



BULGARIAN-SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
БЪЛГАРО-ШВЕЙЦАРСКА ПРОГРАМА ЗА СЪТРУДНИЧЕСТВО

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

### **MAKING DIRECT DEMOCRACY WORK IN BULGARIA** **How to Improve the National Referendum Legislation**

Organizers:

BULGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF CITIZENS' INITIATIVE [www.initiative.bg](http://www.initiative.bg)  
CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON DIRECT DEMOCRACY – AARAU, SWITZERLAND [www.C2D.ch](http://www.C2D.ch)

### **Program**

(draft as of 02.02.2016)

Conference hall City Hotel Best Western Plus, 6 Stara Planina Str, Sofia

#### **PRECONFERENCE**

##### **Feb 25th, Thursday**

15:30 – 16:30

Representatives of Legislature and State Agencies responsible for implementation of referendum legislation meet with initiative and referendum committee members and activists.

Coffee break

16:45 – 18:30

MIR 36 - The network of initiative and referendum activists and petitioners discusses proposal for amendment of the Law on Direct Participation; planning the way ahead.

Consultation with foreign experts: Uwe Serduilt, Corina Fuhrer, C2D, Switzerland and Daniel Schily and Angelika Gardiner, Democracy International and Mehr Demokratie, Germany.

#### **CONFERENCE**

##### **Feb 26th, Friday**

09:00 -9:30 Registration of participants

09:30 -09:45 Opening Welcome Addresses

*(Deputy Speaker National Parliament, Representative of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – to be confirmed)*

09:45 – 11:30 PART ONE: MODERN DIRECT DEMOCRACY. THE BULGARIAN EXPERIENCE  
WITH NATIONAL REFERENDUMS AND INITIATIVES

**Citizens' Empowerment for Direct Decision-Making. The Importance of Voter-Friendly Legislative Mechanism. Why is the Swiss system considered a role model in direct democracy?**

*Dr. Uwe Serduilt, Center for Research on Direct Democracy –Aarau, Switzerland*

## **Highlights of Bulgaria's Experience with Direct Democracy**

*Daniela Bozhinova, researcher, Chairperson of the Bulgarian Association for the Promotion of Citizens Initiative and Alexander Assenov, legal expert, Varna Referendum Committee*

### **PANEL DISCUSSION: National referendums and initiatives – setting the stage for fairer and freer popular votes in Bulgaria through legislative change**

*Members of national Initiative/referendum committees, managers of past and current petition campaigns: Slavi Show Campaign, Manuela Maleeva Initiative Committee on E-voting, NGO representatives*

Coffee-break

### **The European Integration and the Will of the People. Some insights into referendum practice in Italy.**

*David Borrelli, MEP (Italy), Co-chair of Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy political group*

### **Advancing Initiative and Referendum in Europe. Upcoming referendums in 2016 (the case of the Netherlands and other important I&R developments in the national states, role of DI).**

*Daniel Schily, CEO Democracy International – Cologne*

### **PANEL DISCUSSION: The role of media and government in informing and shaping referendum voters' preferences**

*observations and recommendations of national and local media representatives, political scientist*

13:15 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 PART TWO: MAKING LOCAL DIRECT DEMOCRACY WORK

### **Hamburg – Ups and Downs on the Road to Direct Democracy**

*Angelika Gardiner, journalist and referendum activist, Mehr Demokratie, Hamburg*

### **Success and Failure of Local Referendums in Bulgaria – the cases of Samokov initiative and Gorna Malina referendum. Lessons Learnt and the Way Ahead.**

*Angel Jilanov, Mayor of Gorna Malina; Boiko Hadjiiski, Chair Referendum Committee Samokov*

### **Ideas for Legislative Improvement**

### **Quality of Democracy and Direct Participation in Bulgaria. How willing will be Bulgarian reformers to remove legislative stumbling blocks on the way to meaningful citizens' participation**

*Dr Svetoslav Malinov, MEP Bulgaria, the Reformist Block and European People's Party*

**Closing remarks** : *Uwe Serduilt, Daniela Bozhinova*

The conference is organized in implementation of the project "Strengthening Direct Democracy Legal instruments Through Bulgarian-Swiss Partnership" within the framework of the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Program.