

Students' Initiatives

*Fernando Borges**

The “ECI From A to Z” organized two ECI Models throughout the duration of the project. The first ECI Model was hosted by the University of Vigo, between March 8th and March 12th, 2022, and the second was at the University of Göttingen, between October 11th and October 15th 2022. Participants from University of Coimbra, Iasi University, University of Vigo and University of Göttingen gathered to simulate an ECI process. The students formed groups where each one presented an ECI proposal, simulating all the steps, including a public presentation to the EU Parliament and Commission meeting to assess the proposals.

This activity enabled the participants to create a prototype ECI, creating the conditions to understand what students consider to be in an ECI. The analysis of the “Request for Registration of an initiative” will show how they interpret the elements of an ECI and what the essentials that need to be in a proposal are. The “Request for Registration of an initiative” has 4 main elements that will be highlighted here for this chapter: Title of the citizen’s initiative; Objectives of the initiative; Provisions of the Treaties; Categories. In the ECI Model in Vigo 8 groups presented initiatives, whereas in Göttingen ECI Model, the participants submitted 7 ECI. Besides submitting an ECI proposal, students presented their ideas before a simulated EU Parliament. Using oral and visual techniques, they could express their views, clarify some aspects, and reinforce some key-elements.

Here are the results of the 15 proposals and logos from their presentations:

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Ensure security for refugee mobility

Organisers: Ángel Lorenzo Guisande, Dorothee Sartorius, Giulia Măriuş, Heloisa Bueno, Sofia Gonzalez Rodríguez, and Maria Luna Sposato.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to implement a new Directive regarding the requirements needed to conceive the status of refugee as a way to homogenize legislation in all Member States. This new regulation should consider

- Providing buses to allocate people, but in cases of need, private companies could also help with transportation through a partnership with the EU.
- The allocation of hygiene kits, including sanitary articles and supplies for child-care from the first

site of entry to the final destination.

- An Erasmus+ volunteer programme related to refugees.
- The installation of a European phone line in case of emergency, providing assistance in various languages.
- A compulsory annual report made by Member States on human trafficking and discrimination against refugees.

Treaty Provisions: Article 78 TFEU - Article 18 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Categories: Migration and Asylum – Security Transport.

New Focus on the right of Erasure within the EU

Organisers: Lara Ximenes, Cristina-Gabriela Petraru, Mariafé Gonzales, Joana Carvalho, María Otero, and Sarah Duteil.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation to ensure that everybody has the right of erasure and protection regarding their online presence and digital signature.

Treaty Provisions: Article 16 of TFEU, Article 10 of ECHR, Article 11 of CFREU.

Categories: Culture and Media, Justice and Fundamental Rights, Security.

Unpack the Earth

Organisers: Xosé Wamba Alonso, Daniela Leu, Inês Cardoso, Jonna Eileen Eickhoff, Clara Graña Dosantos, Ana Raquel Moreira, Jonathan Samuel Neugebauer, and Stefania Andrei-Bolog.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to promote the use of biodegradable material as an alternative plastic in packaging, by increasing taxes on plastic packaging production

Treaty Provisions: Article 4, Section 1-2 TFEU, Article 11 TFEU, Article 114, Section 3 TFEU, Article 191, Section 1-2 TFEU.

Categories: Consumers and Health – Environment and Climate.

Fair Frontex: push back their uncontrollable competences, not people!

Organisers: Diogo Conceição, Rafael Ferreira Pardiñas, Frederico Sobrinho, Diego Collazos Iglesias, Nikolina Domazet, and Ronja Juckols.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to make Frontex fairer, safer, more transparent and accountable by:

a) reforming the Agency's governance framework, namely by establishing an independent supervisory body that ensures the Agency's commitment to human rights, democracy and EU values; enforcing the Agency's Fundamental Rights Strategy, including the recruit-

ment of the necessary staff; and improving transparency mechanisms within the Agency that allow for improved accountability to the EU and its citizens.

b) making sure that the members of the standing corps have appropriate training in accordance to mandatory prerequisites regarding human rights compliance and adequate use of force; and ensuring continuing collaboration with external agencies and non-governmental organizations that work with vulnerable individuals.

Treaty Provisions: Article 77 of TFEU, Article 78 of TFEU, Article 79 of TFEU, Article 80 of TFEU, Article 1 Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU, Article 2 Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU, Article 3 Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU, Article 4 Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU, Article 18 Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU, and Article 19 Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU.

Categories: Justice and Fundamental Rights – Migration and Asylum.

Greener Clothes – Greener Planet

Organisers: Ruxandra Agache, Isabel Knittel, Selamawit Martínez, Maria Matilde Marques, João Albernaz, Deborah Marlene Lemke, and Mihaela Tutuianu.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to adopt legislation that induces consumers to buy fewer clothes while becoming more conscious of their actions when buying different types of items.

Treaty Provisions: Article 191, TFEU, Article 192, TFEU, Article 4, Section 2 TFEU, and Article 113 TFEU.

Categories: Consumers and Health – Culture and Media – Environment and Climate.

Food redistribution: the path to a prosperous society

Organisers: Tiago Mesquita, Fee Broedermann, Wilson Neto, Noa Fresco Polo, and Ana-Maria Apetroaie.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation to improve the European regulatory framework on food waste and redistribution to achieve Sustainable Development target 12.3: “By 2030, halve global food waste per capita at retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post- harvest losses”.

Treaty Provisions: Article 3 TEU, Article 6 TFEU, Article 11 TFEU, Article 169 TFEU, and Article 192 TFEU.

Categories: Consumers and Health – Environment and Climate.

Humanitarian Aid: You Can Help The Unseen

Organisers: Anabel Gonzalez Castro, Alexandra Ramos, Maria Magdalena Racheru, Sebastian Ocu, and William Dann.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation that includes:

- Providing better inclusive response and services in cases of grave humanitarian crisis, such as specialized legal assistance, specialized support, healthcare and resources (such as equipment, housing, service animals, transport/evacuation...) for vulnerable groups (functional diversity, elderly, children, atypical medical conditions) in situations of humanitarian crisis.
- Ensuring strong and swift cooperation and coordination between stakeholders and organizations with the creation of a database and website as a means to provide an easy channel of communication between volunteers, NGOs, associations and companies that desire to provide humanitarian aid to vulnerable people in situations of humanitarian crisis.
- Raise awareness of current humanitarian aid efforts and the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Increase citizen participation and advocacy in EU humanitarian aid focusing on vulnerable groups.

Treaty Provisions: Article 19 of the TFEU, Article 168 of the TFEU, Article 196 of the TFEU, and Article 214 of the TFEU.

Categories: Aid and Development cooperation

We Craft, EU protect

Organisers: Viktoria Maria Sochor, João Simões, Catarina Fernandes Leite, Sude-Meryem Fidan, Narcisa Pozderie, and Alexandru-Gabriel Bichir.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to adopt a harmonized system that ensures that agricultural and non-agricultural products are being treated equally, taking into consideration their economic and environmental impact.

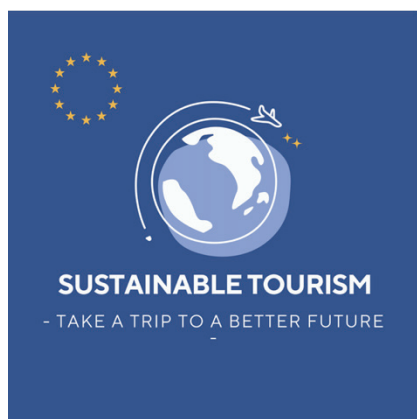
Treaty Provisions: Article 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 118 of the TFEU.

Categories: Business and Economy –

Culture and Media – Region Development.

Sustainable Tourism - Take a Trip to a Better Future

Organisers: Luisa Hehn-Mark, Irem Atik, Roxana Pislaru, Gloria Liboeiro, Andreea Ghebirsina, Ioana Teodorescu, Ana Sofia Marques Henriques, and Vitória Costanti do Nascimento.



Objective: We are call on the Commission to make use of this competence to enhancing sustainable tourism practices as defined by the UN. Therefore, and to accomplish a sustainable long term change in the nature of travellers' demands and the tourist sector towards a safer, cleaner and more sustainable form of tourism, our proposal is intended to have environmental, social and economic impact.

Treaty Provisions: Article 3 TEU, Article 3 TFEU, Article 4 TFEU, Article 114 TFEU, and Article 195 TFEU.

Categories: Environment and Climate – Regional Development – Transport

Protect and Monitor - Ensuring Human Rights in the Mediterranean Area

Organisers: Isabel Vieira Dietz, Tiago Eira, Clara Aurora San Millán, Maria Marinovskaia, Ana Vitória Soares, and Paola Costa Villanueva.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation that includes:

- The adoption of a programme that includes constant and permanent evaluation and monitoring of European regulations with third countries in the Mediterranean while warranting better transparency
- Enforcement of the obligation to provide assistance to people in distress at sea.
- Creation of an aid fund to support civil society groups to take action on ensuring

Human Rights at the borders.

- Implementation of measures that allow voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity.

Treaty Provisions: Article 214 (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7) TFEU, Article 78 (1) TFEU, Article 79 (3) TFEU, Article 2 TEU, Article 3 (5) TEU, Article 21 (1) TEU.

Categories: Aid and development cooperation – Justice and fundamental rights – Migration and Asylum

TransparenTcy – Transparency behind Parenthood

Organisers: Julica Schütz, Lucía Pérez Quiroga, Hugo Abrantes, Miruna Iosub, Mihaela Gladunec, Yejin Kim, and Natália Mendes Melo.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation to create a transparent and uniform system that can quicken and ease the process of uncovering the biological truth across the EU's borders while bearing in mind that the rights and well-being of the child is of utmost importance.

Treaty Provisions: Article 81(3) TFEU, Article 3(3) TEU, Articles 1 (human dignity) and 24 (rights of the child) Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and European Convention on the Adoption of Children.

Categories: Digital Economy and Society – Education, Youth and Sport – Justice and Fundamental Rights.

Free Access to Essential Products

Organisers: Eva Sanches Vicente, Anisia-Mihaela Formagiu, Camelia Gusavan, and Bruno Antonio Ortíz López.



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation to:

- Provide easy and free access to sanitary products in all European Union Member States by 2027
- Provide easy and free access to contraceptive methods in all European Union Member States by 2027
- Introduce free sanitary products in businesses such as restaurants, as well as workplaces in all European Union Member States by 2027
- Introduce sanitary products in public spaces in the cities through automatic machines in all European Union Member States by 2027
- Introduce a 0% tax on sanitary products in the European Union by 2027.

Treaty Provisions: Article 35 EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 2 TEU, Article 3(3) TEU, Article 4 (2)(k) TFEU, and Article 153(j) TFEU.

Categories: Consumers and Health – Education – Youth and Sport – Justice and Fundamental Rights – Regional Development

No deals with Exes

Organisers: Luiz Fernando Ribeiro de Faria, Maria Luísa de Paula Andrade, Lavinia Teodora Darie, Ana Veiga de Vilhena, Tudor Adochiei, Ana Catarina Dias, Marla Kriessel, and Belén Verónica Álvarez. ECI Model Goettingen, October 2022



the European Union for more real transparency

Objective: We call on the Commission to propose legislation that includes:

- A Three-Year-Prohibition of public office holders who previously worked in the European Union on taking a job as a lobbyist at European institutions/ agencies/ organisms afterwards.
- A Cooling-off period for any related job in a company (conflict of interest) for anyone who had previously worked in a European institution/agency/organisation.
- Changes to the Ethics Committee of

Treaty Provisions: Article 245 TFEU, Article 15 TFEU, Article 81(3) TFEU, Article 3(3) TEU, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Articles 1 and 24.

Categories: Business and Economy – Employment and Social Affairs – Justice and Fundamental Rights.

Microplastic, Macroproblem

Organisers: Ioana-Roxana Matei, Carolina Condeço Marques, Alice-Mihaela Nita, Cristina Florentina Dinca, Barbara Valente de Jesús, and Ainoa Giraldez Rodríguez. ECI Model Goettingen, October 2022



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation that includes:

- Raising awareness of the possible impact of micro and nano-plastics in the human health.
- Raising awareness of the seriousness of the issue. Bringing attention to the problem due to the fact that it is not only a maritime one but a global one.
- Using 0.25% of the European budget to research deeper into the consequences it has on human health.

- Using 0.25% of the European budget to research alternatives for plastic materials.
- Using 0.5% of the European budget to bring visibility to the matter (ads, publicity of many kinds).
- Compelling countries to introduce the matter into school education.
- Reviewing the regulation concerning the unnecessary usage of plastic on packaging.

Treaty Provisions: Treaty of the Function of the European Union, Article 9 (Title II) and Article 168 (Title XIV), and Charter of Fundamental Rights of The European Union, Article 35.

Categories: Consumers and Health - Environment and Climate – Research.

Green Energy4EU

Organisers: Selen Gündođdu, Catarina Vaz Ribeiro, Margarida Ferreira Marques, and Washington Vitorino Silva Santos. ECI Model Goettingen, October 2022



Objectives: We call on the Commission to propose legislation that force EU Member States to progressively limit the use of nuclear energy and gas as fuels in their territories by public services and private companies. In addition:

- To create and implement a “nuclear energy tax” and a “gas tax”, to be paid by public services and private companies, increasing the own resources of the European budget (according to a mechanism similar to that regulating the assignment of a percentage of the VAT to the European budget).
- To grant tariff concessions to third countries that ratify and implement international conventions which aim to reduce the use of nuclear energy and gas as fuels, and increase the duty rate being paid under the Common Customs Tariff for the import of goods that were produced in third countries where precautionary measures to avoid damage caused by the use of nuclear energy and gas are not in place.
- To develop new programmes to promote and fund research and innovation (R&I) initiatives to be developed on a European scale aiming to mitigate the negative consequences derived from the use of nuclear energy and gas as fuels, and also to stimulate the widespread use of renewable and green sources of energy.

- To create a “EU Green Energy Source Fund” destined to reward Member States which, through their action, are able to reduce the use of nuclear energy and gas as fuels to the point that the overall use of these sources of energy does not exceed 5%.

Treaty Provisions: Article 11.4 TEU, Article 11 TFEU, Article 24 TFEU, Article 168 TFEU, Article 191 TFEU, and Article 194 TFEU.

Categories: Consumers and Health - Energy - Environment and Climate.

Feedback from the Commission

The simulated EU commission provided feedback on each ECI presented. It was a way to offer some critical views on their work. Here is some of the feedback from the commission:

Ensure security for refugee mobility

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that the topic addressed shows a range of concerns that are innovative, encompassing and urgent to deal with. Also, the Commission values the fact that the Parliaments recognized the political value of the proposal.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that it is not clear how these proposals interact with current EU regulations and directives concerning this topic (mostly the Dublin framework, that normally prohibits circulation of asylum applicants within the EU). Also, the creation of a refugee database could turn out to be problematic in terms of data protection and, eventually, misuse.

New Focus on the right of Erasure within the EU

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that this topic is appropriate and necessary in modern times, given the relevance of social networks and the dangers they entail. Several elements presented in this Initiative will be considered by the European Commission for the purpose of a more detailed regulation on the right of erasure.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that there are possible overlaps between the initiative at hand and the legislation in force or even the recent jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice on this topic. Also, the Commission considers that it is not very clear what the most sensitive issues within the scope of the proposal are.

Fair Frontex: push back their uncontrollable competences, not people!

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that this is an issue of great concern for all EU institutions and, mainly, for the European Commission, an institution that is totally dedicated to increasing accountability in the management of EU borders. Also, the Commission values the fact that the Parliament has clearly asked the Commission to pursue legal changes in this field, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that the name of the proposal barely passed the registration requirements, since it seems a bit abusive and vexatious towards Frontex and the EU as such. Also, this proposal focuses dominantly on the reinforcement of the Parliament's role in the control mechanisms within Frontex, forgetting the Council's importance in this field.

Unpack the Earth

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that the topic of the initiative is very important considering that the packaging industry is one of the main polluters. Therefore, measures to raise awareness in consumers and companies are truly welcome. Also, the Commission values the fact that the Parliament has fully recognized the political value of the proposals.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that taxing the producers of plastic packaging could be problematic, since the EU has very limited competences in this field and this kind of measure should, in any case, always be a subsidiary one, and only where less burdensome ones fail. Also, the initiative doesn't properly address the question on how the balance between environmental and the consumer's interests can be achieved. In particular, there are questions over whether the proposed measures would represent a disproportionate burden on the consumer.

Greener Clothes – Greener Planet

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that the topic is very important considering the efforts of the European Union in the promotion of more sustainable practices. The Commission furthermore has recognized the political value of the proposals as the presentation was extremely compelling and well organized.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that it is not clear how the proposed measures could apply to products coming from third countries. The initiative also lacks connection to the recent proposal of a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Corporate Sustainability, Due Diligence and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937. Moreover, the third proposal, regarding the reduction of VAT on sustainable fashion products, coincides with an already registered initiative.

We Craft, EU protects

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that Intellectual Property-related matters, and in particular Geographical Indications, are one of the major issues of concern for the Commission. Furthermore, the proposal has clearly traced the legal and societal arguments for better regulating this field and the logo is very compelling.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that a review of the present ECI is needed in order to confirm that there is no conflict between the current proposal and an existing initiative regarding the same subject. Moreover, the proposal could have been more detailed regarding the legal act proposed.

Humanitarian Aid: You Can Help the Unseen

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that the topic is most relevant considering the current situation in Europe and the emerging humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the inclusive approach of the proposal should also be praised, as well as the significant efforts made to connect different entities in the pursuit of the established objectives.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that some proposals are quite vague and need to be more concise (see, for example, proposal n. 4: "raise awareness of current humanitarian aid efforts and needs of vulnerable groups"; proposal n. 5: "Increase citizen participation and advocacy in EU humanitarian aid focusing on vulnerable groups"). Regarding the proposed databases, concerns may rise about the risk of cyberattacks as well as problems with the personal data collected.

Food redistribution: the path to a prosperous society

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that the issue of food waste and redistribution is very relevant and up-to-date considering not only EU objectives and policies, but also the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda of many international organisations.

The Commission is, however, of the opinion that the coherence of the EU and its Member States' competencies was not dealt with sufficiently, as the proposal deals with public health issues that are mainly regulated at a national level, so a mandatory rule that would allow for the redistribution of products after the "best before" date in all States has to be seen with particular circumspection.

Microplastic, Macroproblem!

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that neutralizing the negative impacts of micro and nano-plastics on human and environmental health is a clear priority. Concrete measures must be put in place to pursue this objective. The Commission is of the opinion that this Citizens' Initiative is highly relevant and

completely in line with the objectives established in articles 168 and 191 of the TFEU.

Sustainable Tourism – Take a Trip to a Better Future

The Commission notes that this Citizens' Initiative contains a combined solution enhancing sustainable tourism practices intended to have a triple impact: environmental, social and economic.

In response to the citizens' call for action, the Commission is committed to taking concrete steps and working on a number of new actions in areas that are of direct relevance to the initiative and its goals. In particular, the Commission will:

- Study the possibility of creating a European Agency for Sustainable Tourism;
- Create funding programmess to support the implementation of a Tourism Voucher System by the Member States;
- Adopt a Directive addressing Member State Laws to safeguard the rights of workers in the tourism sector;
- Evaluate the financial impact of the programmes proposed by the group of organizers.

Free Access to Essential Products

The Commission shares the Citizens' Initiative's conviction that, seeing as this problem affects the whole population of the EU, the Union should facilitate this access to all people regardless of sex, religion, age, social status or income by 2027. This objective seems overall feasible, even if it needs to be more specific.

In response to the citizens' call for action, the Commission is committed to taking concrete steps and working on a number of new actions in areas that are of direct relevance to the initiative and its goals. In particular, the Commission will a) Adopt a Regulation on guidelines for co-operation between the Member States to improve the complementarity of the hygiene and contraceptive services already offered; b) Propose to the Council the adoption of a Recommendation concerning the introduction of free sanitary products in businesses, as well as in workplaces and in public spaces in cities to be distributed via automatic machines.

Greenergy4EU

The Commission is of the opinion that both energies are still needed. The current world situation shows that gas dependence from third countries is not desirable, but the first thing to do is to act on the demand side to reduce dependence, and that is what is in any case being done. Nonetheless, the Commission agrees with the need for the measure in the mid to long term.

Protect and Monitor - Ensuring Human Rights in the Mediterranean Area

The Commission welcomes the mobilization of citizens in support of the protection of human rights within the scope of its migration and asylum policies. The Citizens' Initiative has provided an opportunity to critically examine how the EU can reinforce its efforts in establishing the appropriate mechanisms and survey the ones already existing on matters of migration and asylum.

No deals with Exes

The Commission welcomes the mobilisation of citizens in support of the Initiative "No deals with Exes". The Citizens' Initiative has provided an opportunity to critically examine how the EU can reinforce its efforts in ensuring and promoting transparency in the European Union.

In response to the citizens' call for action, the Commission is committed to taking concrete steps and working on a number of new actions in areas that are of direct relevance to the initiative and its goals.

In particular, the Commission will: a) Stimulate all efforts from the European Union and the Member States to promote transparency in public affairs; b) Launch an impact assessment to base a possible proposal on the issue of revolving doors; c) Rethink the role, procedures and functions of the Ethics Committee.

TransparenTcy – Transparency behind Parenthood

The Commission welcomes the mobilisation of citizens in support of TransparenTcy–Transparency behind Parenthood. The Citizens' Initiative has provided an opportunity to critically examine how the EU can reinforce its efforts in bettering the rights of the child, in particular that of knowing their origin.

Conclusion

All in all, what the ECI analysis show is that students created the proposals with a lot of new ideas to improve life in the EU. Considering that the ECI is for empowerment, participation and a platform to voice citizens' concerns, as seen in previous chapter, the participants in the ECI Model used the ECI proposals to voice their concerns for the future of Europe and used the ECI pathways to combat some ongoing problems.