



**ECI DAY 2020**  
**Today and Beyond | 25.02.2020**



## **ECI Day 2020: Today and Beyond** **Speaking points – Daniela Vancic, Democracy International**

### **Evolution of the ECI**

- ECI first conceptualized 20 years ago by founding members of Democracy International (then only loose network of direct democracy activists that rallied for the ECI at the Convention on FoE). It was envisioned then to be a real citizens' initiative tool with a more binding nature than what we see today.
- Should the ECI be 100% binding? 1 million signatures are not majority. No voice of those who are against an ECI.
- Most popular initiatives should lead to an EU wide referendum, which sparks an EU wide debate on the issue.
- Process: 1 million signatures collected in 1 year. If Commission follows-up with legislative proposal that organizers are satisfied with, process ends here. This is what we have today. But if Commission hesitates to respond, does not come up with a leg. proposal within a certain amount of time, signature collection should continue with as second round of signatures with a much higher threshold (e.g. 3 million signatures). If 3 million signatures reached, then an EU wide referendum is automatically triggered.
- A real debate on an issue is triggered from the bottom-up.
- 1 million signatures is already a hard task to reach, but if an initiative can manage to reach an even higher threshold, it proves its popularity enough to be put in front of the rest of the EU electorate in a vote.

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## Think Global

- The ECI is inspiring a UN WCI, and why don't we also take inspiration from other national or regional examples? We are all familiar with the Swiss style of direct democracy. Personal experience with "Michigan citizens' initiatives" which can become ballot proposals. It sparks a real debate among people because they know their direct vote carries more weight than if waiting for a candidate to bring up an important issue themselves once every 4 years.
- There is no better way to foster European citizenship.
- A real citizens' initiative tool needs to be meaningful. It needs to carry weight and needs to promise some follow-up in a way that does justice to the campaign efforts of organizers and to the 1million+ citizens that signed an ECI.
- We should celebrate many successes the ECI has seen until today – 14 ongoing ECIs open for signature right now. More than at any given time in ECI history. But we should also look at how the ECI can evolve, how it can do better, how it can match the growing 21st century technologies and how it can match the growing trend of active citizens.
- And how we can build on the momentum the tool has created and give it real life but giving it real meaning and purpose for citizens.

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