

ECI Day 2026 “From Initiative to Implementation” workshop outcomes: ideas & notes

Please note that the group numbers below do not necessarily correspond with the group numbers used during the workshop.

Question 1: Practical improvements: how can the follow-up phase of successful initiatives be improved within the current legislative framework (i.e. without legal changes)?

Group 1

- Improving the “marketing” strategy, social & traditional media, public spaces - “ECI buses” e.g.
 - Geographical & linguistic & stakeholder diversity
 - Follow-up information on the outcomes, even when negative
 - Improve accessibility of sources of information on ECI (e.g., EU Commission’s ECI website)
1. Practical Improvements
- Improve visibility among the wider public via communication campaigns (with influencers for instance), traditional (media, school, universities)
 - Need to go where the people are!
 - THE MAIN PROBLEM: lack of visibility
 - Bring it under the spotlight: posters in public, just like during EE24

Question 2: Legislative improvements: how can the legislative framework for the follow-up phase of successful initiatives be improved?

Group 2

Most popular ideas:

- Pre-legislative obligation for exchange, consultations, impact assessments, etc. for successful ECIs
- Amend rules requiring deletion of contact info post-campaign (expand window)

All ideas:

- Deleting contacts post-ECI - 5 votes
- EC to oversee MS follow-up in case of greenlight - 2 votes
- + create office for tis support ECI follow-up in MS - 2 votes
- General awareness-raising of ECIs: success stories -> put into legislation - 3 votes
- Expand signatory category to residents - 3 votes
- Expand time window for collecting signatures - 1 vote
- Research mapping EC follow-up - 3 votes
- Pre-legislative obligation on impact assessments, consultations - 4 votes
- Council, EP involvement (esp. Council) earlier on to check for support - 2 votes
- Reduce damage or turnover in EP to institutional memory regarding ECIs - 1 vote
- Digital citizen-facing instruments where citizens can post and elected (?) respond - 1 vote
- Live feedback - 2 votes

Question 3: Strategic action: how can ECI organisers, civil society organisations, citizens and political allies act and collaborate to push for a more impactful ECI?

Group 3

- Capacity building platform
- Better, more inclusive communications + transparency / accountability
- Accelerator for ECIs
- Resourcing: from EU institutions, from civil society

Group 4

- Build partnerships, build a network, explore which stakeholders are working on the topic. Work on a mapping in order to identify the various stakeholders, their key focus areas and ways of working
- Go outside your bubble, bring other sectors
- Identify allies and opposition
- Understand different levels of partnerships across the EU. Some partners may not be able to gather signatures but may help later on, during the lobbying phase
- Reach out to organizations as well as citizens. For citizens you need to put a campaign in place
- Be prepared to educate citizens on the ECI tool and its potential, as general knowledge may be low
- Don't forget to work at both national and local level
- Be ready to share info and contacts, as needed. Build trust when sharing info
- Access to funding is very important
- Make the ECI visible, spread the message re the key focus area of the ECI, as well as the tool itself.
- Visibility is key in social media nowadays
- Bring in communication experts or experienced people
- Use influencers if possible, this can lead to higher impact and reach audiences you won't have access to
- Awareness about the message and the instrument itself will bring in signatures
- Good to reach out to institutions before and during the signature collection phase, building support there. Don't expect to reach out only after the signature collection phase ends.

Group 5

- More facilitated communication between ECI organisers -> there were multiple ECI organisers on the table who stated it was the first time they had met others & already started sharing some best tips. They noted that since in general ECI organisers are voluntary, they don't have capacity to organise spaces of networking with other ECI organisers, but would greatly benefit from this being set up.
 - An online networking platform for ECI organisers where they can share knowledge for best practices?
 - A moment during the ECI day specifically for ECI organisers for knowledge sharing and workshops?
 - Other opportunities for training & knowledge sharing spaces created?
- Communication strategy being collective, inspiring, and educative

- -> finding key people who can share messages in accessible & exciting ways -
> not necessarily social media influencers but sports coaches, cultural organisers / people with wide networks
- Emphasis on educating public on ECIs through sectoral specific communications and educational institutions
 - Tapping into pre existing sectoral networks
 - Emphasis on education
- Dialogue between political allies where they listen to the organisers and understand the strategic best ways of acting -> sometimes public support is useful, sometimes not

Group 6

- Organise hearings in national parliaments to raise politicisation and facilitate cooperation with national civil society organisations and national and local MPs

Group 7

- Run and organize an ECI on the ECI
- Infrastructure: buddy system; bootcamp; event to collect funds, ideas and capacity; leverage existing alliances
- Education & raising awareness: cross-sectoral & cross-cultural
 - Engage youth - HAVE FUN!
 - High school
 - University
 - Work spaces
 = use EU funding / demand EU resources to organise workshops
- Education & raising awareness: cross-sectoral & cross-cultural
 - Global citizenship
 - Influencers
 - Target specific areas and minorities
 - "Open day" following along ECIs on the ground
 - Leverage existing resources (ESN, Erasmus ...)
- Bridge distances, "different name" as "ECI" can sound too EU-technocratic
- ECI Day celebrated outside of Brussels

Group 8

- Stronger, earlier EESC + CoR involvement in ECIs, e.g. through own-initiative opinions on ECIs
- Best practice: broad ECI coalitions, including influencers
- Involving national parliaments in public hearings + around ECIs more generally
- Ask questions about "rejected" ECIs to responsible Commissioner in case of possible re-appointment during appointment hearing
- In addition to the Communication detailing the Commission's response to a successful ECI, the Commission should hold a press conference to answer questions about its response, including with the Commission President present

Group 9

How can ECI organisers - both past and present - support, learn from one another and collaborate to push for the necessary changes and effective follow-up on each successful initiative? What role can the annual ECI Day play in this regard?

- Speak to people who've been through the process: difficulties, best practices; contacts; more contact with each other;
- Connected push from more ECIs together;
- Connect and advertise more with people;

What role does strategic litigation at the Court of Justice play? What can the European Ombudsman and the European Parliament do?

- Accountability: dismissing millions of signatures? Institutions should be there to increase accountability;
- ECIs should be presented as NECESSARY and welcome;
- To encourage people to go down the same path

Does it make sense to use the ECI to push for democratic renewal of the EU?

- Long, heavy bureaucratic process
- Education around how ECIs work: not so spread, not so easy to understand
- Perhaps a plan to disseminate ECIs and how they work with a target audience <18
- Perhaps we could think about introducing a binding mechanism for ECIs responses when the policy area of the ECI is exclusive competence of the EU; and a MSs check if the policy area is a shared competence;
- Demonstrate the intergenerational component of ECIs to better valorise the process, response and follow up
- Huge European Social Sphere component
- Funding

Group 10

1. Sensitise and involve European Parliament more by Rules of Procedure to make sure after hearing at the EP in relevant committees EP has all knowledge/political agreement to put forward an own initiative report and further pressure the European Commission;
2. Set up a specific body of the European Commission entrusted to meet annually with ECI organisers and prospective ECI committees to share intel, knowledge, best practices and to reinforce the ECI movement, offering legal advice if needed (for free)
3. Provide the EU with a dedicated budget line for ECIs, making sure that it addresses:
 - a. Knowledge deficiencies around ECIs;
 - b. A target audience of <18 to push youth to use this direct democracy instrument
 - c. Design a yearly plan of events in the 27 MSs around ECIs which revolve around the ECI day.