

DIRECT IMPLICATION OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS IN NORMATIVE PROCESS WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Ph.D.Candidate **Andrei MICU**
Academic of Economic Studies, Romania
andumicu@yahoo.com

Abstract:

Direct participation, being understood as the possibility for non-institutional actors to take part in decision-making process, became the main legal mechanisms to ensure voice to citizens or persons affected in decision-making procedures of the EU institutions and bodies. The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), as introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, allows citizens to request new EU legislation once a million signatures from seven member states have been collected asking the European Commission to do so. Two basic principles have to be respected for a proposal to be admissible. It must concern "a matter where a legal act of the Union can be adopted for the purpose of implementing the Treaties" and it has to fall "within the framework of the powers of the Commission to make a proposal," according to the regulation. In this context, further reflection should be made on what the added-value of the ECI is in general and how could it be an added value in the perspective of the European Citizenship. The analysis of the regulation on ECI reveals that one of the main it is to facilitate the collection of statements of support and organising a European-wide debate with the expectation that it will create enough political echoes for action. Also, more emphasis should be put on the final stage of the procedure, by providing more guarantees for quickly receiving an affirmative answer from the European Commission. Therefore, ECI represents a new democratic tool in order to decrease the democratic deficit in the European Union.

Key words: citizens' initiative, european citizenship, citizens' rights participatory democracy, transparency principle,

JEL classification: K 39

INTRODUCTION

"We warmly welcome the introduction of the ECI. It is the first transnational instrument of participatory democracy in world history. With it, Europe enters a new territory of citizen participation. It is the result of nearly a decade of work," said Carsten Berg, campaign director at the ECI Campaign, a grassroots coalition of democracy advocates and NGOs dedicated to bringing the scheme to light.

The growth of the political importance of Europe imposes to design a suitable and modern European polity, closer to its citizens. We are witnessing a transformation from Europe of the governments towards a Europe of the citizens, in which they take part in decision-making process. Only a democratic Europe will survive in the long run; one in which citizens see themselves not only as the object of the decisions made but also, especially, as their subject. [1]

Created by European civil society, accepted by the Convention for a future European Constitution and stipulated by article 11, paragraph (4) of the revised Treaty on European Union (TEU), and article 24 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (TFEU), European Citizens' Initiative offers them the opportunity to get involved directly in EU politics for the first time. Based on these provisions, in May 2009 European Parliament issued a resolution requesting the European Commission to elaborate a proposal for the regulation on citizens' initiative. [2] Therefore, in November 2009, Commission issued Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative [3] and further in March 2010 drew up its Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens' initiative.[4]

Now, we are in a decisive phase, being developed the legislative framework necessary to implement the mechanism for the direct participation of citizens in European decision making, namely citizens' initiative.

The present article begins by analysing the normative background of European Citizens' Initiative. This allows us to understand the potentialities and limitations of the procedure of the

participation in EU law and governance, by underlying the conditions that it has to fulfill in order to applying the procedure (section 2). It then examines the normative implications of elevating participation to one of the bases of democracy in the Union and proposes an interpretation of the legal consequences that may stem from Regulation (EU) no 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Citizens' Initiative (section 3). Finally, the article discusses the liability of the main actors involved in the procedure. (section 4). It concludes that the normative framework establishes limits the discretion of the institutions in shaping participation practices, (section 5).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

At present it has been drawn out the necessary legal framework for the implementation of ECI mechanism into european decisional process. Thus, para.4 of Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union provides that *not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.*[5]

Moreover, the procedures and conditions required for such a citizens' initiative shall be determined in accordance with the first paragraph of Article 24 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: *The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of regulations in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall adopt the provisions for the procedures and conditions required for a citizens' initiative within the meaning of Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union, including the minimum number of Member States from which such citizens must come.*

In summary, from the text quoted above it might be detached three essential traits of ECI. First, such a citizens' initiative has to be developed at European scale, which implies one million signatures to be valid. Second, these signatures should come from a significant number of Member States; and third, after both former requirements are met, the Commission is "invited" to put forward a European legal act required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

As we can see, the european treaties have provided only at level of principle the right of european legislative initiative accorded to european citizens; and it has been established that the procedure of ECI is detailed by regulation.

Under these provisions two regulations were adopted: Regulation (EU) no 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Citizens' Initiative,[6] and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no 1179/2011 laying down technical specifications for online collection systems pursuant to Regulation (EU) no 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens' initiative.[7]

THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR AN EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

As it is noted in legal doctrine, "the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the very first concrete tool of participative democracy above the nationa-state level which is not based on an invitation "from above". The right of initiative vis-à-vis the EU Commission means that the citizens themselves have the right to invite the institutions to consider their ideas and proposals. The ECI also embodies and expresses a modern style of representative democracy – one which offers more direct participation by citizens in decisions on important substantive issues, in addition to indirect representation by elected representatives."[8]

ECI is not static instrument, it has to be understood as process that stretches across interdependent stages. This means that each stage has specific objectives and unfolding conditions. In addition, ECI is developed within well-established institutional and political context which decisively influence he outcomes of this "legislative process".

The success of the participation of European citizens at the EU's democratic life through ECI largely depends on the extent to which the entire procedure is clear, simple, user-friendly and

proportionate to the nature of the issue which need a legislative act. Also, the conditions for supporting a citizens' initiative by the citizens of the Union have to be similar, regardless of the Member State from which they come; ensuring a judicious balance between rights and obligations.

In order to ensure that a citizens' initiative is representative of interest, it should ensure as uniform and spread over an area as large signatories, therefore in this democratic process must attend a large number of citizens, from as many Member States. In this regard, regulation provides the minimum number of signatories coming from each Member States,[9] and the minimum number of states from which citizens must come set at one quarter of Member States.

It is particularly important that the participants in citizens' initiative should have the minimum age at which citizens are entitled to vote in elections to the European Parliament. They have to be informed about the conditions in which they can exercise this right of initiative. In order to support an citizens' initiative the citizens of the Union have to complete a statement of support form for that initiative and thus becoming "signatories".[10]

In order to successfully carry through a citizens' initiative, it is necessary to establish an organized structure, taking the form of a committee, composed of citizens, as organizers, coming from at least seven different Member States. The members of citizens' committee are responsible for preparing and presenting its initiative the Commission. Moreover, the organisers shall designate one representative and one substitute, who shall be mandated to act on behalf of the citizens' committee and to represent it in front of the institutions of the Union throughout the procedure.

In consideration of ensuring the coherence and transparency in relation to proposed citizens' initiatives and in order to avoid a situation where signatures are being collected for a proposed citizens' initiative which does not comply with the conditions laid down in this Regulation, it should be mandatory to register such initiatives on a website made available by the Commission prior to collecting the necessary statements of support from citizens.

THE PROCEDURE OF CITIZENS' INITIATIVE

First stage of ECI procedure is detailed in Article 4 of Regulation (EU) no.211/2011 and consist in registration of a proposed citizens' initiative in one of the official languages of the Union, with an online register made available by the Commission.

To be considered by the Commission, any citizens' initiative shall cumulatively fulfill the following conditions:

- the citizens' committee has been formed and the contact persons have been designated;
- the necessary information set out in Annex II, in particular on the subject matter and objectives of the proposed citizens' initiative has been provided;
- the proposed citizens' initiative is within the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties;
- the proposed citizens' initiative is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious; and it is not manifestly contrary to the values of the Union as set out in Article 2 TEU.

If the above conditions are met, the Commission shall register the proposed citizens' initiative under a unique registration number within two months from the receipt of the information set out in Annex II of the regulation.[11] Also, the Commission shall establish a point of contact which provides information and assistance.

If the above conditions are not fulfilled, the Commission shall refuse the registration of the proposed citizens' initiative and shall inform the organisers of the reasons for such refusal. At any time before the submission of statements of support, the organisers may withdraw a proposed citizens' initiative that has been registered. In that case, an indication to that effect shall be entered in the register.

The organisers shall launch the citizens' initiative on own website and shall provide, for the register and where appropriate on their website, regularly updated information on the sources of support and funding for the proposed citizens' initiative.

Therefore, “this proposal makes the ECI extremely accessible: even individual persons can launch an ECI”.^[12]

The second stage of the procedure consist in collecting the statements of support from signatories for a proposed citizens’ initiative, which, according to Regulation (EU) no.211/2011, may be done of support in paper form or electronically.

In order to collect the statements of support in paper form, the organisers shall complete the forms as indicated in Annex III and which are in one of the language versions included in the register for that proposed citizens’ initiative. The information given in the forms shall correspond to the information contained in the register.

Signatories may only support a given proposed citizens’ initiative once, and in this regard they complete statement of support forms made available by the organizers with only the personal data that are required for the purposes of verification by the Member States, as set out in Annex III.^[13]

In case that statements of support are collected online, these shall be electronically signed using an advanced electronic signature and shall be treated in the same way as statements of support in paper form.^[14] The data obtained through the online collection system shall be stored in the territory of a Member State, which certify that this system have adequate security and technical features ^[15] in place in order to ensure that:

- the possibility of submission a statement of support form online for natural persons only;
- the data provided online are securely collected and stored, in order to ensure, inter alia, that they may not be modified or used for any purpose other than their indicated support of the given citizens’ initiative and to protect personal data against accidental or unlawful destruction or accidental loss, alteration or unauthorised disclosure or access;
- the system can generate statements of support in a form complying with the models set out in Annex III, in order to allow for the verification by the Member States in accordance with Article 8(2).

The organisers may use one online collection system for the purpose of collecting statements of support in several or all Member States, thus the models for the statement of support forms may be adapted for this purpose.

The organisers may only start collecting statements of support through the online collection system once they have obtained the certificate, in accordance with the model set out in Annex IV. Therefore, the organisers shall make a copy of that certificate publicly available on the website used for the online collection system. Member States shall recognize the certificates issued by the competent authorities of other Member States.

In order to be valid, the signatories of a citizens’ initiative shall come from at least one quarter of Member States and they shall comprise at least the minimum number of citizens set out, at the time of registration of the proposed citizens’ initiative, in Annex I.^[16] Those minimum numbers shall correspond to the number of the Members of the European Parliament elected in each Member State, multiplied by 750. Signatories shall be considered as coming from the Member State which is responsible for the verification of their statement of support in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 8(1).

As has been stressed, “even if one wants to preserve a strong trans-European touch of the ECI, one quarter of the Member States seems to be a too high hurdle. It could be the case, that certain cross-border territorial entities have a common trans-national problem to solve.(...) In other case, even if the potential for one million signature would be given in the affected region, an ECI would not be successful as the signatures would only come from two or three Member State instead of the required seven.”^[17]

The entire procedure of collecting the statements of support shall be completed within a period not exceeding 12 months from the date of registration of the proposed citizens’ initiative. At the end of that period, the register shall indicate that the period has expired and, where appropriate, that the required number of statements of support was not collected.

The third stage of ECI procedure is verification and certification of statements of support by the competent authorities from relevant Member State. The Article 8, para.1 of Regulation establish that relevant Member State is that state of residence or of nationality of the signatory [18], or the state that issued the personal identification number or the personal identification document indicated in the statement of support by a signatory.[19]

For the purpose of the implementation of ECI procedure, each Member State shall designate one competent authority responsible for coordinating the process of verification of statements of support and for delivering the certificates provided for therein, and shall forward the identification features of the competent authorities to the Commission. The Commission shall make the list of competent authorities publicly available.

The organisers shall submit collected statements of support to the competent authorities from relevant Member State and shall separate those statements of support collected in paper form, those which were electronically signed using an advanced electronic signature and those collected through an online collection system, using the form set out in Annex V of Regulation.

Within a period not exceeding three months from receipt of the request, the competent authorities shall verify the statements of support submitted on the basis of appropriate checks, in accordance with national law and practice, as appropriate. After that, the competent authorities shall deliver to the organizers, free of charge, a certificate in accordance with the model set out in Annex VI, certifying the number of valid statements of support for the Member State concerned. For the purpose of the verification of statements of support, the authentication of signatures shall not be required.

The fourth and last stage of ECI procedure consist in submission the citizens' initiative for examination to the European Commission.

For this purpose, the organizers shall obtain the confirming certificates and shall comply with all relevant procedures and conditions set out in this Regulation. They submit the citizens' initiative to the Commission, accompanied by information regarding any support and funding received for that initiative, which shall be published in the register.[20] Moreover, the organisers shall make use of the form set out in Annex VII and shall submit the completed form together with copies, in paper or electronic form, of the confirming certificates.

After the Commission received a citizens' initiative and the related documentation, it shall publish it without delay in the register. Also the Commission shall receive the organisers at an appropriate level to allow them to explain in detail the matters raised by the citizens' initiative. Within three months, the Commission shall set out in a communication its legal and political conclusions on the citizens' initiative, the action it intends to take, if any, and its reasons for taking or not taking that action. This communication shall be notified to the organisers as well as to the European Parliament and the Council and shall be made public.

Where the conditions provided by Regulation are fulfilled, and within three months a public hearing will be held during that the organisers shall be given the opportunity to present the citizens' initiative in front of the European Parliament, together with such other institutions and bodies of the Union as may wish to participate, including the Commission represented at an appropriate level.

In case that the ECI is rejected, the Commission should publish the reasons of this decision. The scholars emphasized that "there should be provision for any decision by the Commission to reject an ECI to be appealed before the Court of Justice." [21]

LIABILITY ISSUES

From other point of view, we stress that the organisers shall be liable for any damage they cause in the development of a citizens' initiative in accordance with applicable national law. In this regard, the Member States shall ensure that organisers are subject to appropriate penalties (meaning shall be effective, proportionate and dissuasive) for infringements of this Regulation and in particular for false declarations made by organizers and the fraudulent use of data.

The organisers of a citizens' initiative shall ensure that personal data collected for a given procedure are not used for any purpose other than their indicated support for that initiative, and shall destroy all statements of support received for that initiative and any copies thereof in within the term provided by Article 9 of Regulation. Moreover, the competent authority shall use the personal data it receives for a given citizens' initiative only for the purpose of verifying the statements of support, and shall destroy all statements of support and copies thereof at the latest one month after issuing the confirming certificate.

Also, the organisers and the competent authorities from Member States shall implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect personal data against accidental or unlawful destruction or accidental loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure or access, in particular where the processing involves the transmission of data over a network, and against all other unlawful forms of processing.

In processing personal data pursuant to this Regulation, the organisers of a citizens' initiative and the competent authorities of the Member State shall comply with Directive 95/46/EC and the national provisions adopted pursuant thereto, being considered as data controllers in accordance with Article 2(d) of Directive.

CONCLUSIONS

European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) represents an absolute novelty, being the first democratic tool of transnational citizen participation in the world (G. Häfner, 2010). By developing the citizens' initiative mechanism at European level, the European legislator plans to strengthen the institution of European citizenship, improving democratic process within the EU.

Based on a careful analysis of the whole procedure, we can identify its key element, namely the way in which the Commission will establish relationships with citizens, and the extent of it intends to exercise the powers conferred in this regard. From this point of view we refer to a high level of decision of the Commission in assessing the opportunity and admissibility of a citizens' initiative.

The legal doctrine argues the necessity of an institutional mechanism to counterbalance the powers conferred on the Commission in this procedure, to avoid turning it into a pseudo-direct and pseudo-democratic tool. Thus was formulated the idea of developing a surveillance mechanism to the Commission by the European Parliament which stops any arbitrary measures taken by it. Only in this way *European citizens can be brought closer to Europe*, an idea formulated in the European Constitutional Convention.

In this regard, as has been stressed in the literature, "the EP should perform an important task of acting as the guardian of the procedure and supporter of the institute, interacting with the ECI and possibly absorbing its suggestions and ideas where these are unable to get to the end of the procedure. The use of Art. 225 TFEU would be essential for creating a dual channel towards achieving a particularly well-accepted ECI within the EP. Also, the national parliaments, apart from monitoring compliance with subsidiarity, could be stimulated to deal with the issues raised, look further into and debate them.

Apart from achieving the objectives, the ECI should be conceived as an important occasion for broadening debate, participation, quality of politics and create a common European home of greater trust. All this will depend on the attitude of the EU institutions and the spirit that animates the organising and implementing of this tool for popular initiative, the only survivor from the referendum proposals and direct, participatory democracy promoted within the European Convention on the future of Europe (2002-2003). Therefore, even if the ECI were only able to play a complementary role in the democratisation of the EU, this would already be a good result. Trying out this new democratic instrument, so that it is inclusive and stimulates European decision making at all levels, is certainly useful and the ECI can form a bridge between citizens and the EU, a channel for communication and exchange." [22]

ENDNOTES

- [1] Gerald Häfner, *A glimpse at legislation cookery*, in Bruno Kaufmann (main author) “The European Citizens’ Initiative Handbook. Your Guide to the World’s First Transnational Direct Democratic Tool”, commissioned and published by GEF and IRI Europe, Brussels, Belgium, November 2010, pp.6 and subseq.
- [2] European Parliament Resolution of 7 May 2009 requesting the Commission to submit a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the citizens’ initiative- P6_TA (2009)0389.
- [3] Green Paper on a European Citizens’ Initiative – COM (2009) 622 final: Brussels, 11.11.2009.
- [4] Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens’ initiative COM (2010) 199 final.
- [5] Version of the Lisbon Treaty was published in the Official Journal of the European Union, C 115, Volume 51, on 9 May 2008.
- [6] Published in the Official Journal of the European Union, L 65, on 11 March 2011.
- [7] Published in the Official Journal of the European Union, L 301, on 18 November 2011.
- [8] Diana Wallis, Jo Leinen, Carsten Berg, Paul Carline, Bruno Kaufmann, Introduction – *The Future of European Democracy has begun*, in „The Initiative for Europe Handbook 2008”, by the Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe, edited by Carsten Berg, Paul Carline, Diana Wallis, Jo Leine &, Bruno Kaufmann, Bruxelles, 2007, p.7.
- [9] For the purpose of clarity, those minimum numbers should be set out for each Member State in an annex to this Regulation. The minimum number of signatories required in each Member State should correspond to the number of Members of the European Parliament elected in each Member State, multiplied by 750.
- [10] Para, Article2 of Regulation (EU) no.211/2011.
- [11] The Commission sends a confirmation of the registration of proposed citizens’ initiative to the organizers.
- [12] Bruno de Witte, Alexander Trechsel, Draga Damjanovic, Elin Hellquist, Josef Hien, Paolo Ponzano, *Legislating after Lisbon, New opportunities for the European Parliament*, European Union Democracy Observatory, Florence, 2010, p.7
- [13] The Member State shall forward to the Commission any changes to the information set out in Annex III, and based on these, the Commission may adopt amendments to Annex III, by means of delegated acts, in accordance with Article 17 and subject to the conditions of Articles 18 and 19.
- [14] According to the Directive no.1999/93/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Community framework for electronic signatures, of 13 December 1999.
- [15] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no 1179/2011 laying down technical specifications for online collection systems pursuant to Regulation (EU) no 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens’ initiative.
- [16] In case that any modification in the composition of the European Parliament occur, the Commission shall adopt, by means of delegated acts, in accordance with Article 17 and subject to the conditions of Articles 18 and 19, appropriate adjustments to Annex I.
- [17] Bruno de Witte, Alexander Trechsel, Draga Damjanovic, Elin Hellquist, Josef Hien, Paolo Ponzano, *Legislating after Lisbon, New opportunities for the European Parliament*, European Union Democracy Observatory, Florence, 2010, p.14
- [18] As specified in point 1 of Part C of Annex III.
- [19] As specified in point 2 of Part C of Annex III.
- [20] The amount of support and funding received from any source in excess of which information is to be provided shall be identical to that set out in Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 on the regulations governing political parties at European level and the rules regard.
- [21] Carsten Berg, *The European Citizen’s Initiative process*, in „The Initiative for Europe Handbook 2008”, by the Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe, edited by Carsten Berg, Paul Carline, Diana Wallis, Jo Leine &, Bruno Kaufmann, Bruxelles, 2007, p.61.
- [22] Salvatore Aloisio, Giorgio Grimaldi, Umberto Morelli, Antonio Padoa-Schioppa, *The European Citizens’ Initiative: Challenges and Perspectives*; in *Democracy in the EU after the Lisbon Treaty*, edited by Raffaello Matarazzo, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) Research Papers, pp.142-146

REFERENCES

1. de Figueiredo, J. M., Ji, C. H., Kousser, T. (2011), “Financing Direct Democracy: Revisiting the Research on Campaign Spending and Citizen Initiatives”, *The Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, Vol. 27, No. 3, <http://jleo.oxfordjournals.org>

2. Häfner, G., (2010), "A glimpse at legislation cookery", in Bruno Kaufmann (main author) *The European Citizens' Initiative Handbook. Your Guide to the World's First Transnational Direct Democratic Tool*, commissioned and published by GEF and IRI Europe, Brussels.
3. Ponzano, P., (2011), "A million citizens can request European legislation: a sui generis right of initiative", ECAS, Conference on Citizens' Initiatives: *Getting Citizens' Initiatives Started*, Bruxelles, 17.03.2011, European University Institute. www.ecas-citizens.eu
4. Ponzano, P., (2010), "Le droit d'initiative législative de la Commission européenne : théorie et pratique" in *Revue des Affaires européennes – Law & European Affairs*, Editions Bruylant, Brussels, 2009-2010/1.
5. Suchman, J., (2010) "European Citizens(') (May Soon Take The) Initiative" The Columbia Journal Of European Law Online, Vol.16,
6. Thomson, J., (2011), "A Space inside Europe for the Public" before "A European Public Space" www.involve.org.uk
7. de Witte, B., Trechsel, A.H., (directors), Damjanović, D., Hellquist, E., Hien, J., Ponzano, P.. (2010), *Legislating after Lisbon New Opportunities for the European Parliament*, European Union Democracy Observatory (EUDO), Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute Florence, www.eudo.eu
8. The Lisbon Treaty, consolidated version published in the [Official Journal of the European Union, C 115, Volume 51, on 9 May 2008.](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:065:som:en:html)
9. European Parliament Resolution of 7 May 2009 requesting the Commission to submit a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the citizens' initiative- P6_TA (2009)0389.
10. Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative – COM (2009) 622 final: Brussels, 11.11.2009.
11. EU Regulation no.211/2011 on the Citizens' Initiative, from the Official Journal of the European Union <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:065:som:en:html>
12. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) no 1179/2011 laying down technical specifications for online collection systems pursuant to Regulation (EU) no 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the citizens' initiative.
13. Foundation for European Progressive Studies, (2010) *European Citizens' Initiative*, Summary of the Contributions, FEPS Jurists Network Meeting, www.feps-europe.eu
14. EurActiv, (2010) *EU commissioner vows to block 'silly' petitions*, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/eu-commissioner-vows-block-silly-petitions-news-493794>
15. European Commission, (2010) *European Citizens' Initiative: giving citizens new possibilities to influence EU policy*, <http://europa.eu/rapid/oressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/397&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>,
16. European Commission, (2010) *Speaking points for press conference on the "European Citizens' Initiative"*, (2010), http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/sefcovic/documents/speech_138_10_03_31_citi_initiave_en.pdf
17. European Commission, (2010), *Stakeholder Hearing on the European Citizens' Initiative*, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/sefcovic/documents/100222_citizen_initiave_en.pdf
18. Berg,C., Carline,P., Wallis,D., Leine,J. & Kaufmann,B (editors) *The Initiative for Europe Handbook 2008*, the Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe, Bruxelles, 2007.
19. Matarazzo, R.,(editor) *Democracy in the EU after the Lisbon Treaty*, Instituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)Research Papers, Edizioni Nuova Cultura, Roma, 2011.