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**AFCO Committee meeting on Temporary measures concerning the time limits
for the collection, verification and examination stages provided for in the ECI
Regulation.**

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This is indeed a good news that we have found agreement on a quick fix to the rules on European Citizens Initiative. I would like to congratulate the rapporteur, Lorant Vincze, for the outcome of the negotiations. Given the exceptional circumstances and specific time pressure related to the adoption of this file, we can consider this as a success for the Parliament. But I also believe it is a good news for the citizens who engage in shaping European policies in spite of hurdles generated by this challenging time of Covid crisis.

It is not only a difficult moment but also one when building trust of citizens to Europe is more relevant than ever.

It is laudable that the three institutions agreed on the measures as a matter of urgency in order to address the legal uncertainty affecting citizens, organisers, national administrations and the EU institutions, in particular where the time periods for the collection of statements of support, verification, and examination of initiatives have already ended or are about to end. Through these amendments we try to get rid of some barriers to citizens' involvement in European decision making.

Amending this regulation in the exceptional circumstances, required a constructive interaction between institutions based on shared a objective and approach. I would like to recall that AFCO sent a letter to Commission Vice-President Jourova at the beginning of the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic, recalling the difficulties faced

by the organisers of the ECI in collecting their statements of support and promoting their initiatives, and asking the Commission to take a swift action to remedy the situation in the EU. Commission reacted speedily by presenting its proposal on the 20th May.

As we all know, the preparatory work in the Parliament was unprecedentedly rapid. Less than two weeks ago, we adopted the negotiating mandate under urgency procedure (Rule 163). This is a first time that such procedure has been used in order to provide a mandate to the Committee for inter-institutional negotiations. Our efforts were driven by the sense of urgency to provide legal certainty to the organisers of the ECIs.

I would like also to congratulate the shadows that cooperated in good spirit and allowed for the swift endorsement of the EP mandate. It was a joint effort, the three institutions showing availability and flexibility in the numerous informal meetings that were organised in a short span of time. This allowed for a smooth and in my view fully satisfactory conclusion of the file in a single trilogue.

The planned temporary measures, which would apply until the end of 2022, give organisers of initiatives more time to collect statements of support in order to reach the required threshold of one million signatures from across the EU.