



1 Million Signatures – why?

The goal of 1 million signatures seems very ambitious. The 100 000 collected signatures are at this point quite respectable! Why then ten times as many? The answer is: This number has a special significance in the political context in the EU. It originated in article I-47 of the 2004 Constitution for Europe (<http://europa.eu.int/futurum>), which did not come into effect. According to these regulations, 1 million Union citizens from a considerable number of member states can demand action from the EU commission. This means in plain language: 1 million people in several EU countries, who have the same concern, must be taken seriously in Europe.

Such an initiative coming from 1 million people would be part of citizens` participation in the decision-making processes of the EU. Hand-in-hand with this needs to go an open, transparent, and regular dialogue of European institutions with representative organisations and civil society, as well as hearings with the persons concerned.

At their summit meeting in June 2007, the EU's governmental heads and heads of state decided to carry over substantial parts of the constitution into a revised contract to be developed, by a conference of governments, into a final form by the end of the year. The articles to be adopted also expressly include the one relating to the citizens' initiative of one million signatures (www.eu2007.de/en/, conclusions by the executive). Thus this article enshrined in the new, revised constitution, is expected to come into force in 2009

In recent years, participatory democracy in Brussels has already developed in a practical way. This magic number of 1 million will be codified in the revised constitution. Without waiting for the verification, several non-government organizations have already made use of this concept of 1 million, in order to put pressure on Brussels institutions and gain attention for their concerns (www.citizens-initiative.eu).

The ELIANT alliance is following this path. The signatures support the alliance in general at this point, rather than any particular individual demand. When, in the end, a sufficiently large number of signatures are submitted to Brussels institutions, we can later refer to this in relation to individual issues.

This is what is essential now: The more signatures the ELIANT alliance can collect from member states of the EU and from third countries, the greater will be the political weight of the alliance and its organisations in Brussels in the future. At the same time, the alliance will become a welcome partner for collaboration with other non-governmental organisations that pursue similar goals.

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