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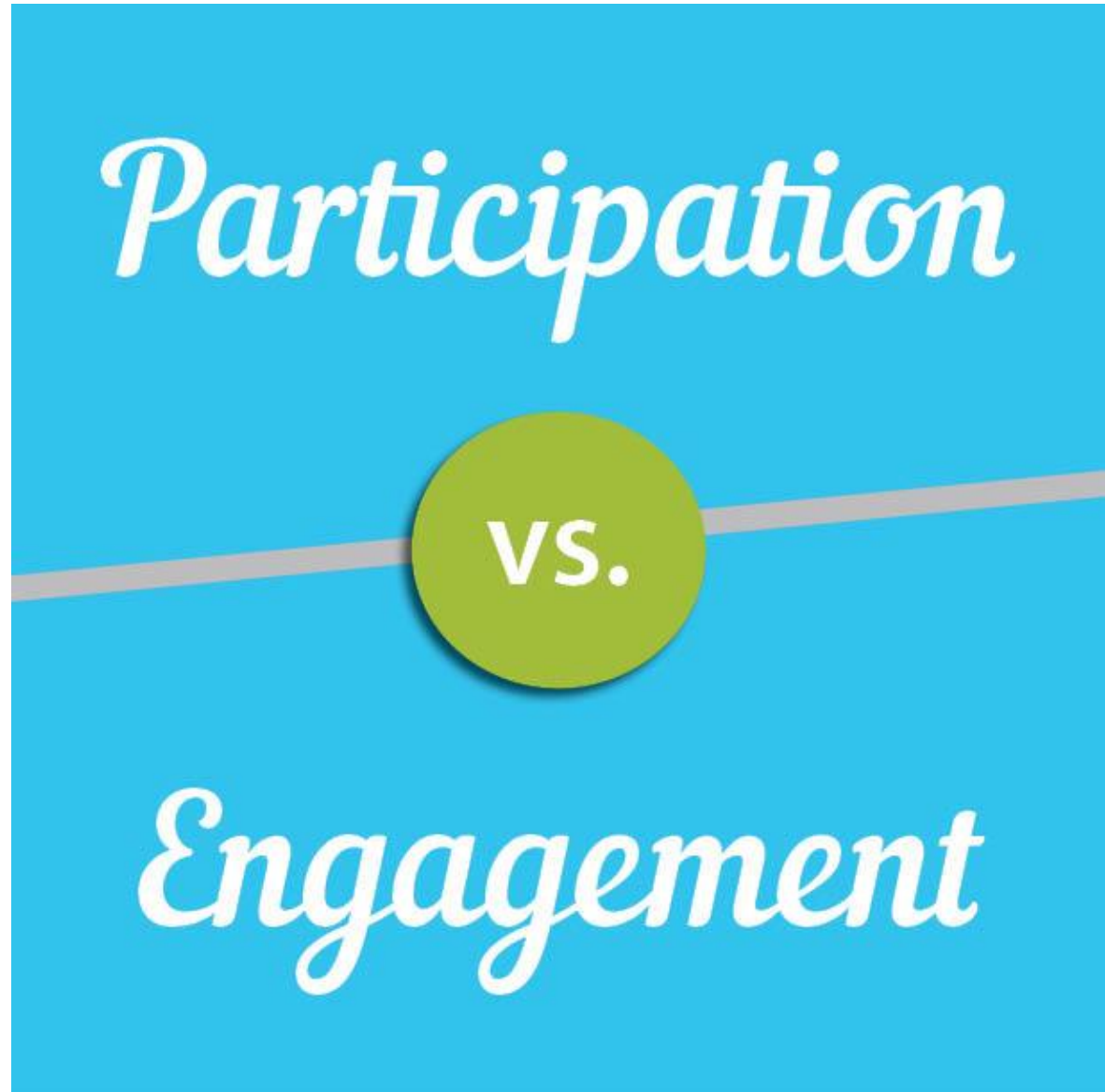


Training 1.3

EU Citizenship Participation and Engagement



What does civic
participation
and
engagement
mean?





What does **civic engagement** mean, then?

- Does civic engagement is simply another term used to refer to civic participation?
- Engaged citizens can play a critical role in making public institutions more transparent, accountable, and effective, and contributing innovative solutions to development challenges.

Fig. 1 Citizen engagement v/s Citizens participation



Citizen Engagement is:

- a top-down initiative, initiated by governments.
- Its nature is formal: governments provide citizens with the necessary tools to get involved in decision-making.
- Its main challenges are identifying what is important for citizens, convincing them to engage, and offering them all the necessary information to make well-founded decisions.



Citizen Participation is

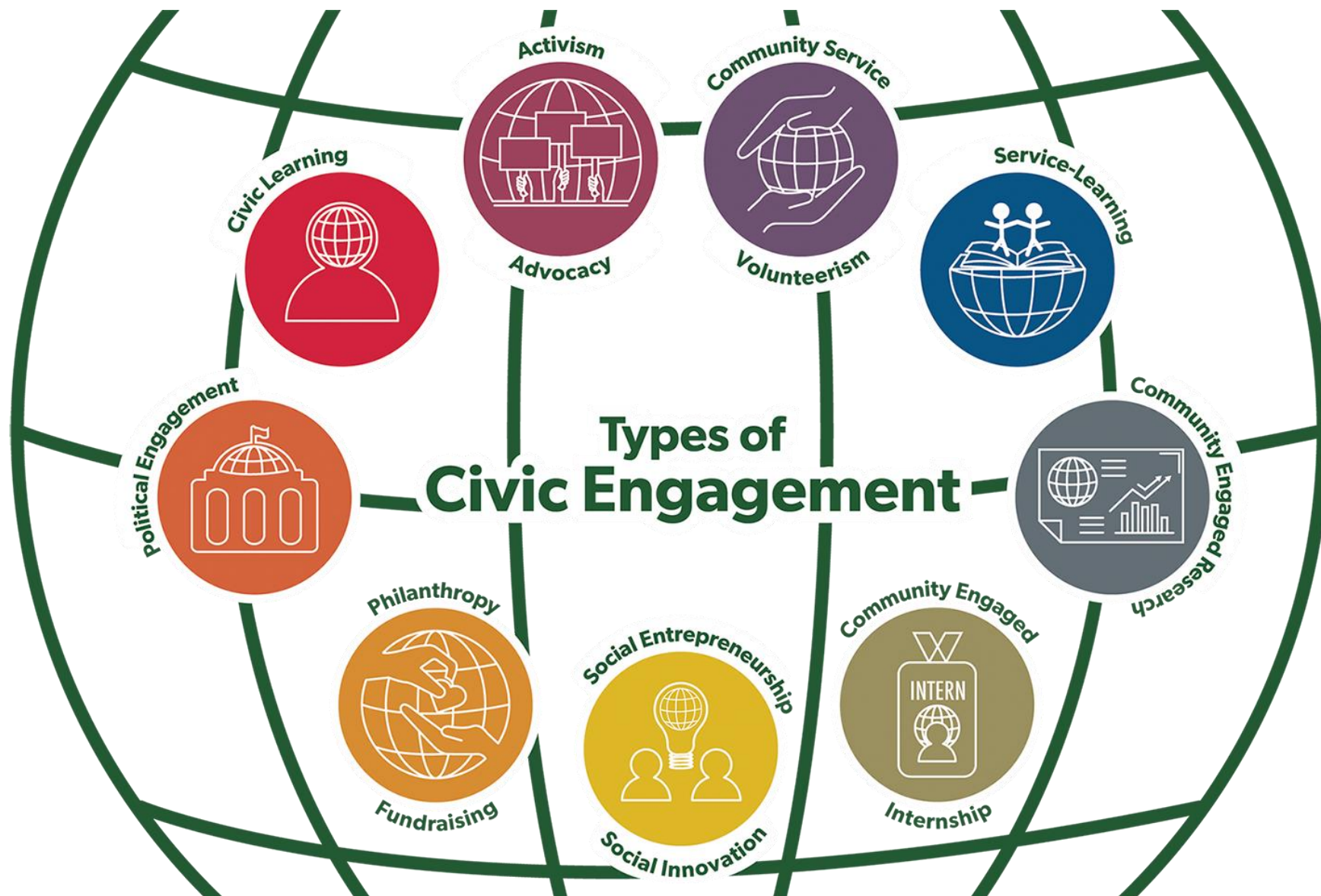
- a bottom-up initiative, initiated by citizens.
- Its nature is informal: it does not require official rules, but also cannot be applied to all policy projects.
- Its main challenges are mobilising enough citizen support and targeting larger policy domains that require higher levels of inclusiveness and awareness.

Source: Autor by Lodewijckx, 2020.



Forms and categories of engagement

- Activism and advocacy
- Volunteering
- Working for a civil society organization
- Civic research and learning
- Service learning
- Fundraising and philanthropy
- Political involvement
- Social entrepreneurship





- **Activism/Advocacy:** Involves organizing to bring about political or social change or to show support for, bring awareness to, or promote a particular cause or policy.
- **Civic Learning:** Acquiring knowledge of community, government, social issues, or political issues with or without the application of the knowledge.
- **Community Service/Volunteerism:** Engaging in activities to benefit others or one's community; such activities may or may not involve structured training and reflection.
- **Service Learning:** Involves intentionally linking service activities with student learning objectives to mutually benefit the recipient (community organization) and the provider (student) by addressing real community needs while students apply what they have learned and advance that learning through active engagement and reflection.
- **Community Engaged Internship:** Provides students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of social or political issues relevant to a particular area of study. Course is denoted as "Professional Practice" in the university catalog.
- **Philanthropy/Fundraising:** Collection of resources (e.g., money, food, clothing, etc.) to benefit charitable organizations or agencies
- **Community Engaged Research:** Creation of new knowledge in collaboration with or on behalf of a community partner that contributes to student learning within the academic discipline while also strengthening the well-being of the community by working to solve or understand an issue of public concern.
- **Social Entrepreneurship/Social Innovation:** Combining innovation, resourcefulness, and opportunity to address critical social and environmental challenges through the development of business models, products, or services.



Why it is important?



Civic participation is a central component of democratic society. Active civic engagement promotes accountability, be it between the government and the people, between different identity groups within a society, or between individual citizens.



It can help to decrease levels of violence and crime in the community, improve living conditions, and foster a sense of community pride, to reduce social isolation and lead to improved mental health and a feeling of empowerment and belonging.



Engagement can make a positive difference



1 Greater citizen participation in governance is essential if we are to strengthen representative democracy.

2 Our most pressing societal challenges can only be addressed if public policy is a shared endeavour, developed continuously in partnership between governments, citizens, civil society and other actors.

3 Citizens are best placed to understand and propose solutions about their everyday lives – and this understanding can support governments in taking decisions.

4 Our success in this work depends on rebuilding trust between governments and their citizens.

5 As citizen engagement processes are constantly evolving, we need to transform our public administrations to adapt to the challenge.





If it's good, why doesn't it work?



THE LACK OF AWARENESS



THE LACK OF ACCESS TO
INFORMATION AND
RESOURCES



A SIGNIFICANT POWER
IMBALANCE BETWEEN CITIZENS
AND ELECTED OFFICIALS





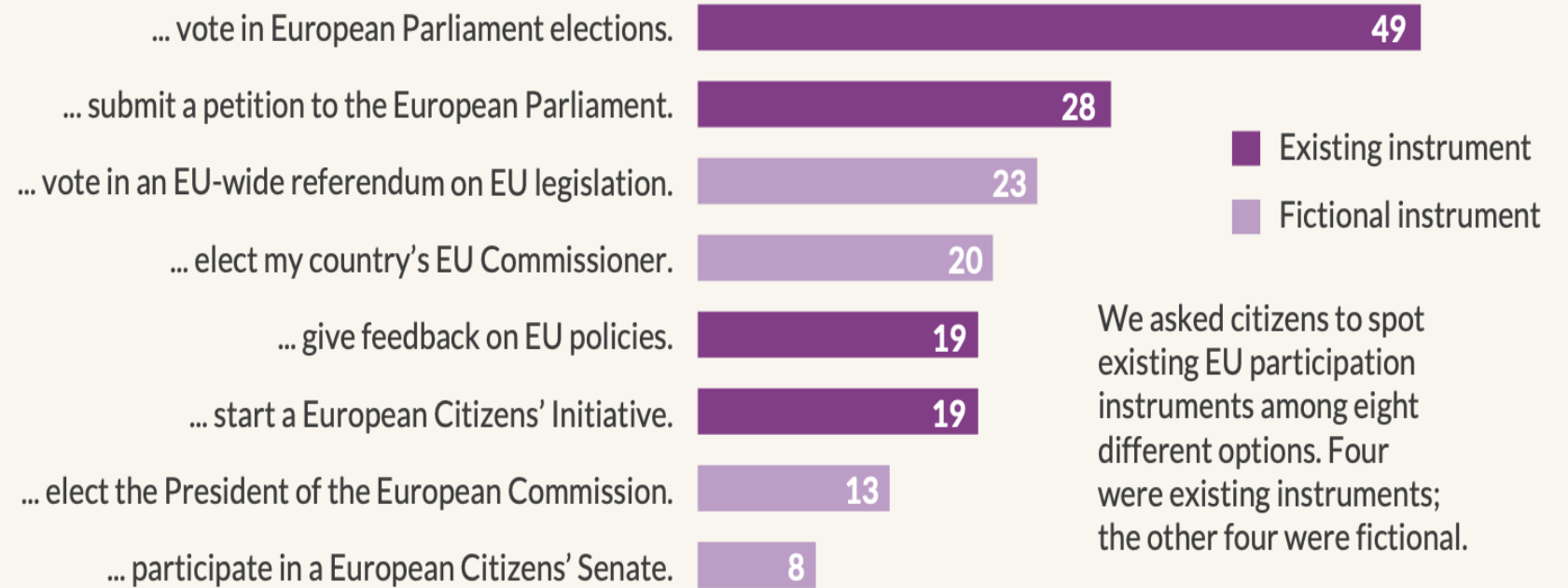
Participation of European citizens in the EU

Which of the following is true? EU citizens can ...

- 1.... vote in European Parliament elections.
- 2.... submit a petition to the European Parliament.
- 3.... vote in an EU-wide referendum on EU legislation.
- 4.... elect my country's EU Commissioner.
- 5.... give feedback on EU policies.
- 6.... start a European Citizens' Initiative.
- 7.... elect the President of the European Commission.
- 8... participate in a European Citizens' Senate.

Citizens have a
vague idea of their
participation rights
in the EU

Which of the following is true? EU citizens can ...



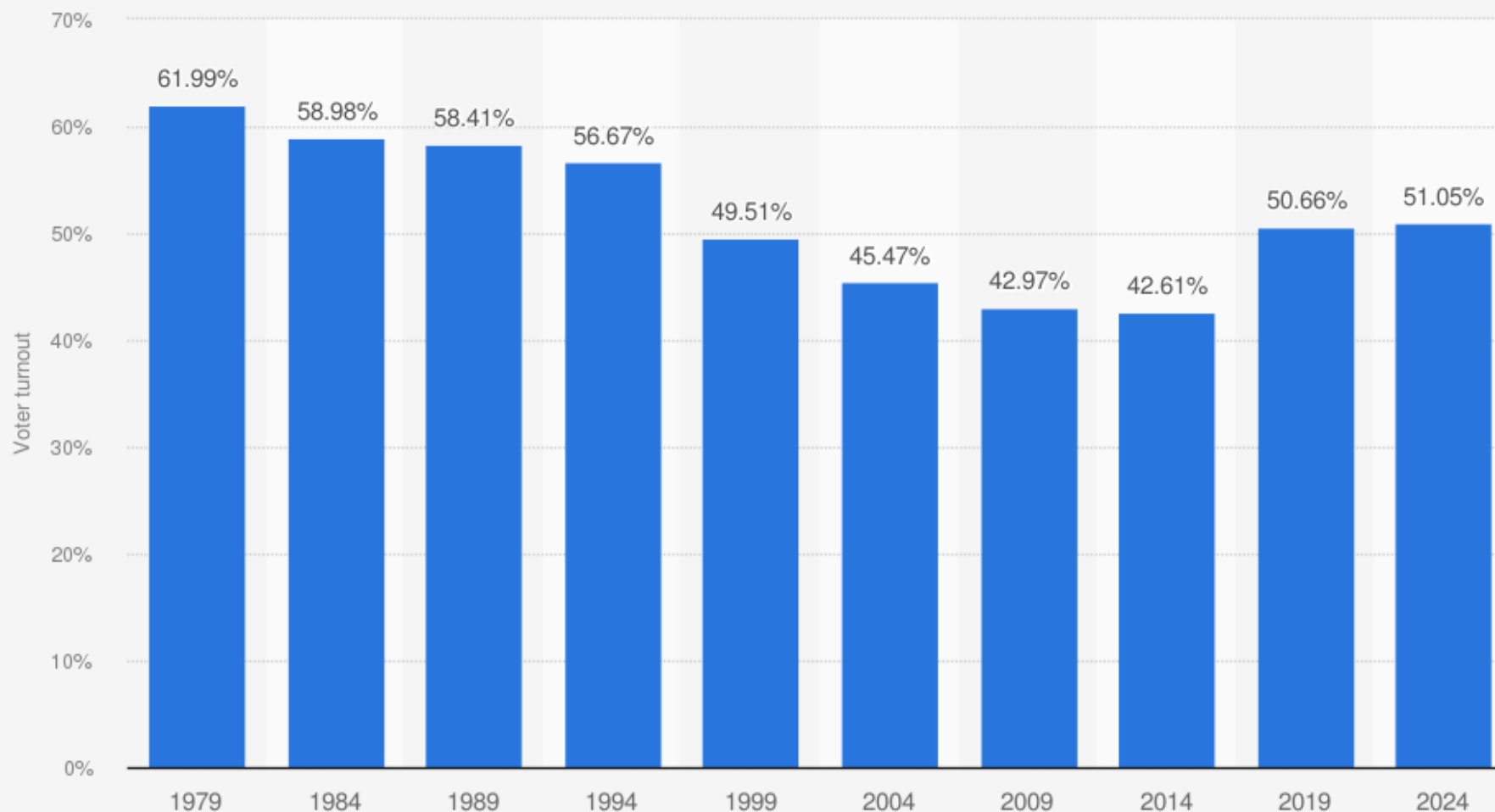
We asked citizens to spot existing EU participation instruments among eight different options. Four were existing instruments; the other four were fictional.

- 
- An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of numerous concentric, wavy lines in various shades of blue, creating a sense of depth and movement.
- **European Parliament elections**
 - **European Citizens' Initiative**
 - **Petitions to the European Parliament**
 - **European Ombudsman**
 - **Public consultations**, organised by the European Commission,
 - **Citizens' Dialogues**
 - **European Citizens' Consultations**
 - **European citizens' panels**

Enhancing citizen participation In the European Union



Voter turnout in the European Parliament Elections in the European Union (EU) from 1979 to 2024



Source
Europäisches Parlament
© Statista 2025

Additional Information:
EU; Europäisches Parlament; 1979 to 2024

Video

HOLLYWOOD

ACTION!



What is the European Citizens' Initiative?



- The European Citizens' Initiative allows EU citizens to influence EU policies by putting on the European agenda the issues that matter most to them.
 - A citizens' initiative brings together people from different EU countries to collect signatures and call on the European Commission to propose laws in areas where the Commission has powers to act.
 - It is a bottom-up way of starting a political debate and raising awareness of common causes which unite people across borders.
 - The tool was launched in 2012, and is now bearing fruit, with several initiatives leading to concrete legal proposals by the European Commission.
- 

Main steps:

Establish a citizens' committee, comprising at least seven EU citizens, living across seven EU Member States, old enough to vote in European Parliament elections. These citizens designate a representative to speak and act on behalf of the citizens' committee vis-à-vis the Commission;

Register the Initiative in one of the official EU languages with the Commission;

Establish an online collection system to collect online statements of support and have this system certified by the relevant national authorities or use the system provided by the Commission, which is available free of charge.

Launch a campaign to collect statements of support with a view to obtaining at least one million signatures in twelve months, while reaching the required thresholds in at least seven Member States (the minimum numbers correspond to the number of the Members of the European Parliament elected in each of these Member State, multiplied by 750);

Have the collected statements of support in each Member State verified by the national authority;

Submit the verified statements of support to the Commission, attend a public hearing in the European Parliament and await the response of the Commission to the initiative.



Let's find more about

- Right2Water Initiative,
- One of Us,
- Stop Vivisection,
- Ban Glyphosate,
- Minority SafePack
- End the Cage Age.

+ WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL +
• ◦ EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE? • ◦



Suggestions


- It must be something that affects/is an issue in the majority of EU countries.
- It must have broad appeal.
- It must be something that can be legislated for (rather than just a moral issue).
- Specific action should be requested (not just 'something should be done').
- There should be a clear connection between what is being asked of the Commission and the solution to the issue.

The background features three large, overlapping circles in a medium blue color, set against a dark gray background. The circles are arranged horizontally, with the middle circle overlapping the other two. A white horizontal band runs across the center of the image, containing the text.

Try to Develop and promote a European
Citizens' Initiative

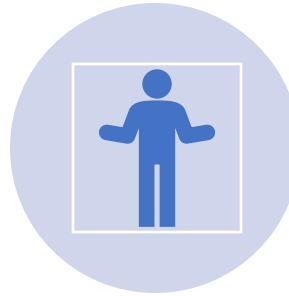


Think
about:

- How you would find people in other countries.
 - What you might have to spend money on.
 - How you would raise money.
 - What channels you would use to reach out to people.
 - Who you would reach out to.
- 



Logic: Does the idea make sense? Is there a direct connection between the action called for and, for example, improvements in society/the economy/daily life/health?



Feelings: Is the issue something people are afraid of? How much better will they feel if the issue is resolved? How will they feel if it is not resolved/if they do nothing? Is the issue something people can empathise with? Is it something that inspires hope?



Ethics: Is there a moral issue here? Is the issue morally wrong? Should we be resolving the issue simply because it is the right thing to do (although there may be a cost)?



Credibility: Are there reliable sources that back up our suggestion (science, research, etc.)? Are there individuals/groups we admire or respect (and who have shown themselves to be knowledgeable) who have taken a similar position or are involved in action?



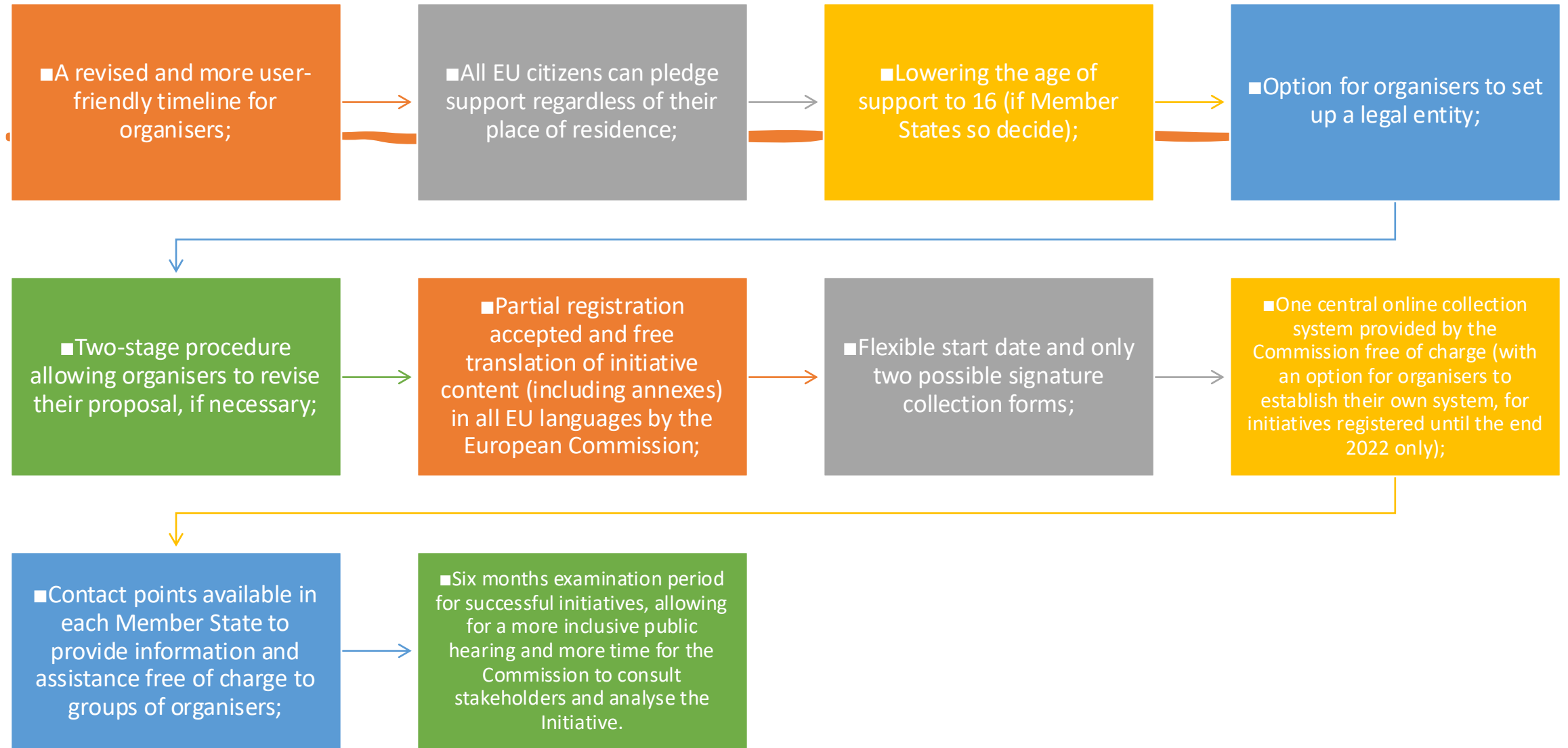
The European Citizens'
Forum - support
infrastructure for ECI
organisers



Is ECI perfect?

How could be
increased the
user-friendliness
and accessibility
of the European
Citizens'
Initiative?






Petition to the European Parliament

- One of the fundamental rights of European citizens: Any citizen, acting individually or jointly with others, may at any time exercise their right of petition to the European Parliament under Article 227 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

A large orange circle on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

EU Missions & citizen engagement activities

- Citizens' engagement is therefore a key element for the EU Missions. Missions have the potential to mobilize EU citizens around common goals and to offer meaningful opportunities to participate in change. They are instrumental to building a deliberative democracy in the EU.
- 
- A series of four yellow curved dashes in the bottom right corner, arranged in a diagonal line from bottom-left to top-right.

From Citizens'
Dialogues to
Conference on the
Future of Europe and
later the Citizens'
Panels



The future is in your hands

The Conference on the Future of Europe

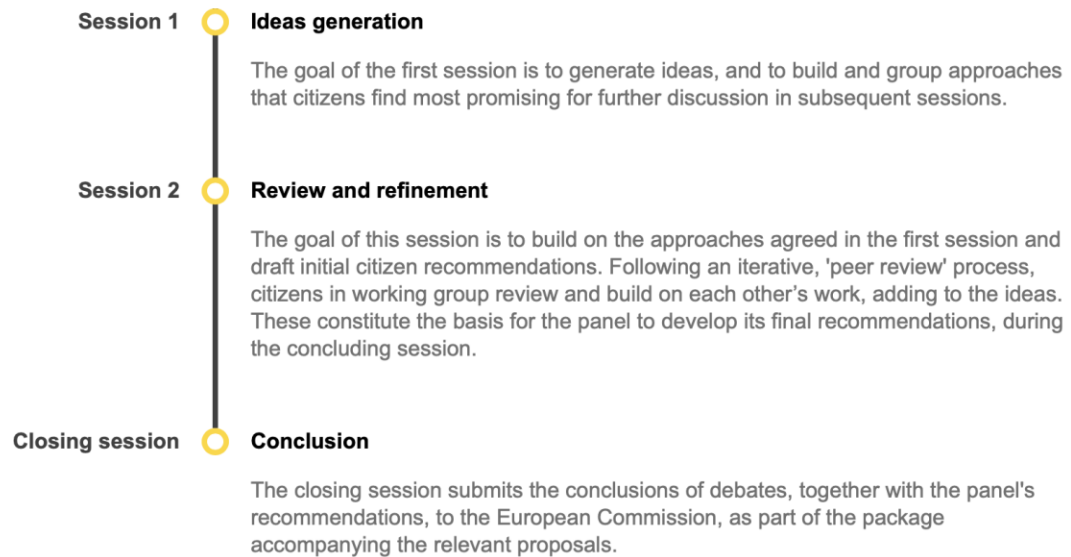
Make your voice heard



Conference
on the Future
of Europe

European citizens' panels

How does a citizens' panel work?



How are citizens selected?



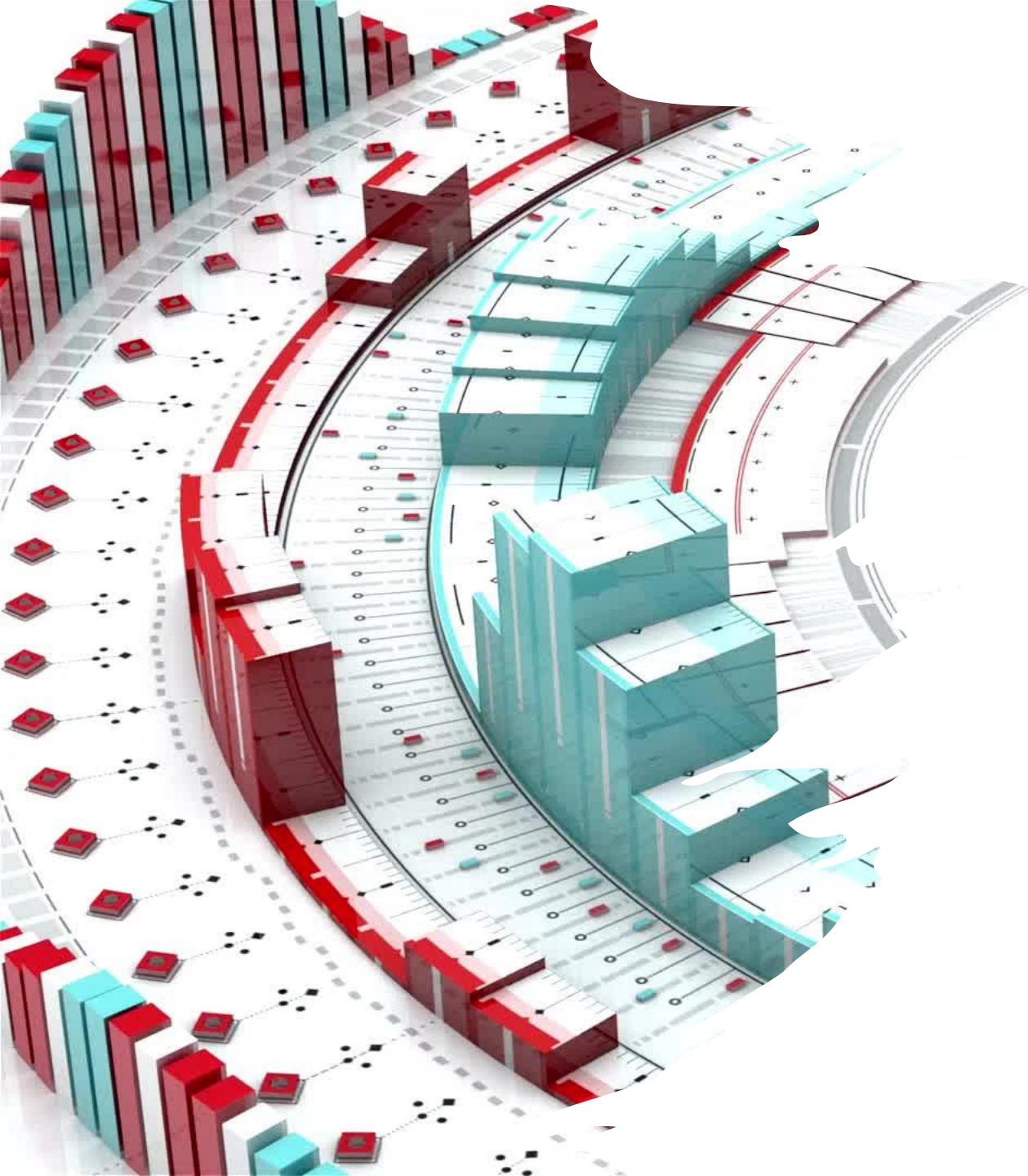
Around **150 citizens**, randomly selected from the 27 member states



Representing the EU's diversity - geography (urban/rural), gender, age, education, socioeconomic background

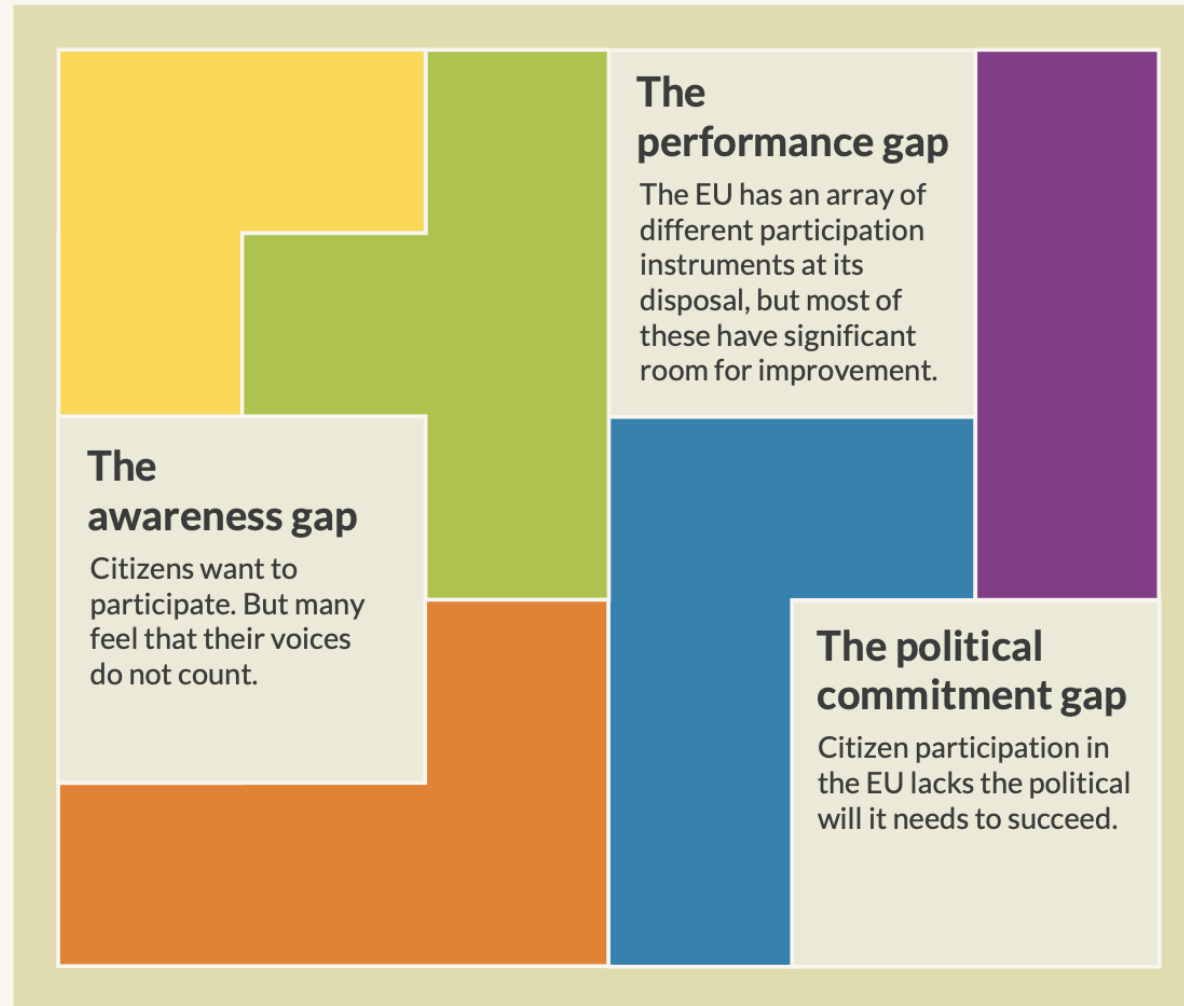


1/3 of participants are young people (16-25 years old)



- A resilient European democracy requires meaningful citizen participation. But the EU's participatory system is a patchwork of disconnected instruments. It is largely unknown and creates little impact. To give citizens a say and deepen democracy, the EU needs to develop a fully-fledged participation infrastructure.

To develop a visible, coherent, comprehensive, and effective participation infrastructure, the EU needs to address **three gaps** in its current participatory system.



Source: Hierlemann, Dominik, et al. (2022). Under Construction: Citizen Participation in the European Union. Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung. Gütersloh.

1. Citizen Engagement is a top-down initiative, initiated by governments.

a) True

b) False

1. Participation is one of the key elements of the European citizenship architecture.

a) Yes

b) No

1. What are the main goals of the "European Citizens' Initiative"?

a) To promote civic participation and engagement in the EU

b) To support economic growth in the EU

c) To promote sustainable development in the EU

d) To improve legislation in the EU

1. What is the role of the European Parliament in civic participation in the European Union?

- a) To lead campaigns to promote civic participation
- b) To legislate in the area of civic participation
- c) To represent the interests of EU citizens
- d) All of the above
-

1. What are the main barriers to civic participation in the European Union?

- a) Lack of information
- b) Limited powers of citizens
- c) Political apathy
- d) All of the above

1. To be considered successful, a European Citizens' Initiative needs:
 - a) it has to obtain the signatures of at least 1 million citizens of the European Union, spread over at least 7 EU Member States
 - b) the EU Commission must have adopted measures in response to the citizens' initiative or introduced legislation in accordance with it
 - c) to address a significant public issue
 - d) to be supported by the European Parliament





Thank you!