



HOW CAN I, A CITIZEN, PARTICIPATE IN EUROPEAN DECISIONS?



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Firstly, you can **vote every 5 years** during the European elections, to elect members of the European Parliament who will sit in the European Parliament (concerning the functioning of the institutions, refer to: *The European Union, how does it work?*). The next elections are in May 2019.

You can also participate in decisions by **petitioning** the European Parliament; **refer matters to the European Ombudsman** if you deem that European institutions are not respecting your fundamental rights (discrimination, abuse of power, denial of information, etc.), the rules and principles of the right or the principles of good administration; participate in consultations on the enforcement of European Commission policies.

But do not forget the importance of the Member States and the Council of the EU, which convene Ministers (refer to: *The EU, how does it work?*), who have the most weight in the decision-making process at European level, and thus rendering your vote crucial in national, regional or local elections, (refer to: *How can I, a citizen, participate in European decisions?*)



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THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DECISION MAKING

A section of what is known as “**lobbies**” is made up of groups that defend the public interest, based on issues such as ecology, youth, human rights, etc. These groups are active in Parliament and at the Commission. Citizens’ movements have rallied against certain international agreements.

However, citizens’ lobbies are much less powerful than lobbies defending private interests, such as industrial groups, as they have less staff and a budget that is 30 times inferior according to Corporate Europe Observatory. In order to master lobbying, the European Commission created a transparency register that lists the organisations that seek to influence the legislative process of European institutions. Registration in it is compulsory in order to meet with the commissioners and their teams as well as the general directors. In addition, the commissioners must inform about meetings held with these groups. A compulsory register shared by the Commission, Parliament and the Council is under negotiations.

EUROPEAN CITIZENS’ INITIATIVE (ECI)

Citizens can **seek out the European Commission** to adopt a text that is deemed necessary if one million signatures have been gathered from citizens from at least a quarter of the Member States (i.e. 7 States).

However, among the 4 successful initiatives, none led to EU legislation. To this effect, the **Stop Glyphosate** initiative received over 1.3 million signatures in 2017. It demanded a ban on pesticides containing glyphosate. In spite of this, the Commission proposed its renewal for 5 years, adopted by the Member States. The European Parliament created a special commission to investigate the issue. Rather than influence legislation, ECI mainly serves to **mobilise citizens**. In order to improve this measure, the Commission proposed to reform it in order to render it more accessible. However, it does not propose to reinforce the binding nature of the ECI (it is therefore up to the Commission to decide whether to legislate on the ECI subject or not).

Testimony: Anthony Simpson, spokesperson for the “Retaining European Citizenship” ECI launched in March 2017.

“To launch an ECI, the formalities are not excessively burdensome, and the staff of the Commission is helpful. What’s really hard is finding a way to launch an ECI that attracts public attention.”

MORE DETAILS

Toute l’Europe, *Société civile : quel impact sur les décisions européennes ? (Civil society: what impact on European decisions?)*

ECI campaign, <http://www.citizens-initiative.eu/>

European Ombudsman, *Problems with the EU? Who can help you?*

The Corporate Europe Observatory, *Lobby Planet Brussels*, June 2017