



DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL'S GROWING NETWORK

At Democracy International, we believe that we are stronger together. This is why over the past year, we have partnered, campaigned and exchanged ideas with like-minded organisations worldwide. We firmly believe that by expanding our network, we can reinforce our own impact and that of other organisations working on direct democracy and citizen participation all over the globe. And so, Democracy International over the next years will continue to invest in building international connections because together we can promote true people power!

A selection of organisations Democracy International has worked with in 2017



USA
The Elephant Project
Initiative & Referendum Institute
Zocalo Public Square

URUGUAY
Catholic University of Uruguay

GERMANY
Allianz Stiftung
Bergische Universität Wuppertal
Bertelsmann Stiftung
Change.org
Citizens for Europe
Europahaus Marienberg
The European Moment
Lobbycontrol
Mehr Demokratie
Navigator for Direct Democracy
Omnibus für Direkte Demokratie
Procedere
Progressive Zentrum
Pulse of Europe
Schwarzkopf Stiftung
Stiftung Friedliche Revolution
Transparency International
We Are Europe
WeMove.EU

ITALY
City of Rome

NORWAY
ARENA
Centre for European Studies
European Movement Norway
Plato Project

SWEDEN
Falun Municipality
International IDEA

NETHERLANDS
Meer Democratie

BELGIUM
AEGEE
Democratie.Nu
ECAS
The ECI Campaign
EESC
European Movement Int.
On Our Watch

FRANCE
Missions Publiques
European Civic Forum

AUSTRIA
Europe Direct
European Credit Initiative
Mehr Demokratie
Österreich Entscheidet
Pulse of Europe Vienna

SWITZERLAND
Denknetz
People2power
Swiss Democracy Foundation
Swissinfo
Zentrum für Demokratie Aarau

HUNGARY
Independent activists

BULGARIA
Bluelink Foundation
Bulgarian Association for
the Promotion of Citizens'
Initiatives

SOUTH KOREA
Catholic University of Daegu
Korea Democracy Foundation

JAPAN
Independent activists

TAIWAN
Taiwan Foundation for Democracy

INDIA
Citizens Global Platform

AUSTRALIA
NewVote

In 2017...

DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL
GAINED

2

NEW CO-WORKERS

STOP GLYPHOSATE
BECAME THE

4TH

SUCCESSFUL
EUROPEAN CITIZENS'
INITIATIVE (ECI) EVER

101,752

CITIZENS SIGNED TO DEMAND
AN ECI THAT WORKS

8/11

OF OUR
ECI REFORM PROPOSALS
FULLY OR PARTIALLY ACCEPTED

11

REFERENDUMS
WERE ORGANISED
AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL
WORLDWIDE

178

MEMBERS OF THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
WERE SUCCESSFULLY
LOBBIED IN FAVOUR OF
MORE TRANSPARENCY

2

VERY FIRST
EUROPEAN PUBLIC
SPHERE DEBATES
TOOK PLACE

262,698

PEOPLE SIGNED TO DEMAND
THE RIGHT TO HOLD
CITIZENS' INITIATIVES ON THE
GERMAN NATIONAL LEVEL

THE NAVIGATOR FOR
DIRECT DEMOCRACY FEATURED

1638

LEGAL DESIGNS

>20,000

DUTCH DENOUNCED THE PLAN TO
ABOLISH THE REFERENDUM

2018

WAS ANNOUNCED AS
THE YEAR THE NEXT
GLOBAL FORUM
ON MODERN
DIRECT DEMOCRACY
WILL TAKE PLACE

3,296

PEOPLE SIGNED OUR
OPEN LETTER
TO MEMBERS OF THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
CALLING FOR A DEMOCRATIC
RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

but...

0

COUNTRIES
HAVE IMPLEMENTED
NEW DIRECT DEMOCRACY
INSTRUMENTS THIS YEAR

1

COUNTRY IS MOVING TO
ABOLISH THE RIGHT
TO HOLD A REFERENDUM

DEMOCRACY FIGHTS BACK

Dear friends,

2017 was the year of the aftermath. After last year's surprise Brexit decision, United Kingdom citizens had to define what this actually meant, with the biggest proponents of Brexit disappearing into thin air. A disastrous snap election, meant to strengthen Prime Minister Theresa May's negotiating mandate, confused matters further. Meanwhile Article 50's clock is ticking mercilessly, leaving UK citizens and EU citizens living in the UK in utter darkness as to what awaits.

January saw the inauguration of a ground-breaking president in the USA. Yes, ground-breaking - just not in the ways that he himself likes to think. The highest office in the United States is now held by a man who scoffs at the rule of law, who refuses to grasp the concept of separation of powers and who has allowed religion to mix itself in with politics once again.

Corruption scandals have laid bare the extremely cynical, serve-serving idea some leaders have of public service in Romania, Azerbaijan, Ecuador and too many more places. Winning an election does not equal winning the lottery!

We saw narrow electoral defeats of extreme right-wing parties in the Netherlands, France and Austria, but we saw their ideas gaining ground around the world, including in Germany, where the AfD party gained access to the Bundestag. Increasingly, basic civil and human rights have been put into question by authoritarian leaders in a new guise. And brazenly enough, they often turn to so-called direct democracy. Unfortunately, manipulation and political instrumentalisation have riddled referendums from Turkey to Spain.

But if 2016 was the year of deep and acute crisis of democracy, 2017 has been the year of democracy fighting back. All around the globe, citizens stood up, got organised and demanded that their voices be heard. From the worldwide Women's Marches, to Romania's anti-corruption protests, from the Stop Glyphosate campaign, to the Olympic bids referendums. Above all, 2017 was the year of the resistance, the year of the citizen!

"If 2016 was the year of deep and acute crisis of democracy, 2017 has been the year of democracy fighting back."

This year we were reminded that democracy is not merely the least of evils, but our highest good. Our fight, and yours, is now more important than ever. We cannot let disinformation go unchallenged. We cannot let our institutions be eroded by populists. We cannot allow taxpayers' money to benefit personal gain. We cannot content ourselves cheering when extremists win second place.

At Democracy International, we saw some long-awaited victories this year, and this makes us hopeful for the future: a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) reform was announced, and several of our suggestions were retained, the European Court of Justice ruled that the TTIP ECI was legitimate, and European leaders, shaken by the Brexit decision, have publicly called for democratic debates on the future of Europe. We also have some good things to look forward to with the prospect of the 2018 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy in Rome and the development of a Global Hub for democracy activists.

With your continued support, we will keep fighting for our right to shape the societies we live in! Let it be clear for once and for all that in times of crisis, taking power away from citizens is not the solution, but part of the problem!

On the following pages, please find an overview of what we have worked on this year.

All the best,

The Democracy International Team

European citizen power

The European Citizens' Initiative, the world's first and only transnational tool of direct democracy, turned five this year. However, at the beginning of the year we did not see this as a cause for celebration. In 2016, our call for reform had largely been ignored, and the 2017 Work Programme of the European Commission failed to even mention the tool. However, on ECI Day in April, Frans Timmermans, the Commission's First Vice President surprised us when he announced that a powerful revision of the ECI was coming up by the end of the year.

The revision process was kicked off with an online public consultation on the ease-of-use and perceived effectiveness of the ECI. We jumped at the opportunity to rally around common reform proposals in an ECI Rescue Team. In cooperation with Mehr Demokratie, ECAS, WeMove.EU and The ECI Campaign, we created an easy-to-follow guide with our suggestions for the revision to allow people without expert knowledge to participate in the consultation as well. The questionnaire was a success! Over 5,300 people participated, 98% of which were citizens.

In August, we were invited to a stakeholders' meeting with Mr Timmermans to discuss our proposals. We went to Brussels armed with over 100,000 signatures of citizens asking for an ECI that is more user-friendly, well-known, and legislatively effective. At the meeting, we discovered that we share a lot of common ground: the Commission agrees that the ECI needs to be more well-known by citizens, so that it is less vulnerable to being hijacked by political parties and interest groups.



Our meeting with First Vice President of the European Commission Timmermans.

By mid-September the Commission laid out its proposal for a reinforced ECI. The timing of this was controversial, as the ECI revision was slated for a discussion and vote in the AFCO Parliamentary Committee and in the Parliament plenary. The perception had been that the Commission's final proposal would have included their recommendations. However, despite the Commission's unfortunate timing, the proposal can definitely be seen as a step in the right direction. Of the eleven recommendations we made to the Commission, two were fully accepted, six were partially accepted, and three were either rejected or not mentioned.

The revised ECI is expected to be in effect by the next European elections, after having gone through the normal legislative procedures. It will see organisers able to choose their own start date, the ability for partial registration of an initiative and the possibility to create a legal entity to limit organisers' personal liability. People will be allowed to sign an ECI from age 16, and successful ECIs will get a hearing in Parliament. We are very happy to see the ECI instrument grow like this with our years of hard work paying off, but our job does not end here. European citizens deserve a real direct democracy instrument, with a binding referendum at the end.

A better grasp on EU lobbying

Lack of honesty and low trust in the EU are recurrent themes over the past years. It is no secret that tens of thousands of corporate lobbyists are active in Brussels, have unmonitored access to EU officials and often meet with them behind closed doors.

This year, more than 1,000 citizens and NGOs, including Democracy International, helped prepare a report on transparency, accountability and integrity in EU institutions initiated by Green MEP Sven Giegold. More than 100,000 citizens backed the report in a petition. In September, before a Parliamentary vote on the report, we gave it a little push in the back by reaching out to 178 MEPs who, as candidates, had pledged to support more transparent lobbying practices. We were happy to see the Transparency Report adopted by the EU Parliament on 14 September! It was widely supported by the Greens, Social Democrats, Liberals and right-wing Conservatives, with only the Christian-Democrats voting against it.

Regrettably, the EU Commission rejected a large number of key demands from the report on 13 December and instead responded that they “lead by example” in the area of transparency. The Commission repeatedly referenced its “Code of Conduct for Commissioners”, which they allege already lays down comprehensive obligations. However, the Code of Conduct holds no legal requirements. The Commission rejected, among others demands, a better balance in lobby meetings by empowering underrepresented interests and the creation of a clear online overview of lobbying meetings.

By not accepting the demands of the report put forward by the Parliament, civil society and citizens, the Commission is blatantly rejecting the effort to encourage greater transparency and integrity in the EU. The fight for accountability and good governance in the EU is not over. Citizens should never have to compete for influence with special interest groups! Democracy International will continue to stand by this non-negotiable demand in 2018.

An overhaul of Europe

With over half of Europeans feeling that their voice does not count in the EU, there has never been a more critical need to discuss the future of Europe. Real reform is urgent and necessary in order to bring the citizens closer to the EU again. That is why Democracy International has continuously called for a democratic relaunch of Europe.

The EU Convention is enshrined in Article 48 of the Lisbon Treaty as the necessary procedure for any treaty changes. It is the ultimate tool for a relaunch of the EU, but a Convention should not meet behind closed doors. It is the perfect opportunity for citizens, civil society, politicians and experts to come together and have a true debate on the future of Europe: why do we need the EU and what kind of EU do we actually want? All European citizens should be able to vote on the outcome in a pan-European referendum.

In March of this year, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, presented his scenarios for what the EU could look like in 2025. One of his propositions was to hear citizens through a series of debates across Europe. This is not a new idea - citizens are often listened to, but unfortunately only seldom involved. We took this opportunity to re-contact 114 Members of the European Parliament who had pledged to call for a democratic convention before the 2014 elections: 3,296 people supported our open letter to them! With the election of Antonio Tajani as president of the European Parliament in the same month, and the launch of a “reflection on the future of Europe”, we called on MEPs to trigger a Constitutional Convention under Article 48 and involve citizens as shapers of the EU rather than spectators: 60,865 people signed this petition!

In September, during his Initiative Europe speech at the Sorbonne University, President Emmanuel Macron proposed the organisation of “democratic conventions” to launch the “overhaul of Europe”. And earlier this month, Martin Schulz, the leader of the German SPD, similarly called for a “United States of Europe”, with a new constitution

drafted with the inclusion of citizens and civil society. Macron’s and Schulz’ calls are infused with a sense of urgency that we share: we must act now! But we must insist on the need for meaningful involvement of citizens: the people of Europe should get the final say in an EU-wide referendum.

This is why in the last months of the year, we have been identifying and allying with like-minded organizations and individuals who support Article 48’s call for a Convention. We finalized our vision for the Convention process and timeline, starting with town-hall style “mini-Conventions” to take place across Europe in 2018 and 2019. More to follow soon!

Building a European Public Sphere

Last year, parallel with the EU summit in Bratislava, we organised our own mini-summit under the Europe Dome. This event received such positive reactions that we decided to follow it up with its own project! And so, this year we launched the European Public Sphere in cooperation with IG-Eurovision and the

“... If we want to move forward again, I would like us to do it through democratic conventions that will be an integral part of the overhaul of Europe.”

- President Emmanuel Macron of France -

European Credit Initiative. The European Public Sphere project travels Europe to find answers to our challenges in a globalised world. It inscribes itself into the logic of the European Convention and seeks to encourage positive EU sentiment and to foster the debate on the future of Europe. Because we think that in order to shape our common European future in an inclusive and democratic way, we need to create a true European Public Sphere in which citizens are involved in the debate and decision-making.

In the months and years to come, the mobile, wooden domes of the European Public Sphere will travel across Europe and host participatory debates on the future of the EU in public spaces open to all. We want to create a public space where citizens can discuss openly and freely to reimagine a European project they can believe in.



Our talk at Karlsplatz in Vienna, Austria, on 1st October.

This fall, the first events of the European Public Sphere took place in Austria. The European Public Sphere had its official premiere at the Mehr Demokratie Camp in Wels, where it received very warm reactions. But we were absolutely blown away by the enthusiasm and interest of passers-by at the Karlsplatz in Vienna, where we had our second event. Dozens of people stopped by and listened or actively participated as we discussed the future of the EU. Europe will definitely see more of the traveling dome in 2018!

Cooperation for more direct democracy

This year, we have partnered up with several national organisations on their local campaigns to promote direct democracy. In Germany, with Mehr Demokratie and Omnibus für Direkte Demokratie, we joined an alliance of over 30 organisations, asking for the right to launch national citizens' initiatives. Together, we collected over 260,000 signatures demanding more direct democracy on the federal level. The campaign is still running at a strategically important time, while German coalition negotiations are in full swing.

In the Netherlands, together with Meer Democratie, we are supporting an ongoing campaign to save the national consultative referendum. After the elections, in its coalition agreement, the brand-new government announced their intention to abolish the referendum law, only two years after it was introduced! If this goes through, the Netherlands will be the first country ever to take power away from its citizens in this way. Meer Democratie is fiercely campaigning to preserve the national referendum and over 20,000 people have already signed the petition in solidarity.

Encouraging democratic culture

One of Democracy International's core objectives is to generate qualitative information on Democracy as a service to democracy activists, journalists, and anyone interested worldwide. People across the globe can freely access and use this information to make their communities more democratic and inclusive.

The Navigator to Direct Democracy is one of these tools, created in cooperation with the University of Wuppertal and the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe and supported by Swissinfo and People2Power. The Navigator gives an overview of existing direct-democratic instruments worldwide and is managed by Dr. Klaus Hofmann, who this year has verified and updated most direct-democratic instruments in the Americas and added a complete overview of the regional legal instruments in Spain.

In March 2018, the Navigator to Direct Democracy is hosting a conference in cooperation with the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung and the University of Wuppertal: Political Culture and Active Citizenship. The conference will compare direct democracy instruments from Ecuador, Germany, Hungary, Peru, Slovakia, Switzerland and Uruguay. More information on this can be found on our website, under "Events".

To strengthen democracy, we do not only need improved access to high quality information, but also people who are capable of further developing democracy. This is the goal of the Learning Democracy Academy, Democracy International's new project, led by Dr. Raban Fuhrmann. The Academy is rooted in the belief that as a society we have to be able to continuously adapt to new challenges and expectations. And so, our democracies, much like companies, need smart leadership that is able to adjust democratic processes to contemporary circumstances. We need democracy developers!

These developers will be trained to harvest the potential that the political and social playing field has to offer in Germany, with its five million civil society organisations. Their goal will be to improve cooperation between politicians, administrative officials, NGOs, media, trade unions, citizens and many more. Starting next year, the Learning Democracy Academy will start developing new instruments and training and supporting democracy developers.

Providing a meeting point

We have so much to learn from each other, and so Democracy International is dedicated to providing opportunities for organisations and activists to meet and encouraging them to share experiences and best practices. In May of this year, Democracy International organised a conference together with independent activists in Budapest, Hungary:

People, Issues, Methods – Happening for our Democratic Culture. The conference gathered democratic reformers, activists, experts and other interested people from Hungary and all over Europe to exchange experiences on participatory democracy and citizen activism in Hungary and the rest of Europe.

“We need to look much more closely at the scientific and human aspects of democratic practice to come up with better answers for the challenges we face”

- Csaba Madarász, Hungarian activist & organiser
Happening for our Democratic Culture -

In cooperation with the City of Rome, we have also started planning the 2018 Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy, which will take place next year from 26-29 September. In Rome, the Global Forum will welcome activists, organisations and academics from around the world, who work on direct democracy and citizen participation.

It is clear that the challenges we face today are too great for us to tackle alone, but at the local level we can still make the greatest difference. Therefore, the Rome Global Forum will focus on democratic cities, local participation and what this means in a globalised world. The 2018 Global Forum will be a special edition, as it marks the tenth anniversary of the first Global Forum in Aarau, Switzerland. You can already pre-register your attendance at www.2018globalforum.com.

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Widening horizons

In the past years, Democracy International has continuously worked to expand our efforts and network beyond Europe, reaching out to organisations across the globe. We strive to connect organisations and activists worldwide, so we can mutually reinforce our reach and promote our common ideas. We have found that what is really needed is a true democracy network.

To achieve this next year we will be launching a platform where organisations and activists from all over the world can connect, exchange and campaign. This network will allow organisations to achieve more visibility for their projects, to get in touch with each other and to exchange best practices and expertise. We hope that this way we can give a jolt of power to activists everywhere. Only by working together can we empower the global democracy movement.

Our growing team

2017 started with our search for two new colleagues. In May, Daniela Vancic joined our Cologne staff as European Programme Manager and, with the ECI reform in full swing, dove right in. Caroline Vernailen completed the Democracy International team in the same month, as Global Manager for PR and Community Building, taking on the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy and the new global newsletter.

This year, we have also had to say goodbye to Cora Pfafferott, our Spokesperson and PR manager, as she left to pursue new opportunities in Berlin. We are incredibly grateful to Cora, who has been with Democracy International since the very beginning and set the tone for Democracy International's identity. A call for a new colleague is currently open, and early next year a Fundraiser will reinforce our team.

But most importantly, our warmest thanks go to all of you: our supporters around the world! Without your passion and help, we would not be able to continue the work we do. So, let us keep fighting together for a better world in which citizens are heard and human rights are respected!



Yes, I want to support Democracy International e.V.

☐ 10 euros ☐ 100 euros
☐ 20 euros ☐ 250 euros
☐ 45 euros other amount: [] euros

☐ One-off ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly

> Tick the amount and frequency relevant to you

Name, First Name

Street, Number

Postal Code, City, Country

SEPA Direct Debit Mandate

- > By signing the mandate form, you authorize Democracy International to send instructions to your bank to debit your account and your bank to debit your account in accordance with the instructions from the creditor.
- > As a part of your rights, you are entitled to a refund from your bank under the terms and conditions of your agreement with your bank. A refund must be claimed within 8 weeks starting from the date on which your account was credited.
- > We will send you your SEPA mandate reference number.
- > The donation is tax-deductible. You can get a tax receipt at the end of the year.

IBAN (International Bank Account Number)

BIC/SWIFT (Bank Identifier Code)

Location and date

Signature