

Newsletter: Direct democracy makes fun!

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Content:

1. Support “Let Me Vote”, the ECI to give EU citizens full voting rights!
 2. Lithuanian government should follow result of referendum against nuclear power plant
 3. Dutch activist on direct democracy in Athens
 4. Hype in the Hauptstadt: Collecting signatures at midnight in Berlin
 5. European Commission, take seriously the ECI!
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Dear Friend,

Direct Democracy makes fun. This is what I experienced this month in Berlin while collecting signatures for the “Energietisch”, Berlin’s current citizens’ initiative, which aims at giving back the power grid to Berlin’s citizens. Touring Berlin’s bars at midnight to ask guests for their autographs was one of the best pub crawls ever in my life: I had the chance to speak to many people and to find out what they think about the idea of the initiative.

More seriously, collecting signatures in Berlin also showed me the actual burdens exclusive rules of political participation put on people. I will not forget the French woman, a Berlin resident for more than ten years, eager to sign the initiative. However, she was not allowed to do so as the city of Berlin stipulates German citizenship. Feeling sorry for the woman who was clearly very disappointed, I realized the need to make voting rights much more international.

In that regard I am glad that Democracy International has decided to officially support the European Citizens’ Initiative “Let me vote”. Launched by the people behind “Européens sans frontières”, the initiative aims at allowing EU citizens living in another EU country to take part in local, regional, national and European elections. You support this goal? Then sign at www.letmevote.eu . I strongly hope that this ECI will generate the political impact so that in the near future any resident of Berlin can also take part in direct democracy.

Best wishes from Cologne,
Cora Pfafferott

1. Support “Let Me Vote”, the ECI to give EU citizens full voting rights!

Democracy International supports the European Citizens’ Initiative “Let me vote!” and therefore calls upon every EU citizen to sign the initiative. Like Democracy International, Let me vote! pursues the goal of accomplishing democracy in the EU by removing the democratic deficit. For this to happen, equal, fair and inclusive electoral rights are a central tool.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/support-let-me-vote.html>

2. Lithuanian government should follow result of referendum against nuclear power plant

Democracy International calls upon the Lithuanian government to accept the result of the referendum of 14 October 2012, in which almost 65 per cent of voters had decided not to build a new nuclear power plant in Lithuania, the 'Visaginas' plant. Although announced for Mid May, Lithuania's government – which was newly elected on the same day the referendum was held - yet has not declared whether it will follow the result of the referendum or not.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/referendum-lithuania.html>

3 Dutch activist on direct democracy in Athens

On Friday, 10 May, Arjen Nijeboer, spokesperson of the Dutch Referendum Platform, gave a lecture on direct democracy in the Floral Café, an alternative café and bookshop in the heart of Athens. The lecture was organized by the emerging direct democracy group around Petros Vourlis, who runs the blog <http://referendumsforgreece.wordpress.com> .

<http://www.democracy-international.org/democracy-lecture-athens.html>

4. Hype in the Hauptstadt: Collecting signatures at midnight in Berlin

Crawling pubs on a Friday night in Prenzlauer Berg, one of Berlin's hip districts, chatting up guys in bars that have as special names as "Zu mir oder zu Dir" ("to me or to you") and getting their autographs. This is not the latest marketing idea to line up men and women in Germany's capital renown for having too many singles. This is what you do when gathering signatures for the "Energietisch" ("energy table"), Berlin's current citizens' initiative.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/initiative-energietisch.html>

5. European Commission, take seriously the ECI!

The European Citizens' Initiative 'Water is a human right' succeeded in gathering one million signatures from at least seven EU Member States in proportion to their size of population. This qualifies 'Water is a human right' as the first European Citizens' Initiative ever to be submitted to the European Commission.

<http://www.democracy-international.org/europe-day-2013.html>
