

Direct Democracy

Challenges EU & regionally

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Freedom is participation in power
Marcus Cicero

Electing representative – participation on
Election day (representative democracy)

Making decisions on issues (direct democracy)

Referendum

Initiative

Recall



DD on the Rise

European integration – referenda

Switzerland

USA

Nov 6, 2012 elections +174 referenda in 38 states

Central&Eastern Europe



DD on the Rise

Central and Eastern Europe

Environmental issues become the center of citizens participation

Czech R – 2000-5 – 81 referenda, 2/3 environmental

Bulgaria – citizens initiate referendums on waste depots, extractive concessions, pipeline, water

Hungary

Poland – mainly recalls

Bulgaria

3 major municipal referenda 2008-9




all on the issue of
**Bourgas -
Alexandroupolis oil
pipeline** 70000 people
voted 99% against

Bourgas 27%

Sozopol 38%

Pomorie 60%



BULGARIA

Direct democracy facts

History - **3 national plebiscites**
the last one in 1971 on the Constitution of
“developed socialism”

Since 1971

41 YEARS No national referenda

No referendum on EU accession (2007)

limited number of local referenda

**DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN BULGARIA
ARE WE ABLE TO JUMP HIGH?**





BULGARIA

Direct democracy legislation

Law on Direct Participation ...

- High participation quorum – now 60%
- High threshold for national referendum
500 000 signatures
- Short period of collection – 3 months
- Limitations on topics
- Legislature can edit the referendum question

Bulgaria DD current developments

*Turnout quorum proved **absurd!!!***



Cherni Vrah Village 2011
local referendum ruled
invalid for **insufficient**
turnout of 73%
turnout had to be
82% = last local
elections

Bulgaria

DD current developments

National initiative mechanism (since 2009)

- ◆ N initiative to amend DD law
- ◆ N initiative to denounce agreement on Bourgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline
- ◆ N initiative “to limit the power of monopolies” – providers of electricity, gas, water etc.



NOT RESPECTED BY PARLIAMENT – NO RESPONSE

Bulgaria

DD current developments

Registered petitions for **NATIONAL REFERENDUM**

- **NR?** EU accession of Turkey - 290 000 sign.
- **NR?** Agricultural subsidies
- **NR?** New constitution - 597 152 signatures
fraud accusations – on hold
- **NR!** Nuclear energy – 773 447 signatures

Referendum scheduled 27 Jan 2013

Bulgaria DD current developments

2011- Submission 500 000+ signatures



Bulgaria & regionally

Misuse/abuse of DD

- High barriers of DD do not empower citizens but parties which have the resources to campaign
e.g. Bulgaria -BSP collected 700 000+ sign. for referendum on nuclear power station - 2012
- Referendum used to eliminate political rivals
e.g. Romania – Recall of President Basescu 29.07.2012
- Referendum used for hot potato political issues
e.g. Greece–PM’s referendum proposal on aid package 2011
- Referendum used for political marketing, face-lifting
e.g. Hungary-Fidesz party coming to power (2008)
e.g. Bulgaria- Ataka party consolidating - petition on Turkey

BSP nuclear petition –up-coming referendum



Nationalist party Ataka NO Turkey in EU petition





Fair & Free DD standards

Reasonable number of signatures

Longer time for collection

No limitation on topics and issues (financial!)

No participation quorum

Popular vote has to be binding

Access to media !

Electronic signing? ICT

The European Citizens' Initiative

Right of 1 million

European citizens from
at least 7 member-states
to propose legislation



First included in the draft
European Constitution

Included in the Lisbon treaty

Operational since 1/04/2012

European Citizens Initiative

Steps of Implementation

“Agenda Initiative”

- 1. ECI Committee of 7**
- 2. Proposal**
- 3. Registration (on-line register)**
- 4. Signature Gathering (1 year)**
- 5. Verification of signatures (3 months)**
- 6. Submission for examination**
- 7. EC communication – public hearing, announce conclusions, inform of future actions**



European Citizens Initiative

Registered ECIs (12) May-Oct.2012

- 1. Media Pluralism**
- 2. End Ecocide, for Earth Rights**
- 3. Central Public On-line Collection for ECIs**
- 4. Suspension of EU Climate&Energy Package**
- 5. Gestion responsables des dechets, contre les incinerateurs**
- 6. High Quality European Education for All**



European Citizens Initiative

Registered 12 ECIs May-Oct.2012

- 7. Stop Vivisection**
- 8. Let Me Vote**
- 9. Uno di noi**
- 10. Water for Life**
- 11. Single Communication Tariff Act**
- 12. Fraternite 2020. Mobility. Progress. Europe.**

Democracy International call for Democratic Convention

Burgas, Bulgaria

15 July 2012



Thank you for your attention

DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL

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Bulgarian Association for the Promotion of Citizens Initiative

