



Consultation on the ECI

Supporting statement from The Democratic Society

The Democratic Society

16th August 2017

The ECI in its current form cannot be regarded as a successful and exemplary tool for deliberative and participatory democracy; there are too many barriers for participants to show support, restrictive guidelines for admissibility, and a lack of evidence to show how the citizen participation has had influence. At the same time, we believe the ECI to be a unique model for encouraging Europe-wide citizen conversation and debate on important issues, with a direct route to the heart of decision making power. The ECI has demonstrated some success and with improvement, we believe it has the potential to greatly improve democratic legitimacy and build trust. Trust can only be earned by acting on citizen input and communicating feedback of action taken by the EU institutions as a result of this citizen action. Improving communications and awareness of the ECI gives more people the opportunity to take part and is critical to make democratic opportunities accessible to all. Lowering the barriers to participation in ways discussed in the consultation response should encourage more people to take part.

It is encouraging to see high level commitment at an EU level to such an innovative participatory democracy tool, and consultation on reforms to improve it is welcomed. Citizens must play a bigger role in the future of European democracy, not only to grow confidence in decision-making and to make better policy decisions, but to also ensure people can better understand and engage with the EU. The EU will need to use other deliberative and participative methods to actively seek meaningful engagement with citizens and will need to explore and trial innovative methods to do this. The EU should continue to progress with the ECI and its reforms to build on the success so far. We strongly believe that with a strengthened ECI at the heart of a suite of options for people to participate, there is greater potential for better decision-making and increased democratic legitimacy across the EU.

Better democracy, everywhere

The Democratic Society Limited
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The Democratic Society (Demsoc) works for more and better democracy, where people and institutions have the desire, opportunity and confidence to participate together. We work to create opportunities for people to become involved in the decisions that affect their lives and for them to have the skills to do this effectively. We support governments, parliaments and any organisation that wants to involve citizens in decision making to be transparent, open and welcoming of participation. We actively support spaces, places and processes to make this happen.

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