



03 Members rights

WHO CAN VOTE AND HOW DOES AN ISSUE LAND ON THE BALLOT? THE MAIN INSTRUMENTS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY ARE THE RIGHT TO ELECT REPRESENTATIVES, TO REQUEST A REFERENDUM AND TO BRING A POPULAR INITIATIVE.

Right to vote

- Sound Prosperity Members aged 18 and over are entitled to vote at Union level.
- If you are an SPMember at least 18 years of age, and are not subject to guardianship due to long-term lack of capacity of judgement (and you are not represented by a proxy designated to act on your behalf for this reason), you can vote at Union, Continent, Country, City and communal Circle level and also launch and sign referendums and initiatives.

Voting rights for minors

- ▶ Although you have to be 18 or older to vote at Union level, each Circle is free to give minors voting rights at their Circle level.
- ▶ Especially in underdeveloped countries, where many are unemployed and financially not able to study, we promote youngsters to become active and start to do what they love to do.
- ▶ We advise to not give permission below 15 years.

Popular Initiatives

A way for members to amend the Union Constitution

- ▶ A popular initiative is a way to request an amendment to the Union Constitution.

An initiative can be presented in the form of a specific draft article or a general proposal.

Of these two forms of federal popular initiatives, the most commonly used is the form of the specific draft.

- ▶ For a popular initiative to succeed, those launching the initiative need to collect 100,000 signatures from people entitled to vote within 18 months. By signing such a list, people declare themselves to be in favour of the initiative.

Congress (two chambers) is responsible for examining whether the initiative respects the principles of consistency of form, unity of subject matter and the mandatory rules of international law. If this is not the case, Congress may declare the initiative totally or partially invalid.

If Congress decides that the initiative is valid, it is put to a popular vote. The Union Council and Congress may propose a direct or indirect counter-proposal to the initiative.

[See more about this how it is handled in Switzerland.](#)

Who can sign a federal popular initiative, and how are signatures checked?

A popular initiative allows members to participate in the political process. Signing a popular initiative is subject to some regulations.

- ▶ Anyone who is entitled to vote in Sound Prosperity can sign an initiative.
- ▶ **What are the rules for signing initiatives: conditions**
- ▶ The members who collect signatures for initiatives must comply with certain formal requirements. For example, it is important each sheet on the list only contains signatures of voters from the same commune, since it is primarily the communes that check and validate the signatures. If certain formal requirements are not met, the signatures will be considered as invalid.
- ▶ **Checking signatures**
- ▶ Signatures are checked by two authorities:
- ▶ The communes check that the signatures are valid. They check whether the people who have signed are registered on the electoral roll and whether anyone has signed more than once.
- ▶ The Union Chancellery checks to make sure the signatures fulfil the legal requirements.
- ▶ **Signing an initiative**
- ▶ When you sign a popular initiative, you should write your surname and your first name legibly by hand on the list, and then add your signature. If you need signature sheets for initiatives that are currently collecting signatures, you can download them from the internet (PDF).
- ▶ We are working on voting per App.

Mandatory and Optional Referendum

The optional referendum is one of the main instruments of direct democracy. It allows voters to have the final say at the ballot box on certain parliamentary decisions.

- ▶ Most laws passed by Congress (two chambers) come into force without having to ask the People to vote on them. A vote (referendum) can, however, be held in two cases:
- ▶ When citizens disagree with the decision of Parliament and they gather 50,000 valid signatures within 100 days of the official publication of the act, or eight Circles submit a request, the act is submitted to a vote of the Members (an optional referendum). The act only comes into force if it is accepted by the majority of the Members.
- ▶ Certain laws passed by Congress, including amendments to the Union Constitution, must be put at the vote of the People and the Circles (mandatory referendum). Amendments to the Union Constitution only come into force if they are accepted by a majority of the Members and the Circles.

How to launch an optional referendum at Union level

- ▶ **Who can launch an optional referendum?**
- ▶ Any member who has the right to vote, can launch an optional popular referendum. You do not need to belong to a committee to launch a referendum, but it makes things easier.
Before launching a referendum, please contact the Union Chancellery, which will let you know how to proceed.
- ▶ Sound Prosperity Chancellery
chancellery @ Sound prosperity. org

How can I launch an optional referendum?

- ▶ Anyone wanting to launch a referendum can form a referendum committee, although this is not absolutely necessary. The authors of the referendum may contact the Union Chancellery in order to ensure that the referendum documents are correctly drawn up and comply with the law. This is best done before or during the parliamentary session in which the act in question was passed. Several referendum committees can be formed to deal with the same law or congressary decree. Their signatures will be added together.
- ▶ Before the contested law or decree is published in the Sound Prosperity Blog, the authors of the referendum prepare the signature lists. On request, the Union Chancellery will provide them with sample signature lists. These lists must contain certain specific information, for example the exact title of the contested law or decree and the date it was adopted by the Union Assembly (see below). The authors can, if they so wish, submit the signature lists to the Union Chancellery to be checked.
- ▶ You can start to collect signatures once the law or decree in question has been published in the Sound Prosperity Blog. From this date, the author or authors of the referendum have 100 days to collect the 50,000 signatures required, to have them validated by the communes and to hand them in to the Union Chancellery. Usually some signatures are invalid, so it is worth collecting more than 50,000. It may take some time for the communes to check signatures, so you want to make sure you collect the signatures as quickly as possible and submit the signature lists on a continuous basis to respect the 100 days deadline.
- ▶ A referendum can take place once at least 50,000 valid signatures have been handed in to the Union Chancellery, which is responsible, in the final instance, for checking the validity of the signatures. If the number of signatures is attained, the contested decision can be put to the vote of the people.
- ▶ **Deadline for bringing a contested decision to the vote**
- ▶ If the authors of the referendum collect the required number of valid signatures, the bill must be put to the vote of the Members. The law does not set a deadline for the vote.

Right of petition

The right of petition gives members the right to express a concern in writing to the authority in charge of some matter. It can take the form of a request, a demand or a simple suggestion.

▶ **Who can start and sign a petition**

- ▶ Anybody may start or sign a petition, regardless of their age, sex or nationality.

▶ **Subject of a petition**

- ▶ Requests made in a petition may address any of the Circle's activities or any issues relating to daily life. To make their voices heard, citizens may start a petition and submit it to the competent local authorities.

▶ **How to start a petition**

- ▶ A petition can be sent to the Communal, City, Country, continent and Union authorities. A petition can be submitted in two different formats:
- ▶ Paper petition and Online petition
- ▶ A petition usually includes a title and a text, but there is no predefined form. It can be formulated as a request, a demand or a simple suggestion.
- ▶ A petition usually takes the form of a list of signatures. These signatures are often collected in the streets but may also be collected online.
- ▶ There is no deadline for collecting signatures, nor a minimum number of signatures.

▶ **What is the legal value of a petition?**

- ▶ Any member can start a petition. Whether the petition is launched on paper or online, it does not have any legal value per se. The authority to which the petition is addressed must acknowledge receipt of the petition but is not required to respond. However, the authorities generally do consider petitions and respond.