



## DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL

### **Newsletter: Democracy groups, come together in our Council**

7 May 2013

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#### **Content:**

1. Democracy International: New Council for countries
  2. ECI „Water is a Human Right“ ready for submission to Commission
  3. Direct democracy in Hungary - still a powerful instrument?
  4. European Parliament: European Citizens' Initiative must improve
  5. Ireland: Convention paves way for referendum on same-sex-marriage
  6. ECI Day in Brussels: Civil Society, make it work!
  7. Not a fairy tale - The Icelandic direct democracy Saga
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Dear Friend,

Are you active in a democracy group that has more than seven members? Do you want to work together with activists from other countries to strengthen (direct) democracy in the nation state, in Europe and in the world through exchanging information, advice and best practice?

You answer “Yes” to these questions? Then your group could join Democracy International’s Council, a new body we established this weekend with organizations from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Our goal is that more and more organisations will follow. People (individual members) and organisations (represented in the Council) make up the backbone of Democracy International!

We invite you to a big democracy conference to take place in Bratislava, Slovakia from 4 to 6 April next year. On this occasion we want to get to know you and we want to admit more groups to the Council. You are all very welcome, please save the date. Our preparatory work has just started. We will keep you up to date about the future developments.

Best wishes,  
Cora Pfafferott

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#### **1. Democracy International: New Council for countries**

On Saturday, 4th May 2013, Democracy International formally established the Council in its headquarters in Cologne, Germany. Democracy initiatives from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands are the first members of the new body, whose main goal is to strengthen Democracy International’s work through bringing in experience, advice about best practice and engaging in campaigns.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/di-new-council.html>

## **2. ECI „Water is a Human Right“ ready for submission to Commission**

On 3rd May 2013, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "Water is a human right" jumped over the last hurdle to qualify for the European Commission as a law proposal. With Luxembourg, Finland and Lithuania providing the necessary amount of signatures also, there are now one million signatures from at least seven EU countries that fulfil the required minimum threshold.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/water-is-human-right.html>

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## **3. Direct democracy in Hungary - still a powerful instrument?**

Hungary was and still is among the few countries in which people can initiate a referendum from below. The government has changed the constitution of 1990 in 2011 and with this also the rules of initiatives. What has changed and what are the consequences?

<http://www.democracy-international.org/directdemocracy-hungary-2013.html>

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## **4. European Parliament: European Citizens' Initiative must improve**

Members of all political groups of the European Parliament share the view that more people must know about the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and that the technical problems of the new instrument of transnational direct democracy must be solved. This is the tenor of a plenary session held in Strasbourg on 18 April 2013 to mark the first anniversary of the European Citizens' Initiative.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/eci-in-ep.html>

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## **5. Ireland: Convention paves way for referendum on same-sex-marriage**

As an exercise to modernise Ireland's constitution, the constitutional convention met in Dublin on 13 and 14 April 2013 to discuss the introduction of same-sex-marriage in the Republic of Ireland. At the end of the weekend meeting the members, 100 Irish citizens and parliamentarians altogether, recommended to change the Irish constitution with a majority of 79 per cent to allow for civil marriage of same-sex couples.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/irish-constitutionalconvention.html>

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## **6. ECI Day in Brussels: Civil Society, make it work!**

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has been one year in practice, but neither EU politicians nor civil society organisations are happy with the instrument. Originally praised as the first tool of transnational direct democracy, "ECI Day" in Brussels on 9 April 2013 showed that the requirements of the ECI must change to be an influential and effective law-making instrument.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/eci-day-brussels.html>

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## **7. Not a fairy tale - The Icelandic direct democracy Saga**

The small Mediterranean island of Cyprus has made the headlines this spring. The crash of its banking sector, sending shockwaves across the Eurozone and beyond, was strongly reminiscent of another small island also on the periphery of Europe, but in quite a different climatic zone - Iceland. Five years of crisis management offer Cyprus - and other states - a series of tough lessons. And not just about the economy - but about people power.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/iceland-not-fairy-tale.html>