
Preface

1. Editors Carsten Berg and Janice Thomson, The ECI Campaign

Dear Reader,

With this publication, we invite you to take part in a discussion on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and the future of democracy in Europe. In the two years since the launch of the ECI, the first tool for transnational participatory and digital democracy in world history, we have amassed valuable learning from over 20 pioneering ECI campaigns. Most have completed their campaigns and three have collected over one million signatures of support.

In one year, the rules that govern the ECI (*Regulation No 211/2011*) will be up for review by the European Parliament and Council. Therefore it is time now to open the debate, raise questions, reflect on observations and share perspectives. As the Greek philosopher Pericles said "*a good decision needs a good discussion in advance*".

In this spirit, we approached ECI stakeholders and asked them to share their experiences and tell us what they think is needed for "an ECI that works". They met in person in a December 2013 workshop in Brussels and contributed articles to this publication. Practical experience gives their voices strength and credibility. They, better than anyone else, know how often the ECI does *not* work and to what extent it needs urgent improvement.

Part I features the real-world experiences of people who developed and ran ECI campaigns. They were asked to describe why they chose the ECI and what impact it has had. They share what helped them and challenged them. They suggest ways to improve the ECI, both by changing the regulation and providing supports. The men and women who worked on these first pioneering ECI campaigns are our heroes. They took the risk of testing a new tool and learned the hard way what it would take to succeed.

Part II contains equally valuable reflections from officials inside EU institutions and national administrations who have worked with the ECI, technical advisors to ECI campaigns, democracy advocates and researchers who have studied different aspects of the ECI – from the Commission's legal admissibility decisions to the design of the public hearing.

As the EU's democratic deficit continues to grow alongside citizen frustration with EU decisions, the ECI has become a beacon of hope for a more democratic EU. Expectations are high, but so are the challenges. The ECI was never on the wish list of governments and it was not devised by EU insiders. It has instead been the product of long-term grassroots citizen engagement for more participation and democracy. We hope the stories in this publication will inspire you to get engaged for a renewed Europe by citizens. Together we can ensure that the ECI works, not just for us, but for all future generations to come!

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Carsten Berg and Janice Thomson, Editors of "An ECI That Works!"

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Learning from the first two years of the European Citizens' Initiative

Edited by Carsten Berg and Janice Thomson

Prefaces by Maroš Šefčovič, Martin Schulz and Dimitris Kourkoulas

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This book contains contributions from 16 ECIs,
14 analytic and prospective contributions, and two interviews.

You may order the book by email: contact@citizens-initiative.eu

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