

Democracy Actions 2015

Dear Friends,

“Tunisia is in transition. - So is direct democracy around the world.

We are Tunisians. We are Africans. We are Europeans. We are Asians. We are from the Americas. We come from all kinds of communities, from every corner of the globe, and from all walks of life. Among us are scholars, trade unionists, journalists, activists, campaign organizers, philanthropists, elected officials, NGO leaders, lawyers, businesspeople, farmers, students, citizens, engineers, and the unemployed.... ”

These are the first words of the “Tunis Declaration” that more than 400 people from all around the world adopted at the end of the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy that took place in Tunisia’s capital from 14 to 17 May 2015.

The Global Forum happened two months after the terrorist attack had shaken the Bardo Museum in Tunis, and six weeks before another attack hit Tunisia again. Also, the event took place five months before the Tunisian workers’ federation UGTT, core partner of the Global Forum and a key actor of the “National Quartet”, won the Nobel Prize for Peace. The National Quartet was awarded for “its decisive contribution to the building of a pluralistic democracy in the wake of the Jasmine Revolution of 2011.” Democracy International had co-organised the conference with UGTT, the University of Carthage, the Arab Research and Policy Centre and European partners.

This year, Democracy International devotes its anthology of activities to the many people who courageously stand up for democracy, despite of terrifying setbacks. Allying with these people, Democracy International pursues to realise more direct democracy and citizen participation within national contexts, at the European level and throughout the world.

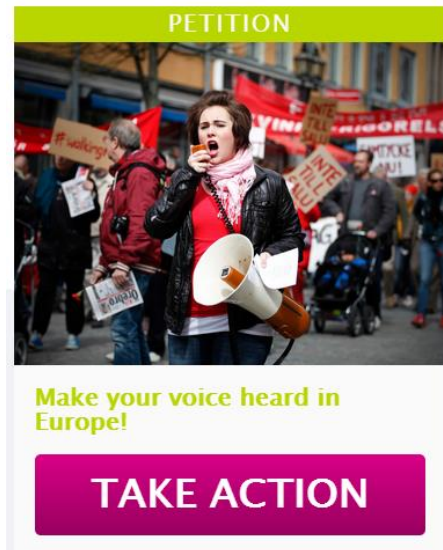
In this respect, we have been campaigning for a more democratic EU and a stronger EU Citizens’ Initiative this year. We have engaged with people across the globe to foster exchange and to provide knowledge on direct democracy. Moreover, we have helped to build new democracy groups and supported them in running campaigns. On the following pages, you can read about our main actions in 2015.



Shaping a more democratic EU

For a powerful European Citizens' Initiative!

Democracy International's campaign for a stronger EU Citizens' Initiative (ECI) started in April on "ECI Day", a conference we jointly had organised in Brussels with our partners, the ECI Support Centre and the European Economic and Social Committee. On this day, Democracy International launched an online petition that called on people to support Democracy International's reform proposals for a more accessible, efficient and powerful EU Citizens' Initiative. The ECI is the instrument that allows citizens to propose new legislation to the European Commission, provided they collect one million signatures within one year. However in practice the ECI has so far achieved poor results.



French economist Thomas Piketty and German political scientist Gesine Schwan publicly backed our reform ideas that we also used to convince the EU politicians in Brussels. Every three years, the ECI is up for critical review, so bearing in mind that the ECI became operational on 1st April 2012, we saw our time had come to seize the opportunity to change its parameters. Our goal: to give the ECI real power!

Our advocacy work first addressed the European Parliament. This is because as co-legislator in the EU, the representative body was supposed to draft a "report" with its own positions toward ECI reform. To increase pressure on the parliamentarians before decisive intermediary votes, we called on our supporters to send e-mails to the EU deputies questioning them to vote in the interest of Europe's citizens. These "e-mail-campaigns"

generated more than 70,000 e-mails from people right across Europe. Plentiful phone calls by Members of the EU Parliament and their assistants, asking us to stop the e-mail action, showed the huge impact our action had!



A decisive milestone of our campaign was the European Parliament's final vote on the report on the EU Citizens' Initiative, which took place in Strasbourg on 28 October 2015. Ahead of the vote, we handed over 76,397 signatures to the Members of the European Parliament, together with our partners Mehr Demokratie Germany and WeMove.EU. Consequently, the EU parliamentarians voted with an overwhelming majority for the ECI report.

We were happy to see that the report contained seven of Democracy International's nine reform proposals. We can therefore celebrate a first major achievement. Now we still need to convince the European Commission to adopt the measures as unfortunately, the Commission has all power to block the new rules for the European Citizens' Initiative. However, we are confident to win also this campaign, knowing that we can count on the support of thousands of people who demand more democracy in the EU.

For clean politics in Europe!

Every day 30,000 lobbyists in Brussels try to influence 751 European parliamentarians – this implies 40 lobbyists on each member of European Parliament. These figures, as well as the huge imbalance between corporate and civil society influence over EU decision-making are alarming! – And for these reasons we initiated the campaign “One against 30.000 - For clean politics in Europe”.

Our window of opportunity was the report for a new EU Transparency Law that Sven Giegold, Member of EU Parliament, began drafting in August 2015. To find out about citizens' ideas on how to counteract unfair lobbying and build transparency, we launched an online questionnaire. Our goal was to feed people's priorities into the report, hence shaping legislation on transparent EU politics.

Overall, 1695 people participated in the survey, giving highest priority to regulating the so-called “Trialogue” negotiations by which 90 per cent of EU decisions are made in an informal fast-track-mode behind closed door. Moreover, 662 Europeans



contributed their own ideas for clean politics in Europe.

On 25 August we met with Sven Giegold and gave to him the results of the survey. At this meeting, the parliamentarian committed to carefully read all suggestions and to integrate the most pertinent ones into his report.

We took Mr Giegold at his words and checked on his promises, when he presented his proposals in the EU Parliament the following months. We were delighted to find in the draft report the top priorities submitted by our supporters. The report will be discussed in the European Parliament, and hopefully, it will be adopted in spring 2016. Then it will be submitted to the European Commission to be implemented.

Learning and Exchange

“Knowledge is power” is a commonly known and very true phrase that Democracy International understands as follows: When we spread knowledge on how direct democracy works, then many people throughout the world can apply this knowledge to advocate their democratic cause and to run campaigns. In other words, information, facts and figures about democracy are essential to empower people and to change structures of power.

New website for the Direct Democracy Navigator

The “Direct Democracy Navigator” is Democracy International’s “online memory”. It is a common research project of the German University of Wuppertal, Democracy International and Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, and it is supported by the online-portals swissinfo and people2power. In February, the Direct Democracy Navigator got a new, responsive website. From A like Albania to Z like Zambia, at www.direct-democracy-navigator.org everybody can now easily research all instruments of direct democracy available in the world and compare them with one another. At the end of 2015, the database features 1249 instruments of direct

democracy, including all instruments at national and some at subnational level. We can expect this number to quickly rise as in 2016 new instruments will be added constantly.





Conferences and Events

This year Democracy International organised three international conferences allowing participants to learn from each other and to share experiences face-to-face:

- The **Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy** took place in Tunis from 14 to 17 May 2015. 400 participants from 40 countries and from 4 continents came together in Tunisia's capital to gain knowledge on the state of direct and participatory democracy in Tunisia and those countries where "the Arab Spring" had happened five years before. The overarching theme of the international conference was "decentralisation by participation", hence we elaborated the question of how democracy can be implemented at regional level. Also, participants discussed the connection between Islam and democracy. We were honoured by Habib Essid, Tunisian Prime Minister, who held the opening speech. At the end of the Forum, we jointly adopted the Tunis Declaration (online at www.democracy-international.org/tunis-declaration-modern-direct-democracy). Also in Tunis, the members of Democracy International convened to hold its general assembly.



- "**Global democracy development – between dream and trauma**" was the subject of Democracy International's annual conference that took place in Fuldata (close to Frankfurt/ Main), in Germany, from 26 to 28 June 2015. Democracy International had organised the weekend event in partnership with its German partner organisation Mehr Demokratie. Speakers from North Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe presented their views on whether democracy



is progressing in those parts of the world or whether it is stagnating or possibly even deteriorating. The debate on Sunday focussed on the question of how free trade can become democratic and how to solve the democratic deficit of the EU.



- **“What can the world learn from Europe’s refugee crisis?”** - this was the question up for discussion at an event in Berlin on 22 October that Democracy International jointly hosted with the US-American ideas exchange Zócalo Public Square. At this time, the topic was very up-to-date. Daniel Schily, executive manager of Democracy International, opened the discussion. In his speech, he stressed the need of adopting a global perspective to find solutions to the refugee crisis: People fleeing their homes was an expression of the fact that people throughout the world were seeking a life that democratic societies enable. The event was broadcasted live in New York and spread by radio all around the United States. Academics of the University of New York joined the discussion in Berlin via web streaming, so there was genuine trans-atlantic exchange.



Helping and Encouraging

One core task of Democracy International is to help new democracy groups to become operational to achieve their political goals. For this to happen, Democracy International provides IT infrastructure necessary to run campaigns in the digital age. Overall, individual democracy groups can seek professional assistance from Democracy International.

In this context, this year we mainly helped our Dutch partner organisation “Meer Democratie” with setting up a new website that followed Democracy International’s master template. The site was then adapted to the needs and corporate design of Meer Democratie. Moreover, we connected the new website with the customer relationship database CiviCRM that allows organisations to efficiently manage huge amounts of contacts.



The new website and database “went live” in March 2015. Very quickly we were happy to see our support bear fruit. This year, Meer Democratie has already run two successful campaigns in the Netherlands (against political party appointments and for a referendum on TTIP). Furthermore, we continued helping our Austrian partner mehr demokratie!.

Democracy Actions 2016

While 2015 is drawing to a close, we would like to offer you a glance at our plans for 2016:

- Our campaign for a stronger EU Citizens' Initiative will continue. As the next step we will convince the European Commission to adopt our reform proposals.
- We will keep a close eye on EU politicians' actions for more lobby transparency in the EU as new legislation will be drafted. This is because transparent decision-making is one of the prerequisites for a functioning democracy.
- We intend to build a support infrastructure for the European Citizens' Initiative to increase awareness of initiatives and to help organisers to reach more visibility.
- We will continue with informing the public about people's ongoing struggle for more democracy within the nation states and at European level and throughout the world. The Direct Democracy Navigator will be complemented with instruments of direct democracy available at regional level.
- The next Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy will take place in Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain, from 17 – 20 November 2016. On this occasion Democracy International will hold its next general assembly.
- We will offer professional assistance and know-how to other democracy groups.

Democracy throughout the world can only be realised with many, many people. We cordially thank everybody who supported our work and say:

