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## 15. One Million Signatures for “A Europe of Solidarity”

Alexis Anagnostakis

*Editor’s summary: This ECI was created as a response to EU-imposed austerity measures on member states. Its goal is to establish as European law the principle of “state of necessity” so a country may refuse to repay its national debt if its political and economic survival is threatened. It was refused registration by the Commission and is appealing to the European Court of Justice.*

The ECI *One Million Signatures for “A Europe of Solidarity”* was one of the first initiatives submitted to the European Commission for registration. Its citizens’ committee was established by *Seisachtheia*, a legal entity created to support the movement for the elimination of the odious Greek national debt. *Seisachtheia* was a set of laws instituted in 6<sup>th</sup> century BC Athens by the law-maker Solon which used debt relief to rectify widespread serfdom and slavery.

The objective of this ECI is to establish as a European law the principle of “state of necessity”. This means that, when servicing an extremely high national debt puts the financial and political existence of a member state in danger, the refusal of its payment is necessary and justifiable.

In Greece, servicing an abhorrent national debt has caused many serious problems for the Greek people: galloping unemployment (60% among youth), the collapse of wages and pensions (some reduced 70%), the closure of hospitals and schools, significant cuts to social services, malnutrition and hunger, and much individual suffering and general misery. Public services are being either dissolved or privatised. Greece is experiencing a humanitarian tragedy, in all aspects of its social, political and economic life.

This ECI maintains that the EU has established usurious relationships with Greece and other EU member states. The rate of interest on loans which the Troika (EU, IMF, ECB) has lent to Greece is much higher than rates at which the individual state creditors borrowed those funds. For example, Germany borrowed money with a 0.25% interest rate and then lent it to Greece at a 5% interest rate. Certain member states have thus taken advantage of and been enriched by Greece’s situation. The outrageous interest rates applied to Greece are only creating more debt and disrupting the Eurozone’s smooth operation. This is a total denial of communal solidarity and constitutes the highest risk for the values of the Europe Union.

The General Secretariat of the European Commission, with its *C (2012) 6289 Final/6-9-2012* document, informed us that the European Commission rejected the registration of this ECI because the proposal falls “*outside the jurisdiction of the Commission, according to the implementation of the treaties*”. We have appealed this decision to the General Court of the European Union citing the improper interpretation and implementation of European legislation.

See: [curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=132107](http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=132107)

This case reveals serious gaps and omissions in the EU legislative framework governing the ECI which hinder the use of this ambitious new instrument.

The reason behind the Commission’s rejection of our ECI is that its objective falls outside the jurisdiction of the EU treaties. This reasoning is unacceptable to us. It downgrades the objective of the

ECI instrument only to matters already envisaged in the treaties. The true purpose of the ECI instrument is to enable citizens to suggest new legislative initiatives, and should include those not currently in the EU treaties. This new ECI instrument should challenge the EU to change. There are already bodies and mechanisms for the implementation of existing EU treaties and laws.

It is reasonable to fear that an attempt is being made to restrict opinions expressed on certain issues via the ECI in order to preserve the current status quo. Our ECI obviously is contrary to the current EU establishment view, but will surely benefit the European people and states.

The European South is sinking in this vicious recession that promotes subordination and increases impoverishment. The EU rationale, amidst an intense social and humanitarian crisis, for relentless and one-dimensional fiscal discipline of high taxes and deadly spending cuts is not beneficial to anyone. The debts of EU member states should be paid through their reserves and not by depriving the population of resources necessary for basic needs such as health, education and social services. Our ECI’s suggestion is to implement the solidarity clause as a main principle of the EU.

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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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14 analytic and prospective contributions, and two interviews.

You may order the book by email: [contact@citizens-initiative.eu](mailto:contact@citizens-initiative.eu)

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