

Newsletter: Oranje Boven

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by Ronald Pabst

Top politicians in the Netherlands gained the first experience with direct democracy. It was negative: The Dutch refused to adopt the EU Constitution. But the story is not that simple. Our friends from Amsterdam told me amazing stories about the interesting debates which took place before the voting day. Sometimes more than thousand people attended public meetings. This convinced the politicians to change their mind on direct democracy. Finance Minister Zalm, previously an opponent of referendums, said that he was "more or less converted, because a referendum is an opportunity to involve the public into the debate."

That is the reason why I believe in direct democracy. People who are asked to decide about their future at the ballot box start to deal with the topic.

Politicians in the Netherlands share this view. The Dutch parliament adopted the citizens' initiative. The regulation itself is not satisfying. The procedure includes too many obstacles. The citizens are still not able to initiate a referendum. Nevertheless, this is an important step towards more democracy in Europe. Oranje Boven.

1) NETHERLANDS: CITIZENS' INITIATIVE INTRODUCED

The Second Chamber of the Dutch parliament adopted the citizen initiative right.

democracy-international.org/dutch-initiative.html

2) INSIDE BRUSSELS: DECISIVE WEEKS LYING AHEAD

In Brussels the building up of a coalition for direct democracy continues.

www.democracy-international.org/insidebrussels-nr4.html

3) AN IDEA SETS OUT FOR EUROPE

Democracy International has started to spread the call for a new convention. We have already received responses from 14 countries.

democracy-international.org/ideasetout.html

4) REPORT: CONFERENCE IN BERLIN

The third regional conference of the Initiative for Europe – A Citizen's Agenda project took place in Berlin. 40 participants from several European countries gathered near the Brandenburg Gate.

democracy-international.org/berlin-conference.html

5) REFERENDUM IN CATALONIA

This year Catalonia will hold a referendum on the revision of its constitution. Our Spanish partner Mas Democracia monitors this process.

democracy-international.org/referendum-catalonia.html

Ronald Pabst / Carsten Berg

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