



DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL

Newsletter: Happy Birthday, ECI?!

1 April 2013

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Dear Members and Friends of Democracy International,

Happy Easter Monday. And Happy Birthday, European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Today marks the first anniversary of the ECI being effectively one year in practice. Yet do we have reason to celebrate the first tool of transnational direct democracy? Overall, is real direct democracy concerned?

These were the points of discussion at a conference and a press briefing that took place in Brussels on 19/ 20 March. We had organized these events with the European Citizen Action Service, IRI Europe and the ECI campaign, which are civil society organizations that had worked like Democracy International for the integration of the ECI into the EU Treaties.

At the conference on 19 March many people were present who had launched the overall 27 European Citizens' Initiative within the past 365 days. For example, Heike Aghte from "30kmh – making streets liveable!" reported about the difficulties "her" ECI faced when making use of the online collection software provided by the European Commission. Or Carsten Berg, Director of the ECI Campaign, spoke about the time constraints initiators of an ECI actually cope with when gathering one million signatures from at least seven different countries within one year. Others raised the point that the ECI still is a non-binding instrument, giving the European Commission the power to reject a law proposal initiated and backed by the citizens.

These were lively testimonials of the people who are actually working on realising the European Citizens Initiative as the first tool of transnational direct democracy. Impressive! Their work and commitment give us reason to celebrate and to be optimistic that the ECI will overcome the difficulties it faces having been in operation 365 days today.

All the best,
Cora Pfafferott

1. European Citizens' Initiative still too weak for real change

On 1 April 2013 the European Citizens Initiative (ECI) turns one year. For civil society organisations the date is not a reason to celebrate.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/eci-first-birthday.html>

2. "Democracy starts at home": Interview with Petros Vourlis, a Greek democracy activist

Petros Vourlis is an electrical engineer by profession. He lives in Athens. Petros Vourlis has been campaigning for direct democracy in his country for two years.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/interview-petros-vourlis.html>

3. Falkland Islands Referendum: British people want to be British

On 12 March the Falklands Islands Government announced the result of the referendum on the status of the islands, conducted during 10 and 11 March 2013: 1,513 Falklanders opted for and three Falklanders voted against the Falkland Islands to remain a part of the United Kingdom.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/resultreferendum-falkland.html>

4. Vienna's Citizens: No to Olympic Games in 2028

On 12 March Vienna's voters have opted not to host the Olympic Games in their city in summer 2028. With a voter turnout of almost 30 per cent, 72 per cent voted against applying for the world's biggest sporting event in a non-binding consultation. Yet, Democracy International demands binding direct democracy initiated by the citizens.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/consultation-vienna.html>

5. NEW: ECI Briefing: The first year with transnational direct democracy in practice

What makes a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) successful, which challenges does an ECI face, which legal barriers does an ECI have to overcome? Find the answers to these questions in a brochure that we have produced together with the European Citizen Action Service, the ECI Campaign and the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe on the occasion of the ECI's first anniversary.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/eci.html>