

CONFERENCE

ASSESSMENT OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVES IN PRACTICE:

REGISTRATION
CERTIFICATION
ONLINE COLLECTION
TRANSPARENCY

FRIDAY, OCT 5th 2012, 9.30

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR
ROOM: „GROßER VORTRAGSSAAL“
MINORITENPLATZ 9
1010 WIEN I



With the support of the programme
Europe for Citizens of the European Union

BM.I



REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

Optimizing democracy and enhancing citizens' participation in the political life of the European Union has been a long and on-going process. The Lisbon Treaty made a big step forward when it introduced the first direct democratic right to the EU:

Since April, a new instrument – the European citizens' initiative (ECI) – is available and has put EU citizens into the driving seats as it has provided them with an opportunity to directly shape the political future of the EU. This offers important means of transnational participation while bringing together new opportunities for information, consultation and dialogue for those who wish to have a say at EU level.

We have seen much pan-European engagement through this new instrument over the last months. These are exciting times for all those who have played a role in ensuring that this new tool is a success – and for all those who have been eagerly hoping to exploit it for quick action. The issues raised through ECIs might even be taken into account by political party campaigners and they could also have a role in the running-up to the European Parliament elections in 2014.

However, as matters sometimes turn out quite differently in practice from what was expected by the drafters, we have also seen a lot of problems and challenges. We have seen the first refusals of ECIs. Over the last few months, it has been also proven that the "semi-official" tool is not as user-friendly as it claims to be.

Initiators have been unable to organise their networks as promptly and easily as one might have expected. Even if some of them formulated brilliant proposals, they often do not have sufficient resources and capacity to make it through the process. Problems arise in particular with regard to the online signature collection software (and especially the excessive costs for setting up this system) in addition of high costs for running a campaign.

Particular attention should also be paid to the notion of transparency. One of the first outcomes from the early stage of the process is that the European Commission has been reluctant to disclose the ECIs it had received before its registration. For EU citizens it is essential to have access to all relevant information at every stage of the proceedings not only to be able to follow a legislative process but also to work together from the early stage in order to secure a true transnational debate on the issue.

This conference is therefore going to offer an excellent opportunity to evaluate the first practical experiences with ECIs and their impact. Most importantly, it will focus on sharing of information, experiences and inputs on particular initiatives and will enable stakeholders to exchange the best practices with a special focus on the technical aspects of the regulation as well as on the potential legal issues which still raise some concerns. The conclusions of this conference should also provide room for further discussion focusing on the revision of the Regulation in three years' time.

Johannes W. Pichler

Tony Venables

FRIDAY, Oct 5th 2012

WELCOME ADDRESSES

Chair: *Gerald Häfner*, Member of the European Parliament

09:30 *Enhancing and Enforcing Direct Democracy Channels*
Sebastian Kurz, State Secretary; Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior

Key developments, experiences, major surprises and challenges for Initiatives ahead

Johannes W. Pichler, Director to the Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy

FIRST SESSION ASSESSING THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ERA

10:00 CROSS PANEL: **ADMISSION - CERTIFICATION - VALIDATION**

The First Refused Initiative on the way to the EuCJ:
Klaus Kastenhofer: My voice against nuclear power initiative

Initiative not realised:
Bengt Beier: Europeans for Fair Roaming

Initiatives in procedure:
Ana Gorey: ECI "High Quality European Education for All"

Simona Pronckute: ECI "Fraternité 2020"

Christian Meidlinger: ECI "Water is a human right!"

Gaël Drillon: ECI "Responsible management of waste"

Vincent Chauvet: ECI "One Single Tariff"

Filippo Vari: ECI "One of Us"

National competent authorities responsible for the certification of the online collection systems:

Robert Stein : Director, Head of Department of Electoral Affairs,
Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior

European Commission:

Charlotte Rive: Secretariat General, European Commission

11:30

Debate

12:00

**Wrap Up by the Chair: Impressions and Legislative
Consequences**

Gerald Häfner

12:15

Lunch break - Reception at the venue, Courtesy of the Institute

Info table of current and planned European Citizens' Initiatives

SECOND SESSION
EVALUATING ONLINE SIGNATURE COLLECTION

Chair: *Alexander Prosser*, Professor for Business Computing, Department of Information Systems and Operating; Vienna University of Economics and Business

14:00 **PANEL : ONLINE TOOLS - REGULATION POLICIES**
How to ensure that your online collection system has adequate security and technical features? Factual functional requirements - application of the level of security. Liability impacts and biases.

Collection and ID requirements:

Reinhard Posch, Chief Information Officer, Austrian Federal Chancellery

Claudia Kutzschbach: Director, German Federal Ministry of the Interior

Verification of statements of support:

Gregor Wenda, Deputy Head of Department of Electoral Affairs, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Austria

Timo Salovaara: Information Services Manager, Finnish Population Register Centre

Software for online collections:

Florian Engel, More Onion, e-campaigning agency

Hurdles and obstacles:

Robert Müller-Török, Professor of E-Government, University of Public Administration Ludwigsburg, Germany

15:00 Debate

15:30 **Wrap Up by the Chair**
Alexander Prosser

15:45 Coffee Break

Info table of current and planned European Citizens' Initiatives

**THIRD SESSION
LOOKING FORWARD**

Chair: *Manfred Matzka*, Director General, Austrian Federal Chancellery

16:15 *How to better prepare initiatives and simplify the ECI to make it a genuine instrument for citizens and what issues will still have to be addressed upon revision of the Regulation in 2, 5 years' time?*

Carsten Berg, Director of the ECI Campaign; Democracy International

Bruno Kaufmann, President of the Initiative & Referendum Institute

Alexander Balthasar, Director, Head of the Institute for State Reform, Austrian Federal Chancellery

Klaus Poier, Professor for Public Law, University of Graz

Justin Greenwood, Professor of European Public Policy at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK

Michaela Sieh, ELIANT Alliance

17:00 **General debate** - Analyses of loopholes and discussion on their possible implications into the future: What are expectations surround the ECI, What obstacles could be overcome now? What impact can be expected with a view to the forthcoming Parliamentary elections in 2014? (*chaired by Manfred Matzka*)

17:30 **Conclusions / Recommendations**

Tony Venables, European Citizen Action Service

Johannes W. Pichler, Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

CONFERENCE LANGUAGE: English

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ACCOMMODATION

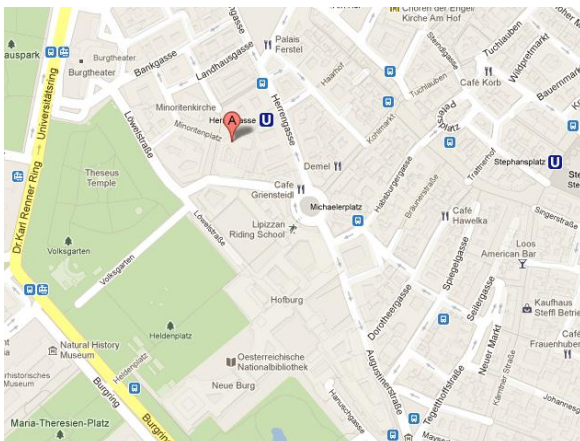
Please note that accommodation and travel arrangements need to be booked individually and no reimbursements are possible. For accommodation, we propose the following hotels:

NH Wien or NH Atterseehaus
110-125€/Night (Breakfast excluded)

or the budget alternative:

Ibis Wien Mariahilf
75€/Night (Breakfast excluded)

VENUE



Federal Ministry of the interior,
Minoritenplatz 9, 1010 Wien I
Room: „Großer Vortragssaal“

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