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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Draft REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European citizens' initiative **(first reading)** - Adoption of the legislative act - Statement

Statement by the Commission

The Commission welcomes the overall agreement reached by the co-legislators on the proposal for a new Regulation on the European Citizens' Initiative. The new Regulation delivers on the calls for action from citizens and stakeholders to make the European Citizens' Initiative more accessible, less burdensome and easier to use for organisers and supporters. It creates the conditions for significant progress towards achieving the full potential of the European Citizens' Initiative as an instrument to foster debate and participation at European level and bring the EU closer to its citizens.

The Commission remains convinced of the importance of lowering the age of support for the European Citizens' Initiative to 16 years. Allowing younger European citizens to contribute their ideas on what the EU should do would enrich the public debate on EU matters and help bring the Union closer to young generations. The minimum age for supporting a European Citizens' Initiative, which is a non-binding instrument, can be different from the minimum age for voting. The Commission regrets, therefore, that the agreement reached does not lower the age of support to 16 years across the EU as foreseen in its original proposal. The Commission nevertheless welcomes the fact that the proposal includes the possibility for Member States to lower the age should they so wish, and calls on them to do so as soon as possible. The Commission will monitor developments on this issue in its regular review of how the initiative is functioning.

On individual online collection systems, the Commission remains convinced of the importance for organisers of having the possibility to use their own online collection systems, to ensure flexibility and diversity of collection systems. It regrets that the agreement does not ensure the continued existence of the individual online collection systems in spite of the engagement and support for these systems by stakeholders. The Commission will ensure that stakeholders are consulted on the developments and improvements the new central online collection system for the European Citizens' Initiative to take into account their suggestions and concerns.