



PROGRAMME

09:00 – 09:30 Welcome coffee

09:30 -11:00 High-level session – A European Citizens’ Initiative that meets the moment (JDE 62)

The European Union’s pledge to champion civic engagement and participation – anchored in the Commission’s 2024-2029 priority *Protecting our democracy, upholding our values* – places citizens’ ideas at the core of policy-making. The recently published communication on the European Democracy Shield reinforces this commitment, identifying citizens’ engagement as a key measure to safeguard European democracy and civil society and referring to the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) in this regard.

This high-level session will thus put the spotlight on the European Citizens’ Initiative as a proven instrument for enabling citizens to propose EU actions. Even more so, as recent developments have underscored its potential: in just the last few months, four initiatives have each surpassed one million signatures. This momentum not only shows the growing capacity of Europeans to take the initiative, get involved and co-shape the EU agenda, but also makes this the perfect time to reflect on the possibilities that lies ahead as regards the political response to these initiatives.

Moderated by Amaia Echevarría

Introductory remarks by **Maria del Carmen Barrera Chamorro**, Chair of the Group on the European Citizens’ Initiative, European Economic and Social Committee

Setting the scene, by **organisers of European Citizens’ Initiatives**:

- My Voice, My Choice (tbc)
- **Mattéo Garguilo** - Ban on conversion practices in the EU
- **Pavel Zálešák** - Stop Destroying Videogames
- **Nina-Raluca Bucataru** - Save your right, Save your flight!
- **Olga Kikou** - Food is a Human Right for All! Guaranteeing healthy, just and sustainable food systems
- **Davide Biasco** - EU Stars On My Passport (STAR-PASS)
- **Tamam Abusalama** - Demand the full suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement in view of Israel’s violations of human rights

- **Faryda Hussein** - No more double standards on human rights
- **Jean Pierre Saulnier** - Ethics, transparency and integrity for European political parties
- **Salvatore Ricci** - Stop Funding Russia's War: Phase Out Harmful and Useless Russian Imports into the EU
- EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries (tbc)

Panel discussion:

- **Séamus Boland**, President of the European Economic and Social Committee
- **Younous Omarjee**, Vice-President of the European Parliament
- **Teresa Anjinho**, European Ombudswoman
- **Gillian Coughlan**, Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions
- **Assya Kavrakova**, Executive Director, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

Q&A round

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break (Foyer 6)

11:30 – 12:30 Workshop – World Café: From Connection to Action (Atrium 6)

Moderated by Daniela Vancic, Democracy International

This workshop aims to foster knowledge-exchange between past, present, and potential ECI organisers by creating an interactive space for sharing experiences and insights. The idea is to identify common challenges in ECI campaigning and explore potential solutions through structured discussion. Additionally, the session will focus on two new features: (1) identifying where future potential ECI organisers might be found; and (2) building on the recent experiences and winning strategies of the new ECIs that have been successful over the past year.

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch (Atrium 5)

13:30 – 14:30 Workshop – From Initiative to Implementation: powering up successful ECIs (Atrium 6)

Moderated by Carsten Berg, Maarten de Groot and Réka Heszterényi, The ECI Campaign, and Berta Mizsei, CEPS

This workshop will explore how successful European Citizens' Initiatives can generate meaningful and lasting political impact beyond signature collection. Drawing on recent ECI experiences, participants will identify what effective follow-up requires, which actors matter most, and how implementation pathways can be strengthened. The session will also examine how the ECI instrument itself can be improved and used more strategically to reinforce European participatory democracy. Through case studies, expert inputs, and interactive group work, participants will map concrete strategies – such as coordinated advocacy, monitoring tools, and multi-level partnerships – to ensure citizen demands translate into real policy change.

14:30 – 15:00 Coffee Break (Foyer 6)

15:00 – 16:00 Workshop – Participate, Propose, Progress: The power of the European Citizens’ Initiative. How can the ECI strengthen Europe’s social resilience? (Atrium 6)

Moderated by Vasiliki Mustakis, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)

Discover how citizens can shape Europe’s future! Join this interactive session that will bring together experts, practitioners, and participants to explore how the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) can empower democratic participation and strengthen communities across the continent. Through panel discussion, and a hands-on group exercise, participants will learn how collective action can foster trust, inclusion, and resilience in European societies.

Speakers:

- **Stefano Spadaro**, ECI organiser of "Demand the full suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement in view of Israel’s violations of human rights" initiative
- **Mattéo Garguilo**, ECI organiser of "Ban on conversion practices in the EU" initiative
- **Olga Kikou**, ECI organiser of "Food is a human right for all! Guaranteeing healthy, just and sustainable food systems" initiative

16:00 – 16:15 ECI Day Conclusions (Atrium 6)

Moderated by Amaia Echevarría

- **Maroš Šefčovič**, Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency
- **Séamus Boland**, President of the European Economic and Social Committee

16:15 – 17:30 Networking event (Atrium 5)

The event will be held in English.
