



DIRECT DEMOCRATIC EURO-VISION NEWSLETTER

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WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER **DIRECTRACY**

Transnationalism or Demonstration Effect?

(by Jiri Polak)

Within the strategy of the global DD movement, basically, two approaches can be observed: The transnational and the national or local. Since the first International Conference on Direct Democracy (Příbram 1998), several international projects have been launched: The **WDDM** (Worldwide Direct Democracy Movement), which still exists as a valuable discussion and promotion channel, the **NDDIE** (Network of Direct Democratic Initiatives in Europe), now inactive, the **IRI** (Initiative and Referendum Institute) launched in the USA by Mr. *M. Dane Waters*, and the **IRI-Europe**, established by Dr. *Bruno Kaufmann*, the **DD-EV** (Direct Democratic Euro-Vision), the **e2d-international**, meant to create a network of truly democratic parties round the world, and even before, the grandiose project proposed on the website created by Mr. *Chambis Kiatipis*, Cyprus. Several other efforts deserve to be mentioned, among others that of Prof. *Mike Stagman*.

As to national organizations, in Europe, by far the most important is obviously the **Mehr Demokratie e.V.** in Germany, but there are others, even if smaller, in Italy, Greece, UK, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain, Sweden, and probably elsewhere. In the USA, the most important organization is the **Ni4d** (National Initiative for Democracy), founded by Senator *Mike Gravel*, but we should not forget the monumental literary, constructive and organizational work done during many years by Mr. *Lee Gottlieb*.

When speaking about *Direct Democracy*, there has been a certain confusion about terms. The classical Swiss-German approach wants to reserve this name for **I&R** only, while others want to extend it even to *Deliberation*, *Participatory Budgeting*, systems of *Electronic Voting*, *Electronic Town Meetings*, and the designing of *Complex Alternative Systems*. To avoid misunderstandings, for the latter, broader approach, I propose the term **Participatory Democracy**, while the term **Direct Democracy** can be used for **I&R** only.

A CZECH WAY TO GENUINE DEMOCRACY: CITIZENS' CONSTITUTION!

*The Czech government is becoming completely isolated.
91% of people*



DO NOT WANT IT !

A national voting campaign on a CITIZENS' CONSTITUTION
(translated)

Now, what approach is the most promising? Experience shows that, apart from the German *Mehr Demokratie*, which has achieved some palpable results, so far, neither the transnational nor the national approaches have influenced practical politics to any important extent. I believe that the decisive factor is the situation inside individual countries. At present, attention is focused on Greece. A new election might result in a new parliamentary majority and a new government, but the new oligarchy will be forced to deal with the same problems and to take highly unpopular measures.

This should, at last, result in the insight: **It is the party-based system which has caused this mess and, no matter what color, this system has lost the ability to remedy what's broken. We have to take decision-making into our own hands! This is the only way.**

If this insight prevails and results in a radical systemic change, it might be a snowball unleashing an avalanche in the rest of the world. Only then, the enormous theoretical and organization work done within our movement would bear fruit.

Vote about your future!



Do you want this?



Or that?

In a real democracy, the Constitution – and the political system based upon it – must be subject to qualified discussions and then approved by the majority of citizens in referendum. Political parties may play only a role allowed by the citizens. So far, reality is the opposite. The parties let themselves be elected on the basis of programs promoting the interests of specific categories of the population, often to the detriment of other categories and society as a whole. The parties never asked for nor received any mandate to write and adopt a Constitution. Parliamentarism – the power monopoly of a small group of party bosses dominating both Parliament and Government – is not democracy, but partyocracy. It's time to change it.

Principles of true democracy:

1. The Constitution must be approved by the citizens in a national referendum
2. The legislative power (Parliament) and the executive power (Government) must be separated, while the Government must consist of non-partisan experts.
3. The Head of State must be elected by all citizens outside the party system
4. The Parliament must be elected on the basis of single-mandate districts, not on party basis.
5. The citizens must have the right to binding Initiative and Referendum on all levels.
6. The politicians' immunity must be cancelled.
7. All elected representatives must be subject to the possibility of recall at any moment.
8. The salaries and benefits of elected representatives must be decided upon by independent Citizen Councils.

Voting results by the end of June:

Number of voters so far: 1.344

YES	1.326	98,66%	████████████████████
NO	12	0,88%	█
ABSTAIN	6	0,45%	█

(Idea: *Jiri Polak*, format and on-line presentation: *Tomas Franke*)

The latest 30 participants:

Name	Profession	Place of residence
Mackova	constructor	Prag
Petr Novak	retired	Lulec
Vladimir Holis	OSVC	Hodonin
Karel Valenta	member of ACR	Prag
Eva Sirova	entrepreneur	Rokycany nad Jizerou
Radek	worker	Novy Bor
Erika	maternity leave	Novy Bor
Lacko Radek	technician	Louny
Petr	technician	Brno
Dana Winzigova	employee	Cesky Krumlov
Prihoda	technician	Brno
Zelenkov	dancer	Ostrava
Ilja Trögel	college teacher	Praha
Martina Lesakova	OSVC	Louny 1
Petr Skrabalek	OSVC	Teplice
Lenka Stádka	OSVC	Hlucin
Zdenek xyht	driver	Karlsbad
Eva T.	Retired	Chrastava
Pavel	welder	Brno
Petr D.	technician	Praha 4
Roman	technician	Domoradovice
Vaclav Volesky	student	Ceska Trebova
Kratochvil Radek	IT	Olomouc
Jaroslava Novakova	retired	Kladno
Kratochvilova	retired	Olomouc
Kratochvil	retired	Olomouc
Jiri Vambersky	gatekeeper	Skutec
Vlastimil Chlumsky	student	Podveky
Pavel Burda	worker	Jirikov
Tereza Kovarikova	student	Kladno

These statistics contradict the myth of grass-root citizens being passive and not interested of politics, so that they need guidance by politicians. JP

10 June, a letter sent round by Mr. *Vaclav Vertelar* (abbreviated)

"70% of the biggest enterprises and half the economic sector belong to foreigners

Selling out national property dirt cheap is the main cause of the big debt incurred by Czech Republic and of the devastation of industry.

Half the Venceslas Square is foreign property.

The situation is threatening"

No wonder that almost everybody wants to change the Constitution and the system! JP



Announcement:

September 17 – 18, 2011, an *International Conference on Global Capitalism and Transnational Class Formation*

will be held at the *Centre of Global Studies, Academy of Sciences, Prague*

Sponsored by the *Centre of Global Studies (Prague)* and the *Global Studies Association of North America*

Keynote Speakers: *William Robinson and Leslie Sklair*

Iceland



(Excerpts from a material published on <http://www.votoenblanco.com>, reported in Czech by Mr. Hlasensky, a citizen activist.)

The media have remained silent about the revolution which took place in Iceland two years ago: The citizens forced the Government to resign and to re-write the Constitution – a model of a Citizen Revolution. The censorship concerning this event is the best proof of selective treatment of information potentially dangerous for the political and economic elite.

In Iceland, people gave up hope for any form of government. The big banks were nationalized and people decided not to pay the debts incurred by politicians because it is they, not the people, who are responsible for bad economic policy. In the new Constitution, the basic principle put forward is: It is the citizen, not the politician, who is the political protagonist.

At present, Iceland is the best example of a peaceful and dignified reaction of the public vis-a-vis the power which had plunged the country – and the whole world – into a crisis. Iceland's example shows that politicians must fear the people's reaction if they do not defend the people's interests. They need not be in fear of their lives, only of their careers.

History - silenced facts:

In 2008, the biggest bank was nationalized. The currency collapsed, the market stopped working. The country was bankrupt.

2009. Enormous protests in front of the Parliament, the Prime Minister was forced to resign together with his reigning bloc. Politicians claimed the payment of debts of 3.500 million euro owed to Britain and the Netherlands, to be payed during the next 15 years with a 5,5% interest.

2010. People went into the streets and pushed through a law on general referendum. In January, the President refused ratification and claimed the necessity of consultations with the

EU. New street manifestations. In March, by referendum, a 93% majority refused to pay the foreign debt. The Government was forced to open investigation concerning the responsibility for the crisis. Some leading bankers were arrested, others left the country. People began to compile a new Constitution. A directly elected Constitutional Convention started sessions in March 2011 and has presented a Constitution draft to be approved by a new Parliament.

This development is relevant for the corrupt parliamentary system as such!

A similar process should take place in all party-based systems. In the long run, no censorship and bribes can stifle it! (JP)

UK

3 July, *I&Rg* brought a PROPOSAL TO ELECTORAL REFORM SOCIETY (UK) by *David von Geyer* on <http://iniref.wordpress.com/geyers-ict-system-for-direct-democracy/>

SPAIN

Relevant for the problem of modern political systems is e.g. the analysis put forward in the article *La crisis del Estado en cuatro claves* by *Xosé Manuel Beiras* in <http://www.sinpermiso.info/textos/index.php?id=4273>

CYPRUS

Mr. *Chambis Kiatipis* has included the editorial of the latest newsletter in his website:

<http://www.kiatipis.org/purpose-eng.htm>

The website displays a grandiose vision of future, truly democratic societies.

GERMANY

3 June, the latest *Democracy International Newsletter*, sent round by Mr. *Ronald Pabst*

Contents

1. Paper: European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)
2. Meeting in Brussels
3. Germany: Referendum on Stuttgart 21 – unfair quorum handicaps modern politics
4. German Government Oversleeps the Electoral Law Reform
5. Democracy in Africa: The Kenyan constitutional referendum

<http://www.democracy-international.org/>

MD Magazin 2/2011 – Contents: Bundesweite Volksentscheide; Kurz notiert; Bündnis; Themen; International; Europa; Bundesländer; Wahlrecht; Bücher; Wissenschaft; Omnibus für Direkte Demokratie; MD Intern

SWITZERLAND

Europa-Magazin 1/2011

Eu-Diskussionen in EU-Ländern: Die dänische EU-Mitgliedschaft – wie ein Schweizer Käse; Der Euro – Rahmbedingung für Irlands Wirtschaftskrise; Nicht weiter über den EU-Ausstieg schweigen!

SPD-Parteiprogramm; Demokratieindizes; Buchbesprechungen;

*L'expérience norvégienne au sein de l' Espace Economique Européen; La nouvelle Europe allemande (<http://www.german-foreign-policy.com/>); SPS-Parteiprogramm, die EU und die Überwindung des Kapitalismus (von *Paul Rupen*); Schabernak mit Demokratieindizes; Bilaterale Verträge – Druck der EU auf die Schweiz*

SWEDEN (translated)

30 May, information from *Aktiv demokrati* – [val.aktivdemokrati.se/?cas_session=1](http://www.aktivdemokrati.se/?cas_session=1)

Welcome to the Voting System GOV. Your power over Sweden's politics

A parliament within Parliament

We are building future joint decision-making. Here you can vote directly on issues or transfer your vote to representatives, if convenient. It's a question of open voting in order to seriously represent the whole people in Parliament

Direct Democracy for Associations

This system replaces former voting systems in yearly sessions. It will be much easier to nominate candidates for representation posts, to decide on priorities of projects, to equalize the level of membership fees, and discuss and vote on bills. At any moment, an ongoing voting on priorities can show what the members consider as the most important issue.

Active Democracy uses this system for internal voting through which the members can steer the party organization. Other associations and parties can provide the same facility for their members.

British Columbia

14 June, a letter from Mr. *Ian Woods* (abbreviated):

"DD in Action – British Columbian's Fight the HST"

British Columbia is the only province in Canada with direct democracy. In 1996 the Michael Harcourt government passed the "Recall and Initiative Act" which gave the citizens of BC the right to recall an elected representative and force a referendum on popular issues. Since then, despite several attempts, no MLAs have been recalled (although MLA Paul Reitsma would have been recalled 1998, if he hadn't resigned first) and none of the four referendums so far offered to the people have passed... that is, up until now."

"The following is an email interview with former Premier Bill VanderZahn about his role in leading the popular struggle to "Fight the HST" in British Columbia. The interview was conducted by *Ian Woods*, Publisher of *Global Outlook* (<http://www.globaloutlook.ca/>) special to *Worldwide Direct Democracy News*.

Question: Mr. VanderZalm, can you tell us how the people of BC were lucky enough to get direct democracy legislation in place when, in fact, no other provinces have it?

Direct Democracy was introduced during my term in the premier's office because of the Meech Lake accord. After the accord, at first there was support and joy which later turned to opposition and denouncement. It was agreed that we should never again consider a constitutional amendment without first going to the electorate. We introduced Referendum legislation to provide for this. When Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, with support from all the premiers, introduced the Charlottown accord – Mr. Mulroney realized that he could not win a referendum on it in B.C. And therefore decided to have a national referendum, which he lost. It was after this that the Social Credit government put a question to the people asking them if they would support a legislation for Initiative, referenda and recall. The people

voted overwhelmingly in favour. The government however was defeated and it was left for Mr. Harcourt to bring in the legislation and rules. ..."

Question: What were the requirements you had to meet to earn the vote? What were some of the obstacles you overcame to get all those 700,000 signatures And now, what threshold must be reached for the referendum to be passed? Can you tell us if you think the hurdles are too high (compared to other jurisdictions) for the legislation to be effective?

The requirement was 10% of all the registered voters in each and every constituency. No one could be paid and no budget was given us. I do think the thresholds for an Initiative petition are excessively difficult and should be made more reasonable but not easy.

Question: What do you say to people that criticize direct democracy as being "mob rule" and that the public is "too ignorant" to know what's good for them.

No system is perfect but a system that best represents the will of the people will serve us best. Because of the internet, Direct democracy can be practiced much easier and much more effectively than it could in days gone by. The people collectively, will instinctively decide better than an elected dictatorship and its bureaucracy."

Question: How do you think a success in BC would affect other provinces that have adopted the HST, especially Ontario?

I believe this will be the beginning for "direct democracy" throughout the country.

Question: Do you think that there's a chance that Ontarians could see the same direct democracy questions on their ballots, as BC voters saw in 1992. If so how?

Governments and bureaucracies do not want direct democracy. If a good number of the populace in Ontario can convince one of the leading parties to include direct democracy in their platform, the party could get elected on that. (The governing Ontario Liberals will need to do something, although no government has ever been re-elected after introducing the HST.)

Question: Is there any other way in which you think Ontario citizens could get the right to have recall and initiative (the two main tools of direct democracy) by using the success of your Fight HST campaign?

If in B.C. we successfully defeat the HST it will resonate throughout Canada. The government of B.C. will have spent \$ 10 million of taxpayers money and a similar amount will be spent by Big Business pro HST group (The Smart Tax Alliance) while we will spend no more than \$ 250 thousand.

Question: If over half a million Ontarians were to sign a petition like yours, and present it before the Ontario Legislature, would the Ontario politicians be able to ignore it?

They could not possibly ignore it but the petition must be well thought out so that it commits the government or its possible successors.

Kenya

16 June, a letter from **Irene Mwangi** (abbreviated) concerning the Prague International Conference on Participatory Democracy (29 – 30 October 2011):

"Dear Sir / Madam, we are a Kenyan registered NGO working with the Youth & Community in the core quest for Sustainable development and environmental protection related issues, initiatives by exchange of experiences and practices in the various fields. Our main platform aims at enhancing sustainable self development & best management practices within our local communities. We promote and enhance the principles of democracy & human rights through open platforms, participatory in global development events seeking further

knowledge to initiate and strengthen cooperation between the Youth and Our Communities. We are very passionate about bringing a change to our Youth & Community. Our programs are subjected to promoting a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing in governments, research institutions, and regional and international organizations."

Comment: Environmental issues are closely connected with problems of democracy. Only by involving ordinary citizens in political decision-making can the planet be saved. We shall be pleased to establish contacts with the African continent, one of the dynamic areas of the World.

Japan

4 July, a letter from Mgr. **Milus Kotisova** concerning Mr. **Joichi Ito** who examines alternative political and economic systems.

"In 2003, he published an online manifesto, "Emergent Democracy", which posited that Internet technology could facilitate the development of truly direct democracy."

<http://joi.ito.com/static/emergentdemocracy.html>

Interesting site, worth taking a look at. JP

New Zealand – The social software facilitates

7 July, Mr. **Kelvyn Alp**, Co-leader of the OURNZ Party, contacted Mr. **Paul Nollen** concerning the wish of the New Zealandian Party to join the E2D International. See www.ournz.net.nz

The World

20 May, information from Spain: **The world is talking, are you listening?**

Globalvoicesonline.org

27 May, a letter sent round by Mr. **Paul Nollen**: **echo**
"echo is a joint Open Source project for **active citizen participation** – worldwide and for all people. Its comprehensive approach is designed to address a core problem of our time: the political resignation and feeling of powerlessness of the individual.

"Discuss – Connect – Act!" - The social software facilitates **constructive, cross-language public dialogs** for opinion formation and collective solution finding. It connects people sharing the same purposes and supports them in creating **joint actions** for social and political impact. Wherever we are in the virtual or real worlds, echo gives us the proof: we are no longer alone with our opinion and convictions- the echo of our voice can **turn idea(s) into reality**.

Beste groeten Paul"

www.directdemocracy.be

[http://www.participedia.net/wiki/Electronic_Direct_Democracy - EDD](http://www.participedia.net/wiki/Electronic_Direct_Democracy_-_EDD)

www.basicincome.org

12 July, a letter sent to the E2D by Mr. **Gunnar Grimson**:

"We've created a website for E2D work which is now open for this group to use and experiment with. Feel free to do your worst (or best) and don't hesitate to do tests and bring other people in, it's free for all that are interested in DD and related issues.

<http://e2d.yrpri.org>



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MDD - MOVEMENT FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY
JIRI POLAK, ASSARHUSAVÄGEN 64, S-24736, S. SANDBY, SWEDEN
PHONE: 046/58891. E-MAIL: JIRI.POLAK@SWIPNET.SE

