



Latvian Presidency
of the Council of the
European Union



EU2015.LV



THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE AND THE PROMISE OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Tuesday, 16 June 2015

9:00 - 13:00

Brussels, Justus Lipsius building

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the world's first tool for transnational participatory and digital democracy. A major innovation of the Treaty of Lisbon (Article 11.4), it allows one million EU citizens to invite the Commission to submit a proposal for a legal act to implement the Treaties. The ECI aims to both increase citizen participation in the EU and make the EU more responsive to citizens' needs.

The ECI attracted considerable citizen interest early on, but has since lost much of its original appeal. Since April 2012, 51 ECIs were officially submitted and 31 were registered by the Commission, including five which were submitted twice*. Over six million citizens have signed an ECI. Three ECIs have succeeded in collecting one million signatures. Three ECIs are currently ongoing.

Regulation 211/2011 on the citizens' initiative is currently up for review. The Commission has presented a report to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of the ECI Regulation. Both institutions are now preparing their response.

With this conference, we open up the debate, hear from a variety of stakeholders and reflect on how the ECI might be improved. The experience of campaigners, national authorities and EU institutions in the ECI has yielded much valuable information. The experience suggests that improvements are needed if the ECI is to fulfil its promise to citizens of greater democratic participation, function efficiently for all parties and be a positive force within the European Union.

OBJECTIVES

With this conference, we seek to clarify both the ECI's potential and its challenges, as well as identify specific ways in which it may be improved. In particular, we will:

- quickly explain to those who are new to the ECI the history and design of the ECI, and the problems encountered in its use by campaigners, national governments and EU institutions.
- identify areas where the ECI could be simplified and strengthened, for the benefit of all parties involved.
- place the ECI in the broader context of European democracy and growing demands from citizens throughout Europe for more participation in public policy, including via digital platforms.

*The ECI *Unconditional basic income* was declared inadmissible and then reworded, resubmitted and registered. The ECIs *Single Communications Tariff Act*, *Let me vote*, *End Ecocide in Europe* and *European Initiative for Media Pluralism* were registered, withdrawn and re-registered to gain more time. In total, 46 separate ECI campaigns have submitted proposals to the Commission, of which 27 have been allowed to gather signatures.

PROGRAMME

The European Citizens' Initiative and the Promise of Participatory Democracy

Tuesday, 16 June 2015, 9:00 - 13:00
Justus Lipsius building – Brussels, Belgium

8:15 – 9:00 Registration and coffee

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome

- **Zanda KALNIŅA – LUKAŠEVICA**, Parliamentary State Secretary for EU Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia

9:10 – 9:55 How might the ECI better fulfil its promise of participatory democracy?

Moderator: Carsten BERG, The ECI Campaign

- **Bernd MARTENCZUK**, Member of the Cabinet of Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans.
- **György SCHÖPFLIN**, Member of European Parliament and ECI Rapporteur for the AFCO committee.
- **Inga REINE**, Current Chair of the Council Working party on General Affairs in respect of the ECI.

10:00 – 11:00 Making the ECI Work for All. How to simplify? Which topics? What impact?

Moderator: Bruno KAUFMANN, IRI Europe

- **Tina NILSSON**, Office of the European Ombudsman. *Where does the ECI most need simplification? How to determine topics and impact?*
- **Carmen PREISING**, Head of Unit, European Commission Secretariat General Unit C4 – Work Programme and Stakeholder Consultation. *What does simplification mean for the Commission? How to improve registration and response?*
- **Sabine ECKART**, German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Member of the Expert Group on the ECI. *What does simplification mean for Member States?*
- **Stan JOURDAN**, ECI Unconditional Basic Income and **Prisca MERZ**, ECI End Ecocide. *What does simplification mean for ECI campaigners? What is the effect of limiting topics? What impact do campaigners require to use the ECI?*

11:00 – 11:20 BREAK

11:25 – 12:20 Participatory and Digital Democracy:

The ECI's new paradigm for EU public involvement

Moderator: Catherine HOWE, Capita

- **Madara PEIPINA**, ManaBalss.lv (My Voice Latvia). *What the ECI can learn from an NGO-run national government online platform for citizen-institution dialogue.*
- **Gilles FEITH**, CTIE (Centre des Technologies de l'Information de l'Etat), Luxembourg. *Examples of and ideas for new user-friendly digital tools developed by the Luxembourg government to support the ECI.*
- **Xavier DUTOIT**, IT specialist for the ECI Right to Water. *What the ECI needs to function as an effective online participatory democracy tool.*

12:25 – 12:55 **What could be next for the ECI?**

Moderator: Janice THOMSON, The ECI Campaign

- **Anne-Marie SIGMUND**, EESC (European Economic and Social Committee). Ideas from ECI Day 2015. Key themes from EESC events and reflections on the ECI.
- A summary discussion of key conference ideas for improving the ECI presented by representatives of event partner civil society organisations, including:
 - **Heike AGHTE**, The ECI Campaign
 - **Elisa BRUNO**, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)
 - **Sophie HATZFELDT**, Democracy International
 - **Alexandrina NAJMOWICZ**, European Civic Forum

12:55 – 13:00 **Closing**

- **Inga REINE**, Latvian Presidency.

ABOUT THE ICI CAMPAIGN

The ECI Campaign works exclusively for the successful introduction and implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). It is independent, non-profit making, politically neutral and not financed by the EU.

It monitors and conducts research on the ECI's implementation and use, provides advice and resources to ECI campaigns, lobbies at EU and national levels to improve the ECI and comments on the ECI in media and events throughout the EU. Its 2014 publication An ECI That Works has been widely quoted during the review of the ECI's first three years.

The ECI Campaign was created in 2004 by a handful of democracy activists who successfully campaigned for the ECI during the Convention on the Future of Europe. It has since grown into a broad network of concerned citizens, pro-democracy activists and over 100 European NGOs. Its work is carried out by volunteers, like-minded partner organisations, donors and a small coordination team which includes several former ECI organisers.

To learn more visit www.citizens-initiative.eu. Follow The ECI Campaign on Twitter at @ecinow and on Facebook at European Citizens' Initiative.

CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS

This conference is supported by the **European Economic and Social Committee** and the following civil society organisations:

AECEE Europe-European Students' Forum

Citizens for Europe

Democracy International

Démocratie Ouverte

European Civic Forum

European Citizen Action Service

European Youth Forum

Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe

SPEAKERS

(in order of appearance)

Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica started her professional career in 1998 at the City Council of Jūrmala. Between 2003 and 2008 she worked for the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government. In 2008, she was appointed to the Strategic Analysis Commission of the Chancery of the President of Latvia and in 2010 became adviser to the President on strategic planning and analysis. In 2011, Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica was elected to the Parliament (Saeima) of Latvia. During her mandate between 2011 and 2014 she was elected as Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee. In November 2014 Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica was appointed Parliamentary State Secretary for EU Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia. She is also a member of the boards of non-profit organisations such as the "European Movement–Latvia" and "Caritas" (Latvia). Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica was born on 30 June 1978. She obtained a master's degree and a PhD in Management Science at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Latvia.

Bernd Martenczuk is a Member of the Private Office of the First Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans. He studied at Frankfurt University and at the Kennedy School of Government (Harvard University), obtaining a doctorate in law at Frankfurt University. In 1999, he joined the Legal Service of the European Commission, where he worked successively in the areas of external relations, trade, state aid, and institutional matters. During his time with the Legal Service, he represented the Commission in numerous cases before the WTO, the General Court and the Court of Justice of the European Union, and the EFTA Court. Since November 2014, he has been a Member of the Private Office of the First Vice President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans. He is also Professor in the LL.M. Programme on International Legal Co-operation of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and has published widely on questions of European and public international law.

György Schöpflin is a Hungarian Member of European Parliament and the rapporteur on the ECI for the Constitutional Affairs Committee (AFCO). Professor Schöpflin, was elected as a Member of the European Parliament for Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union, member of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in 2004, and re-elected twice in 2009 and in 2014. He serves as a coordinator on the Parliament's AFCO Committee, as a full member on the Development Committee (DEVE) and as a substitute member in the Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET) and in the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE). Previously he worked at Chatham House, the BBC, lectured at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, and was Jean Monnet Professor of Politics and Director of the Centre for the Study of Nationalism. Current writings can be found on his blog in both English and Hungarian: www.schopflin-iroda.blogspot.com. Follow him on twitter @schopflinMEP and on Facebook at Schöpflin György.

Inga Reine is head of the Institutional Affairs Division of the Permanent Representation of Latvia to the European Union. She joined the Permanent Representation of Latvia to the EU in July 2012, where she was assigned the responsibility of providing legal advice, coordinating relations with the European Parliament and work with institutional issues. During the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Ms. Reine is chairing the General Affairs Working Party, which, amongst other issues, is responsible for the ECI. Before joining the Permanent Representation of Latvia, Ms. Reine was responsible for representing the Government of Latvia before the European Court of Human Rights, UN treaty monitoring bodies and a number of other international human rights mechanisms. She worked for the OSCE Missions in Kosovo and then in Montenegro, assisting authorities with setting up independent Ombudsperson institutions, introducing democratic reforms and improving compliance with the rule of law and fundamental rights standards. Finally, Ms. Reine is an author of a number of publications in Latvian, English and Russian. She holds a European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation from the Inter-University Programme.

Tina Nilsson is Head of one of the European Ombudsman's four Complaints and Inquiries Units, managing a team of lawyers who carry out inquiries into possible instances of maladministration in the EU administration. Inquiries are carried out either on the basis of complaints from citizens, organisations, businesses etc., or on the Ombudsman's own initiative. Tina Nilsson has been a member of the Ombudsman's team since 2003. She has a Masters in International and European Law from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium, and a Masters in Law from Lund University, Sweden. She has also worked as a clerk at a Swedish district court.

Carmen Preising Since 2012 Head of Unit in the Secretariat General of the European Commission, she is currently leading the unit responsible for the Commission Work Programme, Stakeholder consultation and the European Citizens' Initiative. She has been working in the European Commission since 2003, with a focus on interinstitutional relations and institutional affairs.

Sabine Eckart joined the German Federal Ministry of the Interior in 2006. She currently works in the Division for European Union Law, Public International Law and Constitutional Law relating to European and International Law, and is inter alia responsible for the legal and political aspects of the European Citizens' Initiative in Germany. She holds a law degree from the Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-University in Frankfurt, Germany. From 2004 to 2006, she worked as a lawyer for public law and environmental law in a law firm in Frankfurt, Germany.

Stanislas Jourdan is a board member for Unconditional Basic Income Europe. He was one of the organisers of the ECI for Basic Income which collected 300,000 signatures across Europe. Recently he joined The ECI Campaign in its efforts to improve the ECI and promote a more participatory democracy at EU level. He previously worked as a journalist.

Prisca Merz was the initiator of the ECI End Ecocide in Europe. From May 2012 to March 2015, she built and led the team and represented the entirely volunteer-run and fully independent initiative on a voluntary basis, in addition to holding a full time job at Imperial College London. Her background is in Public Policy and European Studies. Before initiating End Ecocide, she was a very active member of the European Students' Forum AEGEE for which she organised different projects aimed at strengthening the European identity of youth throughout Europe.

Madara Peipina represents one of the most innovative and successful e-petition platforms in Europe - ManaBalss.lv / MyVoice, helping to bring people's ideas to the Latvian Parliament. She works towards promoting social change in various parts of society, putting to good effect her more than 10 years of experience in non-profit project management, communications, non-formal education and law. Twitter: @madarapeipina

ManaBalss.lv / MyVoice is a public participation platform on which every citizen in Latvia who is at least 16 years of age can submit and sign initiatives and e-petitions for legislative change at any level. Anyone with a good idea on how to improve existing laws or create new ones can register his/her idea on this platform and gather supporters' signatures. Once an initiative reaches 10,000 signatures, it is officially submitted to the Parliament, where it is processed and included in the Parliament's official agenda. Later a discussion is held with the author and experts, and Parliament makes the final decision - either the idea presented in the initiative becomes a law or not. During the past three years, more than 1,000,000 people have visited ManaBalss.lv, and 14 ideas have been brought to Parliament. Therefore ManaBalss.lv has proved itself to be one of the most effective, widespread and popular civic participation projects in Latvia's history.

Gilles Feith serves as Chief Information Officer in his position as Director of the Government IT Center for the Luxembourg Ministry of Public Services. The Government IT Center provides centralised IT services for public administrations and ministries. Its total budget, including personnel

costs, is over 100 million euros and it employs an internal staff of more than 300 employees. Formerly, Gilles Feith was the Deputy Director of the Government IT Centre. Before this, he held management positions in the Luxembourg Ministry for Public Services, the Luxembourg telecommunications operator Post Telecom and global accounting firms. Gilles Feith holds a degree in commercial and financial sciences with a specialisation in chartered accounting and has extensive experience working in ICT and government-related environments in both operational and regulatory fields of work.

Xavier Dutoit is an award-winning internet expert who has extensive experience in building online tools and communities. He is committed to the transformative power of technology to achieve democratic change on behalf of citizens everywhere. Mr. Dutoit is a computer engineer and open source advocate who runs a number of companies that work towards promoting technology so that it may be used to enhance people's participation. He has a long track record of running successful pan-European online campaigns and developing wide NGO networks. In 2013 he managed the technological side of the first ever successful ECI campaign, Right2Water. He has been using open data and data visualisation for campaigns to increase transparency, for instance integritywatch.eu.

Anne-Marie Sigmund is a member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and representative of the Federal Committee of Liberal Professions, a professional umbrella organisation in Austria, which includes amongst its members medical doctors, dentists, veterinary surgeons, pharmacists, lawyers, notaries, tax advisers and accountants, patent agents, architects and civil engineers. The main aim of this body is to represent and defend all the inter-professional interests of its members. From 1979 to 2001, Ms. Sigmund was Secretary-General of the organisation. She now acts as advisor on European Affairs. In this capacity she keeps her organisation informed of processes which may be of concern for them and is in permanent contact with the current Secretary-General in order to assess the need for additional activities. In addition, she works towards establishing the function of the liberal professions as "mediator between public force and citizen" in the context of the EESC's mission as "a bridge between citizens and EU". She focuses her activities on issues that are of interest to the public.

MODERATORS

Carsten Berg is coordinator of The ECI Campaign. He is a political scientist and holds a degree in political science from the University Potsdam and a Masters in Education from Alanus University Bonn. He has campaigned for participatory and direct democracy at regional, national and transnational levels. Moreover, he has given university lectures on participatory democracy and served as an expert and adviser to parliaments and international NGOs. From 2002-2003, Mr. Berg worked for Mehr Demokratie e.V. in the Convention on the Future of Europe and successfully campaigned for the inclusion of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) into EU law. Since then, he has continued to contribute to the emergence of the ECI in his position as general coordinator of The ECI Campaign www.citizens-initiative.eu.

Catherine Howe is an expert in digital innovation, focusing on the area of digital democracy and social change. She has a background in technology delivery having run a successful SME, Public-i, Group Ltd, before moving to Capita to develop a new practice focusing on developing new models of engagement – online and offline. She has worked with online communities and social networking tools for over 15 years. Initially developing learning applications, including one of the first eLearning community sites at the London Business School. She was founder and director of Etribes.com – an online community consultancy which specialised in working with large third sector organisations.

Since 2001 she has worked with local government across the UK and Europe, looking at how new technologies can deliver innovative democracy and engagement solutions for the Networked Society and helping clients understand strategic and organisational implications. Working across the public

sector she is currently involved in such projects as the ground breaking NHS Citizen initiative as well as digital leadership programmes within local government. You can find out more on her blog (<http://www.curiouscatherine.info>) or by following her on twitter (@curiousc).

Bruno Kaufmann is editor-in-chief of people2power.info, a global democracy media platform hosted by the Swiss Broadcasting Company [swissinfo.ch/directdemocracy]. He has a background as a newspaper and broadcasting journalist working for publications such as Weltwoche, Tagesanzeiger and Die Zeit. He lives in Sweden, where he chairs the Election and Democracy Commission in city government [falun.se/democracy]. Bruno Kaufmann is a political scientist and president of the Initiative and Referendum Institute [iri-europe.org]. He has published extensively on modern representative democracy with a focus on active citizenship and participatory democracy. He is the author of the new “European Passport to Active Citizenship” published by the European Economic and Social Committee. Bruno currently serves as co-president of the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy [2015globalforum.com] and is a research fellow at the Centre for Social Cohesion at Arizona State University in Phoenix, USA.

Janice Thomson is an advisor to The ECI Campaign and co-editor of [An ECI That Works!](#) She was The ECI Campaign’s representative in Brussels during the drafting of the ECI Regulation in 2010-2011. She promotes meaningful public involvement at all levels of government as a researcher, writer, facilitator, consultant and network weaver. She previously spent over a decade as a consumer researcher and advertising account planner. She holds dual EU and US citizenship and writes about civic engagement on both continents at www.janicethomson.net and tweets at @jkthoms.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The conference will be held in the Press Room of the Council of the European Union.

Council of the European Union
Justus Lipsius building
PRESS ROOM
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175
B-1048 Bruxelles/Brussel
Belgique/België

(picture of the building)

all our social media links

The translation was provided by the Translation Service of the General Secretariat of the Council.