

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVES AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS (2016.14)

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ACTION

Service in charge	DIGIT B.2
Associated Services	SG C.4 JUST C.2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This action is carried out in the context of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), a right given by the European Union Lisbon Treaty, Art 11.4 and European Parliament Elections.

The objectives of this ISA² action are to continue the efforts for improving the already provided tools; and to propose, study, assess and develop new solutions in order to improve the whole process.

Under the first ISA programme action 1.12, several goals have been achieved including:

- The Online Collection Software (OCS) was developed. The tool helps the ECI organisers collect online statements of support necessary to submit the initiative to the European Commission.
- A Validation Tool, a re-usable tool helping Member States to validate the signatures collected by ECI organisers was further developed by the Commission based on the original prototype provided by Germany.
- Tools to improve the mechanism preventing double voting in European Parliament elections (Directive 93/109/EC - participation of EU citizens in EP elections) were developed and offered to Member States
- A helpdesk for assisting the users of these tools was established.

In the scope of the ISA² programme, subject to the outcome of an ongoing study, in 2017 the action aims at enhancing the above tools in the following areas:

- Improvements for European citizens, users of the Online Collection Software (e.g. OCS for mobile devices, better user interface, accessibility improvements)
- Improvements for ECI Organisers (e.g. ISO 27K compliance, OCS Administration Interface improvements, better analytical and statistical tools, more integration with social media platforms, more support)
- Interoperability improvements (better interconnection between the ECI Register, OCS and the Validation Tool)
- Technical advice in relation to development of legislative framework (studies, risk analysis, impact assessment)

OBJECTIVES

The high level objective is to improve the ECI and EP elections processes by enhancing the already provided tools, research and develop new solutions.

As the ECI instrument is currently subject to a review, the outcome of this process may require an adaptation of the objectives in the course of the action.

SCOPE

The scope of this action covers the study, analysis, assessment and supply of tools and documentation directly related to the European Citizens' Initiative and European Parliament Elections software (Online Collection Software, Crypto Tool) and their interoperability with tools directly related to them.

This action does not cover the development of a campaigning platform/websites for the ECI organisers.

This action does not cover the development of the ECI Register legal content and administration interface.

ACTION PRIORITY

Contribution to the interoperability landscape

The contribution of the action to the interoperability landscape, measured by the importance and necessity of the action to complete the interoperability landscape across the Union

Question	Answer
<i>Does the proposal directly contribute to implementing the European Interoperability Strategy, the European Interoperability Framework, or other EU policies with interoperability requirements, or needed cross-border or cross-sector interoperability initiatives? If yes, please indicate the EU initiative / policy and the nature of contribution.</i>	<p>Yes,</p> <p>1) <u>EU initiative / policy</u>: European citizens' initiative. <u>Nature of the contribution</u>: Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 on the citizens' initiative (ECI Regulation): Article 6(2): <i>By 1 January 2012, the Commission shall set up and thereafter shall maintain open-source software incorporating the relevant technical and security features for compliance with the provisions of this Regulation regarding the online collection systems. The software shall be made available free of charge.</i> The action will maintain and further develop OCS to comply with this legal obligation. The cross border interoperability is implemented in this software as it has to comply with the data requirements as defined for all Member States, and set out in annex III to the ECI Regulation.</p> <p>2) <u>EU initiative / policy</u>: EU Treaty – Elections to European parliament <u>Nature of the contribution</u>: Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 Article 13 <i>Member States shall exchange information required for the implementation of Article 4 (...)</i></p> <p>3) <u>EU initiative / policy</u>: Recommendation on EP elections <u>Nature of the contribution</u>: Recommendation 2013/142/EU on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament: <i>"Technical means for safe and efficient transmission of data</i></p> <p>8. <i>For exchanging the data as provided in Article 13 of Directive</i></p>

	<p>93/109/EC the Member States should use a uniform and secure electronic means, as set out in the Annex ..."</p> <p>"ANNEX 1. For exchanging the data as provided in Article 13 of Directive 93/109/EC the Member States should use files following the Extensible Markup Language format ("XML"). These XML files should be transmitted exclusively via electronic means in a secure way. [...] 3. The Member States should use the W3C XML Encryption Syntax and Processing recommendation, [...]"</p>
Does the proposal fulfil an interoperability need for which no other alternative solution is available?	No other alternatives have been identified

Cross-sector

The scope of the action, measured by its horizontal impact, once completed, across the sectors concerned

Question	Answer
Will the proposal, once completed be useful, from the interoperability point of view, and utilised in two (2) or more EU policy areas? If yes, which are those?	<p>Yes:</p> <p><u>For the ECI/OCS system</u>, Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 on the citizens' initiative & ISA action 1.12</p> <p><u>For the European Parliament crypto tool</u>:the Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 & Recommendation 2013/142/EU on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament:</p> <p>The crypto tool module is used in both areas: ECI Online Collection Software and EP elections.</p>
For proposals or their parts already in operational phase : have they been utilised in two (2) or more EU policy areas? Which are they?	Yes, same as above.

Cross-border

The geographical reach of the action, measured by the number of Member States and of European public administrations involved.

Question	Answer
<i>Will the proposal, once completed be useful, from the interoperability point of view, and used by public administrations of three (3) or more EU Members States?</i>	Yes, ECI-OCS is useful by the citizens of all the Member States. Regarding the European Parliament Crypto tool, it is useful to the public administrations of all the Member States
<i>For proposals or their parts already in operational phase: have they been utilised by public administrations of three (3) or more EU Members States?</i>	Yes, same as above

Urgency

The urgency of the action, measured by its potential impact, taking into account the lack of other funding sources

Question	Answer
<i>Is your action urgent? Is its implementation foreseen in an EU policy as priority, or in EU legislation?</i>	Yes, The ECI/OCS is actively used by the European Citizens and the Crypto tool is critical for MS administrations and must be operational well in advance of the 2019 European Elections. Refer to 1.1.5.1 for the legislation from which these actions derive. As regards the ECI Online Collection Software the special urgency is required for the adaptations due to the modifications of the legal framework (especially annex III of the ECI Regulation), and the security related ones. Refer to 1.1.5.1 for the legislation from which these actions derive.
<i>Does the ISA² scope and financial capacity better fit for the implementation of the proposal as opposed to other identified and currently available sources?</i>	While the ECI Online Collection Software requires at this stage continuous update and improvement (because of changes on

	<p>legislation and feedback received from citizens, organisations and other institutions), the ISA Programme offers stability by the continuous financial framework therefore.</p> <p>Although in 2016 EU budget a new separate budget line has been for the first time created specifically for the implementation of the ECI, this source of financing is not meant to cover the necessary developments of the ECI Online Collection Software.</p> <p>Moreover, it cannot be confirmed at this stage whether in 2017 it will be possible to obtain any financing from this source (the budgetary line at issue was created in 2016 as an empty "pro memoria" one).</p>
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Reusability of action outputs

The re-usability of the action, measured by the extent to which its results can be re-used

Can the results of the proposal be re-used by a critical part of their target user base, as identified by the proposal maker? For proposals or their parts already in operational phase: have they been re-used by a critical part of their target user base?

Name of reusable solution	Online Collection Software
Description	Software for collecting Statement of Supports. It can be reused by an organisers' committee of any European citizens' initiative.
Reference	
Target release date / Status	Twice per year approach(Q2 and Q4)
Critical part of target user base	The Online Collection Software can be used by the unlimited number of citizens' initiatives. To date (since 2012) 26 initiatives have collected the statements of support using this software
For solutions already in operational phase - actual reuse level (as compared to the defined critical part)	To date (since 2012) 26 initiatives have collected the statements of support using the Online Collection Software.

Name of reusable solution	Crypto Tool
Description	Tool to encrypt xml files exchanged by Member State at every European Parliament election.
Reference	

Target release date / Status	Q3 2017
Critical part of target user base	27
For solutions already in operational phase - actual reuse level (as compared to the defined critical part)	27 Member States National Administrations

Moreover, it has to be emphasised that the crypto tool module developed originally in the area of the ECI Online Collection Software is now being reused for the purpose of the EP elections.

Level of reuse by the proposal

The re-use by the action of existing common frameworks and elements of interoperability solutions.

Question	Answer
Does the proposal intend to make use of any ISA ² , ISA or other relevant interoperability solution(s)? Which ones?	Yes, a) The Online Collection Software and the Crypto Tool will be published on JoinUp with its source code and documentation freely available. b) If possible, a common solution will be defined between the OCS and ECAS software for the graphical and audio Captcha solutions c) the crypto tool module will continue to be used in both areas: ECI Online Collection Software and EP elections
For proposals or their parts already in operational phase: has the action reused existing interoperability solutions? If yes, which ones?	Yes, the year 2016 releases of the Collection Software and the Crypto Tool have been published on JoinUp. Moreover, the crypto tool module developed originally in the area of the ECI Online Collection Software is now being reused for the purpose of the EP elections.

Interlinked

The link of the action with Union initiatives to be measured by the collaboration and contribution level of the action to Union initiatives such as the DSM.

Question	Answer
Does the proposal directly contribute to at least one of the Union's high political priorities such as the DSM? If yes, which ones? What is the level of contribution?	Yes, refer to above chapter Contribution to the interoperability landscape

PROBLEM STATEMENT

European Citizens Initiatives

The European Citizens' Initiative instrument enables one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States to take the initiative of inviting the Commission to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

If the organisers of an ECI wish to collect statements of support for their initiative online, they must build an online collection system complying with the rules set out in the ECI Regulation. This means, in particular, that ECI organisers need to choose online collection software incorporating the relevant technical and security features and to find a hosting provider ensuring that the data collected can be stored in the territory of a Member State.

In order to facilitate on the one hand compliance with these requirements by organisers of initiatives and on the other hand certification of online collection systems by the relevant Member State authorities, the Regulation¹ (Article 6(2)) requires that the Commission develops and maintains an open source software for online collection (the OCS) which would satisfy the requirements of the regulation and could be freely downloaded by anyone

European Parliament Elections

In the 2010 EU citizenship report the Commission announced that it would take action to improve the mechanism for preventing double voting in European Parliament elections which is laid down in Directive 93/109/EC (participation of EU citizens in EP elections). Recommendations for this purpose were addressed to the Member States in 2013², including recommendations for using common IT tools when implementing the data exchange mechanism. A Crypto Tool was developed by the Commission to help Member States in implementing this recommendation.

It was highlighted in the Report on the 2014 European Parliament elections³ that the vast majority of Member States welcomed the recommendations and reported that the measures had a significant positive impact in terms of cutting red tape. The report concluded that the Commission will continue, together with the Member States, to explore ways of further improving the efficiency of the mechanisms preventing double voting.

Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens' initiative, OJ L 301/3, 18.11.2011¹

² Recommendation 2013/142/EU on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament.

³ COM(2015) 206 final.

This ISA² action will focus mainly in addressing the above needs, in order to the preparation of the election of the European Parliament for 2019.

EXPECTED BENEFICIARIES AND ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

Beneficiaries	Anticipated benefits
Signatories of citizens' initiatives	Improvements in the Commission provided software (OCS) will help the signatories supporting more easily the European Citizens' Initiatives.
Organisers of citizens' initiatives	The enhanced OCS will help organisers (users of the OCS) to build their online collection systems and ease the online collection system certification process. As the OCS is offered free of charge, they will financially benefit as they don't have to invest into an alternative, potentially costly, software (see also study on OCS).
Member States competent authorities	Easier and quicker processes for verifying Online Collection Software instances and validate the signatures collected by the OCS
Member States' Electoral authorities	More efficient, standard and secure process to exchange data on EU voters and candidates participating in European Parliament elections.

ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH

Expected stakeholders and their representatives

Stakeholders	Representatives
Member States	ISA Coordination Group
Member States competent authorities	Expert group on the citizens' initiative
SG – Secretariat-General of the European Commission	SG.C.4. – Work Programme and Stakeholder Consultation
DIGIT – Directorate General of Informatics of the European Commission	DIGIT.B.2. – Corporate Knowledge and Decision making Solutions
JUST – Directorate Justice and Consumers	JUST C.2. – Union citizenship rights and Free movement
Member States' competent authorities	Expert group on electoral matters

Identified user groups

Citizens interested in the Online Collection System platform and Member States administration are interested in the Crypto tool are represented by respectively by expert groups on the Citizens' Initiative and Electoral Matters. As it is published as open source, it can also be adapted for other purposes.

Communication plan

European Citizens' Initiatives:

The representatives of SG and DIGIT will meet twice per year to agree on the mid- and long-term developments and, on working level, on a weekly basis to discuss short- and mid-term developments.

The expert group on the citizens' initiative meets twice per year in the European Commission premises. The members of the expert group can also be contacted or discuss topics in an online forum.

European Parliament elections:

Expert group on electoral matters meets yearly (or more often if required) in the European Commission premises. The members of the expert group can also be contacted or share information on an online forum. DG JUST and DIGIT will meet regularly, according to the actual needs.

Governance approach

The project steering committee, comprised of the head of units of the concerned services, meets twice per year to provide overall guidance and steer the direction of the project. The working level representatives of the services meet weekly to organise and manage the daily work.

The expert groups on the Citizens' Initiative and Electoral Matters provide expert knowledge. With regard to the ECI, this will cover and especially on questions of interoperability and concepts of e-Identification and e-signatures, during the expert group meetings and online and, if appropriate, in workshops. With regard to EP elections, this will cover especially questions related to the management of electoral rolls by the national authorities.

TECHNICAL APPROACH AND CURRENT STATUS

The software components developed under this action will be implemented based on an agile, efficient and pragmatic technical approach. This approach will combine established and emerging standards, industry best practices and state of the art technologies to empower the delivery of high quality and reusable software components.

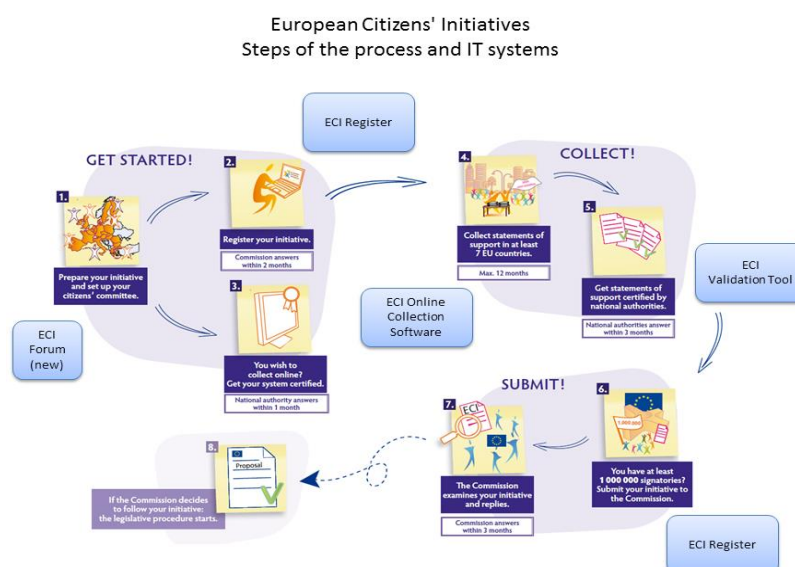
The delivery of the new or improved functionalities will be grouped in bi-annual releases. The scope and timing of the releases will be defined based on the priority and value of the proposed implementations as agreed with the main stakeholders, and can evolve depending on the impact of possible legislative changes. If needed due to legal or technical constraints the releases can be further split or combined. When needed, a feasibility study will be conducted to assess the value of the different implementation options prior to committing the actual implementation. For urgent changes to the software components, two patches (or mini-release) can be added on top of the standard bi-annual releases.

In the scope of this ISA² programme the action aims to enhance in particular the following aspects of the tools concerned. For 2017 the priorities are the following:

- Improvements for European citizens, users of the Online Collection Software

- OCS for mobile (smartphone, tablets, ...)
- OCS: Better user interface for classic / desktop version of the User Interface
- OCS: Accessibility improvements, example: Audio Captcha in all the European Union languages as an alternative of the text Captcha for the blind and visually impaired people
- OCS: Integration of the e-signature and/or e-ID solutions
- ECI Register: Enhancements for the citizens to have a better “user experience”
- Improvements for ECI Organisers
 - Facilitate the OCS instance ISO 27K compliance
 - OCS Administration Interface improvements
 - Web analytics
 - Statistics, reports
 - OCS: Tracking of successful/failed visits (visits transformed or not into a signature) in order to try to identify the reasons behind
 - OCS: More integration with social media platforms
 - ECI Register: Improvements of the Organisers’ Account user interface
- Interoperability improvements
 - More integration between the ECI Register, OCS and the Validation Tool
 - Enhancements of the Crypto Tool and the Live DVD
- Technical advice in relation to development of legislative framework (risk analysis, studies, ICT impacts assessment)
- Improvements of the tools for the national electoral authorities, to enhance the efficiency of the data exchange mechanism under Directive 93/109/EC – EP elections, and alleviate the burden on these authorities.
- Improvements of the tools on overall, and in particular, to cover candidates standing in EP elections , given that the tools currently only cover EU voters.
- Technical advice in relation to the implementation and the use of the IT tools developed under this project to exchange data under Directive 93/109/EC.
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The list above is non-exhaustive and may evolve depending on the outcome of the ongoing ECI review process and the assessment of the value of each of the proposed implementations and the decisions taken by the steering committee.



COSTS AND MILESTONES

Breakdown of anticipated costs and related milestones

Phase: Initiation Planning Execution Closing/Final evaluation	Description of milestones reached or to be reached	Anticipated Allocations (KEUR)	Budget line ISA/ others (specify)	Start date (QX/YYYY)	End date (QX/YYYY)
Initiation	Studies/Impact assessments	200	ISA	Q3/2016	Q4/2016
Execution	Release December 2016	300	ISA	Q3/2016	Q4/2016
Execution	Release June 2017	241	ISA	Q1/2017	Q2/2017
Execution	Release December 2017	200	ISA	Q3/2017	Q4/2017
Execution	Release June 2018	250	ISA	Q1/2018	Q2/2018
Execution	Release December 2018	250	ISA	Q3/2018	Q4/2018
Execution	Release June 2019	250	ISA	Q1/2019	Q2/2019
Execution	Release December 2019	250	ISA	Q3/2019	Q4/2019
Operation	Support	360	ISA	Q3/2016	Q4/2019

Breakdown of ISA funding per budget year

Budget Year	Phase	Anticipated allocations (in KEUR)	Executed budget (in KEUR)
2016	Initiation + execution + support	500	
2017	Execution + support	561	
2018	Execution + support	620	
2019	Execution + support	620	

ANNEX AND REFERENCES

Description	Reference link	Attached document
Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 on the citizens' initiative	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02011R0211-20131008&from=EN	
Commission Implementing	http://eur-	

Regulation (EU) No 1179/2011 of 17 November 2011 laying down technical specifications for online collection systems pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens' initiative	lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:301:0003:0009:EN:PDF	
Minutes of the meeting of the ECI Expert Group held on 15 th June 2015	http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/legislative-framework	
Directive 93/109/EC – Participation of EU citizens in EP elections	http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:31993L0109	
Recommendation 2013/142/EU on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament	http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/c_2013_1303_en.pdf	
Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Expert Group held on 12 th June 2015	https://circabc.europa.eu/ Interest group: European Parliament Election Data exchange (category: Justice and Consumers).	