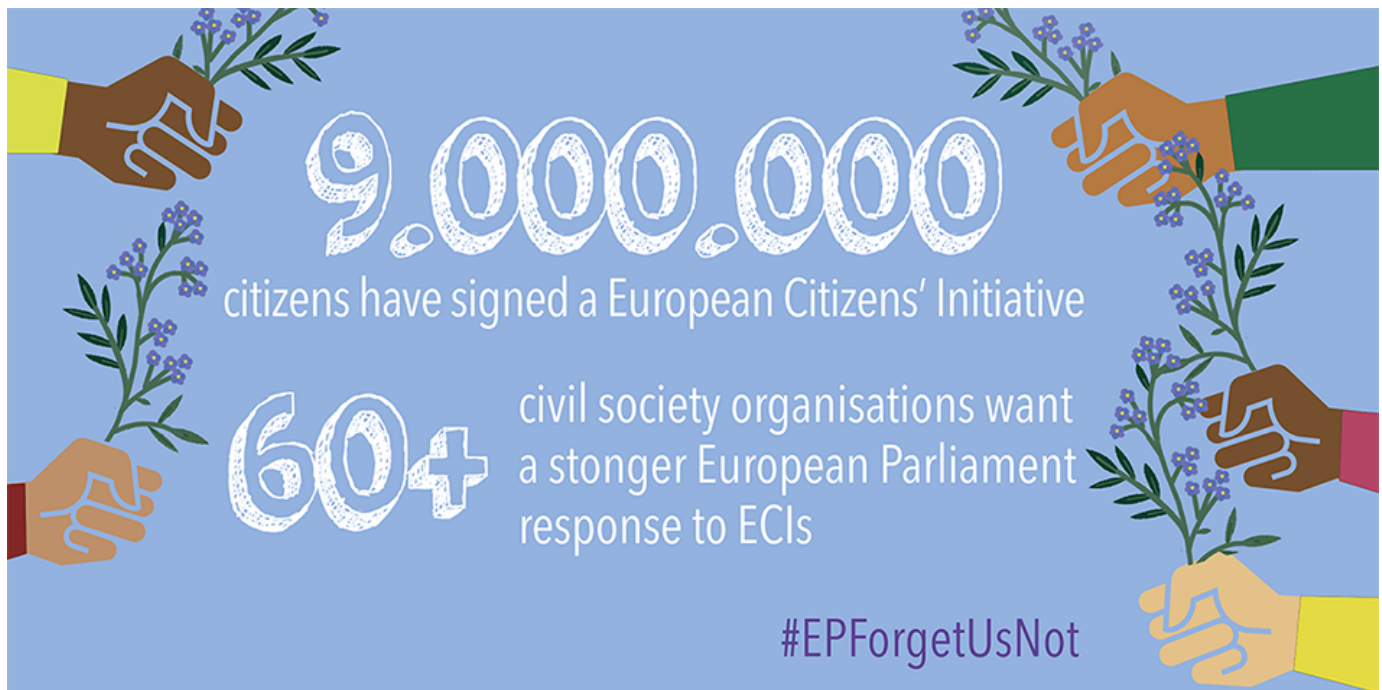


ECI : Parliament will have a bigger role thanks to pressure from civil society



(10 July 2018) On July 5, the European Parliament voted to start institutional negotiations on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) on the basis of the legislative report adopted by the Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee (AFCO) on June 20. The European Parliament (EP) voted to take the report to interinstitutional negotiations despite the fact that it does not contain any concrete, politically significant measure to improve the follow-up on successful ECIs. In particular, the report fails to commit the European Parliament to a debate and vote in plenary on every successful ECI before the Commission issues an official response, which was a demand of 89 civil society organisations, including all 5 successful ECIs, expressed by means of two consecutive open letters to the European Parliament, prior to the votes in AFCO and in plenary respectively. However, in an official statement in plenary, just prior to the vote, György Schöpflin (EP Rapporteur, European People's Party) has announced that he, with the full support of The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, shall initiate an amendment to the Parliament's own Rules of Procedure, so as to ensure that plenary debates are held on successful ECIs.

While EPSU continues to believe that it would have been better to include the

Parliament's commitment to increase its structural involvement in the follow-up to successful ECIs in the new regulation, as a guarantee for ECI organisers, we recognise that the announced amendment to the Rules of Procedure constitutes a first step of the European Parliament towards taking more ownership of ECI and making the instrument more politically impactful. We will continue to insist that the plenary debate on successful ECIs should always be concluded by means of a vote, a motion for resolution containing a recommendation to the Commission on how to respond to the ECI in question. Civil society has for years demanded a strong revision of the ECI, as the world's first transnational tool of participatory democracy has seen little political impact in its six years of existence, which has resulted in a considerable dose of frustration and scepticism about the ECI among civil society. Interinstitutional negotiations on the ECI revision between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council are expected to begin this autumn. The new regulation is expected to come into effect as of 1 January 2020.

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