

10 questions and answers about the ECI “All on Board”

1. Before you tell me what “All on Board” is about, can you please remind me what an ECI is?

A European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI)¹ gives over one million EU citizens the right to demand a European law. ECIs are the first ever transnational democracy tool. A committee of 7 EU citizens living in different EU-27 Member States puts forward a request to the Commission to register the ECI, which will be accepted if it is within the European Commission’s legal competence. The organisers have a maximum of 6 months to prepare for the launch.

In the case of the ECI “All on Board”, the aim is to request **registration early in 2026** with the aim of **launching signature** collection on **15 September** (International Democracy Day). 12 months are then available to collect signatures. To be valid, the ECI must reach over **one million signatures** and **minimum thresholds** in at least **7 countries**. The organisers then present their ECI to the Commission, followed by a public hearing at the European Parliament.

2. Does it work?

Of 125 ECIs tried, only 10% have reached the one million threshold and even fewer have been followed up and implemented. Considering that it has existed for only 10 years, this instrument has yet to show its impact on EU legislation. Recently, more ECIs are succeeding and many more, even without reaching 1 million signatures, have been taken up by the EU, especially by the European Parliament. An ECI can function as an effective way to get attention on a particular issue: giving citizens a voice, they end up having a right of initiative equivalent to that of the European Parliament².

3. I have read your ECI, but can you explain in your own words what you are proposing?

We are proposing an **effective right to know, experience and benefit from EU citizenship**³. This new European right would firstly guarantee that everyone receives a European citizenship education taught both in school and out of school. Secondly, it would provide a chance to participate in a European exchange programme at some time in their life, in order to put such theory into practice. Finally, guaranteeing that the outcomes of these experiences are validated both nationally and across the EU would be essential to ensure recognition within the EU internal market.

4. Why is it so necessary to increase citizens’ participation in the EU?

Citizens often feel detached from the European Union, and we are witnessing growing mistrust toward European institutions, accompanied by strong nationalism across the EU Member States. This detachment is partly due to the fact that EU citizenship remains a concept that is difficult to grasp, as it is often taught in a formal and distant manner. Furthermore, access to European opportunities and rights tends to be easier for those who are already relatively advantaged, particularly individuals with stronger language skills and higher levels of

¹ To know more about the practical aspects of this initiative, please follow the link [here](#).

² It’s worth taking a look at at the [ECI Forum](#), which contains the testimonies of many ECI organisers. For instance, the ECI “Voters Without Borders” did not get enough signatures but its demands for full political rights for mobile EU citizens were turned into a petition and taken up in the report by the European Parliament on Parliamentarism, European Citizenship and Democracy.

³ This would be enshrined in a basic European law, backed up by more detailed legislation and amendments to the Erasmus regulation, setting out its practical implementations.

education. Erasmus is a successful EU flagship policy, but current targets reach only one quarter of university and one eighth of technical college students. As a result, its positive effects on civic awareness and trust in the EU risk remaining concentrated within the so-called “Brussels bubble” and major urban centres. To rebuild engagement, the European Union has to show its concrete impact in citizens’ everyday lives, and this is precisely what this ECI is about.

5. Is there support and where does it come from?

Yes, from citizens themselves. The citizen-led conference on the future of Europe in 2022 made several demands for European citizenship education. Since then, this was repeatedly demanded in representative citizens panels or assemblies. Our ECI is a response to this growing body of consensus coming from practice in European participatory democracy. If people keep expressing this need, it is time they are not just listened to, but that action is taken. European policy makers are also calling for more European citizenship education, especially in the European Parliament.

In Erasmus circles there are those who would like to see schools and technical colleges participating on a par with universities. If this can be achieved, a step forward would be taken to implement the new European right we are demanding⁴.

It’s a matter of principle that access to education and citizenship itself should be equal. This ECI should be a win-win situation for both citizens and EU institutions.

6. Will this be enough? The EU seems distant from citizens and caught up in high level emergency diplomacy: won’t they just complain that this is too expensive?

Yes, but at the same time, the need for resilience and strengthening European democracy is highlighted as part of the stronger response sought by the EU in a more hostile international environment. This is a policy which has political support but has yet to be internal implemented. We recognise that our proposals will have a cost at a time when teachers and Erasmus support structures are under severe pressure and will need significant additional support. However, this new European right will not be taken up by everyone, and it should not be unconditional. Furthermore, the real level of demand and impact needs to be assessed by **pilot projects** in different regions of the EU over a transitional period **before the new right comes into force**. There is potential in using existing public spaces and giving them a European legal dimension. Over time, the advantages of this proposal for creating a **European skills and employment market** and lowering barriers in the EU internal market will **outweigh the costs**.

7. How are you going to launch this ECI?

We have been working on this proposal for more than 5 years with research, discussions and an earlier attempt at an ECI called “Teach Me Europe”. This early version was registered with the Commission, which accepted its legal basis – a significant achievement, especially because education falls within the competence of the Member States. Therefore, we are confident that the new version will be accepted for registration. Moreover, we have more support this time: the law firm Paul Weiss, on a pro bono basis, is drafting the model for

⁴ This is also why this ECI has emerged from cooperation between ECIT - a think tank on European citizenship and [CLEVER](#), an Erasmus project bringing technical schools together.

legislation which will be attached to our ECI; our task forces are being mentored intensively by the DIA⁵ and we can also count on the advice of the ECI Forum⁶.

8. It's the first time I've heard about a task force. Can you explain what you have in mind?

The Task Forces (TFs) are the driving force of the All On Board campaign – dynamic, multidisciplinary groups of young people who connect the European message of equal citizenship with their local realities⁷.

Each task force will bring together young people from a wide range of backgrounds – from various academic and civic environments – combining complementary skills in research, project management, advocacy, human resources, public relations, and communication. This diversity is essential: it reflects the wide scope of European policymaking and ensures that different profiles of young people can contribute their unique perspectives to a shared vision of inclusive EU citizenship. Each Task Force will prepare for the campaign and the signature collection by setting local goals, running outreach and communication activities, and engaging peers and communities through partnerships and social media. They will also coordinate European-wide actions, contribute to shared communication channels, and regularly exchange progress and best practices through online platforms and meetings with National Coordinators and ECIT. This initiative offers them an opportunity to make their voices heard, gain international experience, and see how their field connects to Europe's democratic process. No prior experience would be required, only curiosity and motivation to participate in a transnational civic campaign⁸.

9. You said at the start that you intended registering the ECI soon and then using a 6-month period to prepare for the launch on 15 September 2026. Could you please tell me more about this preparatory phase?

Before registration, ECIT organised a launch event on 3 February in Brussels which was an important opportunity to start putting in place a broad **European coalition** of youth, student and pro-democracy umbrella groups. The European Coalition will represent the European contact point of National Coordinators and task forces, in order to amplify the campaign across multiple Member States, share best practices, and help identify potential national partners. They will be responsible for hosting monthly meetings through a rotational system between participating organisations, appointing the members of the citizens committee and amplifying the campaign at the European level alongside ECIT's own taskforce.

This will be a starting opportunity to find partners to set up contact points, coalitions and task forces in selected countries. At the moment, we are targeting **Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Finland, France, Germany, Poland, Slovenia** and **Spain**. The European task force will develop a strategy, timeline and an action kit for the ECI. This will include the basic text, model legislation, FAQ, and tools for common visual presentation and social media promotion. The important thing is that task forces and anyone who wants to support this ECI should be actively engaged on 15 September. If the ECI can get off to a good start with thousands of signatures, more people will join and the better the chance will be for reaching over 1 million.

⁵ "Democratic Innovations Accelerator" - Cohort 4-Youth Participation, run by the People Powered Program Team.

⁶ A group set up by the Commission to provide advice about legal aspects, coalition building, communication and fundraising.

⁷ ECIT used this approach for its previous ECI by creating a task force called "Voters without Borders" which had impressive visibility and output.

⁸ To know more about the overall ECI strategy, please find the complete document [here](#).

10. Finally, you wrote about the need for an outward-looking European citizenship. Can you elaborate on that?

We don't see European citizenship only as a formal legal status, limited to the EU. The sense of being a citizen of Europe is also a **historical, social and cultural phenomenon** on a continental scale. Just as Erasmus and other programmes are open to applicant and neighbouring countries, so our ECI should, where possible, be spread beyond the borders of the EU. Moreover, the EU is giving priority to further enlargement driven by security concerns. To reach the wider Europe and link European with global citizenship education, the EU should cooperate with the **Council of Europe** and **UNESCO**. These organisations have been actively engaged with citizenship education⁹ before the EU began to explore this theme and have much to offer.

⁹ In this regard, please see: the [SDG 4 of the Council of Europe Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#); the [Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#); and the [UNESCO Global Citizenship Education report](#).