



## **Background information**

**Press release The ECI Campaign / Association for the ECI e.V.**

### **ECI Day**

The ECI Day is an annual event hosted by the European Economic and Social Committee and organised in partnership with civil society partners, including Bertelsmann Stiftung and The ECI Campaign. This year, the ECI Day on 5 March is part of Civil Society Week (4-7 March 2024). The event is web streamed ([link here](#)) and the full programme can be found here: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/de/CivSocWeek2024>

### **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)**

The ECI is a vital instrument of participatory democracy in the European Union, enabling EU citizens to directly influence EU policies. It came into effect in April 2012, allowing EU citizens to propose legislation by collecting one million signatures across the EU. More about this here: <https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/en>

### **End the Cage Age: A European Campaign Success (2019)**

In 2019, the ECI End the Cage Age made history by gathering 1.4 million signatures across Europe, highlighting a pressing issue: the phasing out and prohibition of cages for certain animals in farming. This campaign exemplified the power of collective citizen action and showcased the ECI's potential to engage citizens on critical issues. More about this initiative here: <https://www.endthecageage.eu/en/>

### **Commission's Positive Response (June 2021)**

The European Commission responded positively to the End the Cage Age ECI, committing to present a legislative proposal to address the issue by the third quarter of 2023. This commitment was a significant step toward realising the aspirations of the ECI and addressing the concerns of citizens. Read the Commission's written response here: [https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/initiatives/details/2018/000004/end-cage-age\\_en](https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/initiatives/details/2018/000004/end-cage-age_en)

### **Backpedalling on its Own Commitment (December 2023)**

Despite announcing that the draft legislation in response to the End the Cage Age ECI could be expected by late 2023 (as specified in the communication in response to the ECI and in the Commission's 2023 Work Programme), no such draft legislation was delivered, and the plan was absent from the Commission's 2024 Work Programme. In its review report of the ECI, published on 12 December, it gave only a very minimal explanation of the situation, indicating that "the Commission is now carefully assessing important aspects to ensure that the transition to cage-free farming is sustainable for the agricultural sector and for our food systems, including food security." It did not renew its commitment to submit draft legislation, nor to a new timeline. Read pages 16-17 of this report: [https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-12/COM\\_2023\\_787%20-%202023%20ECI%20review%20report.pdf](https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-12/COM_2023_787%20-%202023%20ECI%20review%20report.pdf)

### **Civil society organisations raise the alarm**

72 civil society organisations have [written](#) to the EU Commission on 30 October 2023, calling upon the institution to keep its promise. The [response](#) from Commissioner Kyriakides, sent on 22 January, does not bode well, as the critical issue is largely evaded.

## **The ECI Campaign / Association for the European Citizens' Initiative e.V.**

The ECI Campaign / Association for the European Citizens' Initiative e.V. is an organisation exclusively working for the successful introduction and implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative right – the world's first tool of participatory, transnational and digital democracy. We are independent, neutral in policy, non-profit and non-EU financed. Our work is carried by the invaluable input of volunteers, like-minded partners, donors and a small coordination team. The ECI Campaign is co-organising [panel 1](#) and [panel 2](#) of ECI Day on 5 March. For more information on how to bring the ECI back on track, see [our study](#) for the European Parliament rapporteur on citizens' participation in EU decision-making Helmut Scholz. Additional information: <https://citizens-initiative.eu/>