

The value of new technologies in participatory democracy. The case of the European Citizens' Initiative¹

La importancia de las nuevas tecnologías en la democracia participativa. El caso de la Iniciativa Ciudadana Europea



Maria Manuela Magalhães Silva. PhD in Law. Associate Professor, degree by the Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra, Master in International Relations and Doctorate in Law-Legal-Political Sciences. Member integrated and principal investigator of Instituto Jurídico Portucalense (IJP) accredited by FCT with Good level, integrating the GI: Dimensions of Human Rights. Research Associate, European Center for Economic, Financial and Tax Law-CIDEFF, Lisbon Law School, integrating the GI "Globalization, Economic Integration and Development: European and Lusophone Perspectives", accredited by FCT with Good level. With scientific production in the areas of Constitutional Law, Fundamental Rights and European Union Law.

Universidade Portucalense, Porto, Portugal
mmdmms@upt.pt
ORCID: 0000-0003-4261-7271



Dora Resende Alves. Professor at Law Department at Universidade Portucalense (UPT), with experience in curricular units in the field of European Union Law, Constitutional Law and the History of Law. PhD from the University of Vigo (Spain) with a thesis on the subject of European Union competition law and a Master's degree in Law, European Integration area, from the Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra. Formator of the Bar Association at the Regional Center of Porto. Permanent researcher at the Instituto Jurídico Portucalense, Research Center of the Portucalense University. Adjunct editor of the Juridical Magazine Portucalense.

Universidade Portucalense, Porto, Portugal
dra@upt.pt
ORCID: 0000-0003-4720-1400



Maria João Ferreira. Associate Professor at the Science and Technology Department at Universidade Portucalense, Portugal. She was awarded a Ph.D. (2003) degree in Computation by the University of Manchester. She is both a researcher at REMIT at Universidade Portucalense, and at ISTTOS-Centro Algoritmi at Minho University. Her research focuses on Information Systems and Digital Transformation. She is a co-author of several scientific publications international conferences, book chapters and journals and has been involved in several conferences as a program committee member, organizer committee member and local-chair member. She is also an Editorial Board Member of the IJADS and the IJAS.

Universidade Portucalense, Porto, Portugal
mjoao@upt.pt
ORCID: 0000-0003-4274-8845

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Abstract:

Democratic participation still is the way forward for societies that seek permanent peace through the exercise of active citizenship. Since 2012, the European Citizens' Initiative instrument has emerged in the process of drafting legislative acts of the European Union. One of the facets of this citizenship is to enable citizens to become involved in decision-making through participation in the exercise of legislative initiative. The Lisbon Treaty introduced the right to the ECI. The aim is to actively involve citizens in the European decision-making, giving them an indirect form of legislative initiative. Information technologies (IT) are the essence of up-to-date organizations in general, and changes in this field are occurring at an uncontrollable pace, interrupting traditional models and forcing organizations to implement new models, new ways of working and communicating. In this context, the European Commission, not ignoring the relevance and transformations inherent in the use of IT, has included its use in several areas, namely in the European Citizens' Initiative. In this research is analysed how much a platform available in the European Citizens' Initiative context is used in petitions and the evolution of this same use until the completion of the review in 2018.

Keywords:

European Citizens Initiative; legislation; European Union, Information Technology, digital participation.

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Resumen:

La participación democrática sigue siendo el camino a seguir para las sociedades que buscan la paz permanente a través del ejercicio de una ciudadanía activa. Desde 2012, el instrumento de la Iniciativa Ciudadana Europea ha surgido en el proceso de redacción de los actos legislativos de la Unión Europea. Una de las facetas de esta ciudadanía es permitir que los ciudadanos se involucren en la toma de decisiones a través de la participación en el ejercicio de la iniciativa legislativa. El derecho a la ECI fue introducido por el Tratado de Lisboa. El objetivo es involucrar activamente a los ciudadanos en la toma de decisiones europea, dándoles una forma indirecta de iniciativa legislativa. Las tecnologías de la información (TI) son la esencia de las organizaciones actualizadas en general, y los cambios en este campo se están produciendo a un ritmo incontrolable, interrumpiendo los modelos tradicionales y obligando a las organizaciones a implementar nuevos modelos, nuevas formas de trabajar y comunicarse. En este contexto, la Comisión Europea, sin ignorar la relevancia y las transformaciones inherentes al uso de TI, ha incluido su uso en áreas diversas.

Palabras clave:

Iniciativa legislativa europea; legislación; Unión Europea, Tecnologías de la Información, participación digital.

1. Introduction

Democratic participation still is the way forward for societies that seek permanent peace through the exercise of active citizenship. Since 2012, the European Citizens' Initiative instrument has emerged in the process of drafting legislative acts of the European Union.

European citizenship provides European citizens important rights and the possibility of democratic participation and active involvement in EU decision-making process. One of the facets of this citizenship is to enable citizens to become involved in decision-making through participation in the exercise of legislative initiative. It happens at national level, as in Portugal and Spain, and at European Union. It is a very promising strand. The results are scarce, believed to the youth of the instrument, but it is an important path. It will, we believe, become a way to empower citizens to influence the political agenda.

Increasingly, the EU seeks to raise awareness of citizenship rights, by fostering the civic involvement of young people, where increased use of technology can lead to greater adherence.

Moreover, the use of the new possibilities created by technology has opened new perspectives to the political participation of the citizens, allowing investing inputs into the political system (Gil de Zúñiga, Huber and Strauß, 2018), namely using social networks (Marcos García, Alonso Muñoz and Casero-Ripollés, 2017). However, the focus of the present work lies in ECI.

There are new technological tools that create a new space of citizenship with great political potential (Chadwick, 2017), but it is still not safe to affirm its success towards a legitimate and informed individual exercise (Aguilera and Casero Ripollés, 2018).

Lisbon Treaty introduced the right to the ECI. It allows EU citizens of at least seven Member States to invite the European Commission to submit legislative proposals in areas of European Union competence as conditions of legal admissibility. The aim is to actively involve citizens in the European decision-making, giving them an indirect form of legislative initiative. To date, more than 9 million of European citizens have signed a European citizenship initiative.

It is after registration that a process of collection of support of the proposal is initiated by its organisers, by one million of citizens from at least one quarter of the EU Member States. It is an invitation to the Commission to submit legislative proposals. Up to now, with four very different situations, which fulfilled the full requirements, there was still no fully successful initiative to give rise to a concrete legislative proposal. However, it is an instrument of future and of great democratic significance to consider, as pointed out by the methodology of documentary and legislative critical analysis followed. The ECI is fully operational, but it is possible to assess its use and improve it, and the revision and simplification of this instrument is ongoing, in order to make it more user-friendly and accessible to citizens.

Information technologies (IT) are the essence of up-to-date organizations in general, and changes in this field are occurring at an uncontrollable pace, interrupting traditional models and forcing organizations to implement new models, new ways of working and communicating (Schuelke-Leech, 2018). In this context, the EC, not ignoring the relevance and transformations inherent in the use of IT, where is included the internet with all its potential, namely information access, communication and work collaboration (Murray, 2016), has included its use in several areas. An example of this is the platform, developed and put at the service of citizens, which centrally enables citizens to be easily and efficiently involved in the policies that affect their lives, including petitions promoted by the EC itself or any citizen / organization belonging to the EC. This results in a democratization of the instrument to the extent that citizen participation becomes easier and friendly.

The integration of technologies in order to stimulate the active participation of citizens requires their perception of the technological means and initiatives supported by on-line platforms placed at their disposal. In this context, the research questions to be answered are: "Are citizens in the context of the "European citizens" initiative, (1) using the platform for new petitions? and (2) has its use increased over time?" These questions are justified by the non-existence reported in the literature of similar research papers.

In this context, our research uses the Case study methodology (Yin, 2009) in order to allow an exploration and understanding of how much the platform is used in petitions and the evolution of this same usage from since its first use by organizations and citizens until the present.

In the specific case of the ECI, it is evident that the use of the means provided by the new technologies made it easier and extended its use. This results in a democratization of the instrument to the extent that citizen participation becomes easier and friendly.

1.1. The European democratic construction

The values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law (Bonavides, 2001; Silva and Alves, 2016) are the mottoes of the entire European construction, both yesterday and today, present in the 1950 Schuman Declaration or documents of the moment that draw the current action vectors. In addition to article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the Commission (2001) enshrines them by saying that the European Union Court of Justice ensures respect for the rule of law and is safeguarded through the mechanism of article 7 of the Treaty on European Union, addressing the violation of democracy, which is nowadays very much in line with the political problems in Hungary and Poland.

Common values come as a result of European history. Despite these founding values, the EU is often accused of a democratic deficit whether in the functioning of the institutions or in the issue of the right of access to documents, or even in the current issues of gender parity. Conscious of this, the EU maintains the ongoing construction towards greater transparency of procedures, access to information by citizens and the creation of better interinstitutional mechanisms (European Commission, 2017c).

It is through the democratic construction, rooted in the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, that a possible homogeneity of the EU is reached, based on the unavoidable diversity of the six founding countries, and today 28 or 27, if we consider the departure of the United Kingdom through of the mechanism of article 50 of the TEU.

Being sure to be one of the founding values almost 70 years ago, the democratic characterization of the European Union today is still open to discussion, as Moury (2016), in aspects such as the transparency of decision-making, the control of institutions or the participation of citizens in the legitimacy of both previous ones. But it is not questionable that the European Union is surely to be one of the places in the world where democracy and fundamental rights are protected from improved way (European Commission, 2003). There are already 60 years of peace in a globe where 60 military conflicts live but none of these wars on the Union's territory, highlighted in the speech given by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, on March 25, 2017 for the 60th anniversary of the Treatys of Rome which created the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the European Economic Community (EEC).

In all situations the universal value of democracy must be promoted by the EU in its actions, partnerships and instruments, and the Commission (2016) is already thinking of the Agenda 2030. The institutions (European Committee of the Regions, 2015), are attentive to the efforts, having their own geometry of powers, with checks and balances, a translation of these concerns as well as the various reforms undergone by the EU institutions (Pais, 2010). And it will be through education and training in the common values and general principles of law established in articles 1 to 3 of the TEU that the EU path should be pursued in order to enable learners to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes towards an active (Council, 2017) and democratic citizenship. By ensuring a high-quality education for all, at all levels of education, education policy

has a first-plan role to play. These social, civic and intercultural competencies will strengthen, reaffirm and promote the democratic values of the EU.

According to the European Commission (2017d), the functioning of the Union is based on representative democracy, which implies transparency and a political culture based on accessibility and accountability, supported by an effective electoral system and an informed and participative electorate. From this idea, the importance of the mechanism of the European Citizens Initiative, as it is presented, is arised. This achievement plays an important role in bringing citizens closer to the legislative process, as European Parliament (2017a).

2. In the Portuguese national system

One of the facets of democracy is to enable citizens to become involved in decision-making through participation in the exercise of legislative initiative. Not being the only form of participatory democracy (Maior, 1998), it is today an instrument in relief. It happens at national level, as several countries recognize it, such as Portugal, Brazil or Spain, and it happens at the European Union level.

In Brazil, for four times popular law bills have been approved as law in cases of violence that have mobilized public opinion, such as the first use that resulted in Law 8.930 of 07/09/1994. Also, in Spain, the Ley Orgánica 3/1984, of 26 march, regulator of the popular legislative initiative (consolidated), with the last amendments introduced in 2015, guarantees to citizens the power of legislative initiative, right provided in article 87.3 of the Spanish Constitution 1978.

This is not the only political right of immersion in democracy (European Commission, 2017a), but it is a very promising aspect that has been sought clear and easy to achieve. The results are scarce, perhaps attentive to the youth of the instrument, but it is an important path even if only by the added contributions. The aim is to empower citizens to influence the political agenda. The European Committee of the Regions (2018a) recalls, moreover, that the diversity of subnational structures in the Member States is an essential element of the EU's political and cultural heritage and a key point of reference for developing active citizenship based on EU citizenship rights.

In these legal terms, the ordinary and parliamentary legislative process in the Portuguese Republic allows a group of citizens electors to present a bill of approval in the Republic Assembly. It is necessary to 20 thousand signatures of voters in a text of the idea of law that they want to see discussed, sent to Parliament and, after the proceedings of the legislative process, eventually be approved. The signatures can be collected through a computer platform provided by the Republic Assembly itself, a resource that represents a great value in the chances of success of the instrument in the days that run and in order to gather the interest of the younger layers of the population.

As a concrete example, in 2018 the collection of signatures for proposal on the full consideration of the time of teaching service takes place².

On this path, the European Union also came later to recognize the instrument and introduce it.

2 As it can be consulted at <https://participacao.parlamento.pt/initiatives/76>.

3. In European Union

The citizens of the European Union are the real actors of the European Union (European Commission, 2002).

In conjunction, European citizenship provides European citizens several rights proclaimed in the treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and more than a way of intervening in democratic political life. The issues of exercise and knowledge about citizenship and active participation in the democratic life of the Union are among the priorities defined by the EU, which considers this priority area in its actions (European Commission, 2017f). And in addition to cited studies of European Commission show that Europeans are becoming more and more alert in the experience of their role as citizens of the Union and the percentage of Europeans who want to know more about their rights continues to increase. Europeans are mostly aware of their EU citizenship, but they do not always know the rights that flow from it. European Union citizenship holds important rights and freedoms and the possibility of democratic participation and active involvement in the EU decision-making process and it continues to matter in defining the substance of European citizenship because many doubts still arise, especially in the field of fundamental rights (Silveira, 2014).

On the one hand, as mentioned, Europeans are increasingly aware of their status as citizens of the Union and, on the other hand, the EU increasingly takes steps to better publicize citizenship rights (European Commission, 2017a), by promoting the civic involvement of young people, where digital media have great impact.

The right to the European Citizens Initiative, today in Regulation (EU) 211/2011 of the European Parliament and the Council, published in OJ L 65 of 11.03.2011, 1-22 (Alves, 2012; Gonçalves, 2016) was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty (Articles 11 (4) TEU and 24, § 4, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)). This revision treaty strengthens the citizenship of the Union and improves its democratic functioning.

4. European Citizens Initiative Right

The right to the European Citizens Initiative is an innovative instrument of transnational participatory democracy in force since April 2012. It allows one million EU citizens from at least seven Member States to invite the European Commission to submit legislative proposals in areas of competence of the European Union, as conditions of legal admissibility. Furthermore, they must relate to matters within the competence of the European Commission for this body to submit a legislative proposal for applying the treaties. In this way, it is intended to actively associate citizens in the European decision-making process by providing them with an indirect form of legislative initiative. To date, more than six million European citizens have signed a European Citizens Initiative. Although 69 initiatives were submitted until 2018, of which 48 were registered by the European Commission, according to the European Committee of the Regions (2018b), with 17 applications for registration refused, 15 were withdrawn and 25 were not sufficiently supported. It is noted that a 12-month process for collecting signatures in support of the proposal of the European Citizens Initiative by its organizers is initiated by one million citizens from at least one quarter of the EU Member States. It is an invitation to the European Commission to submit legislative proposals, of course within its fields of competence, and cannot therefore be contrary to the values of the Union. Furthermore, it is within one to three months after registration that European Commission to

present legislative proposals, naturally in areas of its competence, deciding whether to intervene and explain the reasons for its position, with legal and political conclusions (European Commission, 2014b). To date, no fully successful initiative has existed, that is, only one has given rise to a commitment to a legislative proposal (European Economic and Social Committee, 2018), although in some cases the European Commission have considered the position of public opinion on specific aspects. However, it is an instrument of the future of great democratic significance to be aware.

In the sense of widespread visibility and awareness, aiming to draw the attention of the media and the public to the ECI (European Committee of the Regions, 2018b), was even created by the European Economic and Social Committee (2018) one annual commemorative day, since 2012, which already has seven editions.

The European Commission considers that the European Citizens Initiative is “fully operational” (2017e) but recognizes that it is possible to improve this tool. Also the European Parliament (2015) has been keeping an eye on this legal mechanism, seeking to improve it in order to make it a more accessible and user-friendly instrument of participatory democracy in order to prevent technical and bureaucratic barriers (European Parliament, 2017b) to its use. And the European Commission has already presented a proposal to amend the Regulation (European Commission, 2017c) with measures to facilitate the organization of the citizenship initiative, to facilitate support for initiatives and to increase the impact of successful initiatives. The legislative process of amendment is under way with great consideration because it expresses concern about its impact on the current functioning, which is the legislative priorities set by the European Commission (2017b) for 2018. The European Committee of the Regions (2018b) says that if this new regulation fails, it will be the end of ECI.

The essential feature of the European legislative process is that it is a negotiating process that calls for the participation of European institutions, Member States and even citizens (Marrana, 2012).

5. Research methodology

Knowledge of a scientific nature is based on a fact and language of its own, and whenever possible science supports its theoretical axioms in observable and repeatable data. According to McMillan & Schumacher (1997), scientific knowledge has approximations and techniques in order to guarantee the highest possible accuracy in the results obtained.

In any research, the research strategy is a relevant decision since it communicates the expected results of a study and how the results should be evaluated. The different existing research strategies are not mutually exclusive; however, one must be able to identify some situations in which a specific strategy has a distinct advantage over other strategies (Yin, 2009). In the present case, in addition to the analysis of some doctrine and more closely the official documentation of the European Union, has been selected the case study methodology. According to Yin (2009), in the case study “how” and “why” are central questions about a set of contemporary events on which the researcher has little or no control. Additionally, to Guba & Lincoln (1994), the purpose of the case study approach is to report the facts as they occurred, describe situations or facts, provide knowledge about the event studied and prove or contrast the effects and relationships present in the case.

As the presented research is characterized by the analysis of an event in a real environment, with the aim of clarifying, “how much the platform is used in petitions and the evolution of this same usage from since its first use by organizations and citizens until the present?”, the research strategy adopted was the case study.

A key step in planning and conducting a case study concerns the definition of the unit of analysis, that is, the definition of the object of study (Yin, 2009). And, in this reach, as referred, the research analysis unit is the platform that promotes the European Citizens Initiative (European Commission, 2018). As data collection technique, it was used data/information available on the platform about its use in different times. As the main strategy for data analysis, the “constant comparative method” will be used (Glaser, 1978).

6. European Citizens Initiative platform. Case Study

The adequacy of a digital platform for the use and implementation base of the European Citizens Initiative (European Commission, 2018) has put technology at the service of democracy and citizens throughout the Union, allowing them to access an instrument that would not otherwise would have immediate repercussions.

This is just one of the examples in which it is possible to analyze this new connection between the use of new technologies and democratic participation, changing political reality and political phenomena (Marcos García, Alonso Muñoz and Casero-Ripollés, 2017). In fact, the use of on-line platforms is one of the new forms of political participation that Aguilera and Casero Ripollés calls “extrarepresentative” in the sense that it goes beyond established institutional mechanisms (2018).

The so-called computer tools are mentioned in the European Union's documentation as a means of strengthening democratic values (European Parliament, 2018a) and it is clear here that they are at the service of building a stronger society towards integration.

Otherwise, this digital transformation (Ferreira, *et al.*, 2015), which is the use of this instrument of civic participation through digital means, meets the objectives of transparency pursued in European Union law, as established in article 15 (3) of the TEU in conjunction with article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union with a view to making visible the “legislative footprint” (European Parliament, 2018b) for the construction of each standard.

This phenomenon is on social media (one of the tools developed in the context of web 2.0. With Web 2.0 any user can assume an active role being promoter in the development of its own contents, contrasting with web 1.0 where only such function was only possible to specialized programmers) as analyzed by Casero-Ripollés (2017). Among other new technologies, this citizen's access to a digital platform, which can operate on any digital device, at any moment individually (Casero-Ripollés, 2018) to express support for a legislative initiative represents a great novelty of civic intervention in the political system.

In order to develop our research and answer the research questions the following tasks were followed:

1. Data collection – the data was collect from the ECI Platform;
 - a. Ininitiatives of success
 - b. Achieved initiatives

- i. Withdrawal
 - ii. Insufficient support
2. Data Analysis; and
 3. Uses of a tool to draw a graphic in order to obtain a comparative analysis of the results. This option is justified by the more friendly reading and comparison of the results.

6.1. Context

The ECI platform, as referred, is an on-line platform that is available to any citizen or organization, providing several information in general, and open initiatives, successful initiatives (object of the presented study) and launch an initiative (see Fig 1).

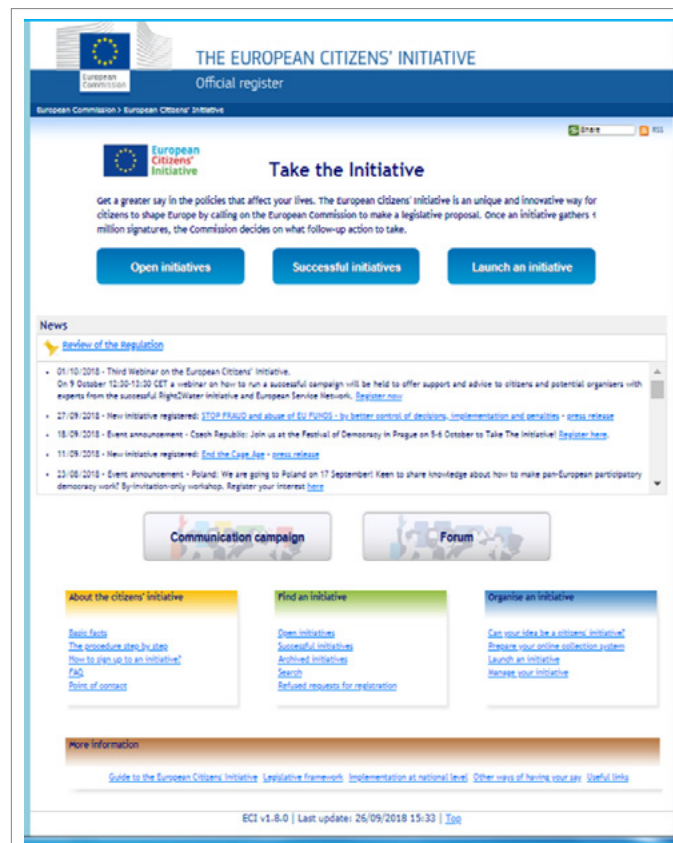


Figure 1. ECI platform [Source: (European Commission, 2018)]

6.2. Data collection

In order to analyze how much the platform is used in petitions and the evolution of this same use since its first use by organizations and citizens until now, it has been used of data/information available (1) “initiatives of success” and (2) “achieved initiatives” - (a) withdrawal and (b) insufficient support (see Fig. 2).

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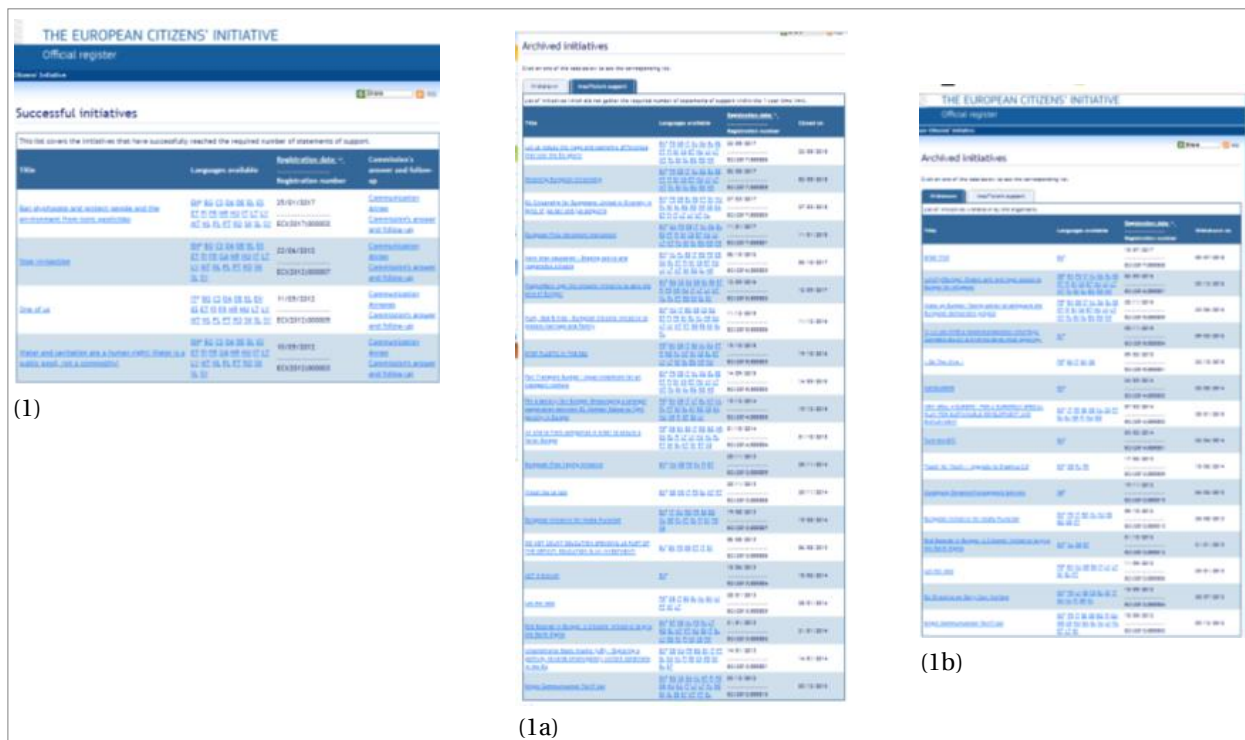


Figure 2. ECI initiatives [Source: (European Commission, 2018)]

Fig 3 shows the list of covers the initiatives currently open for collection of statements of support and those for which the collection is closed but for which the Commission does not yet have any information about whether the organisers managed or failed to collect the required number of statements of support.

Open initiatives			
This list covers the initiatives currently open for collection of statements of support and those for which the collection is closed but for which the Commission does not yet have any information about whether the organisers managed or failed to collect the required number of statements of support.			
Title	Languages available	Registration date Registration number	Deadline for collection (24:00 CET)
Eat ORIGINali. Unmask your food	EN* BG CS DA DE EL ES ET FI FR GA HR HU IT LT LV MT NL PL PT RO SK SL SV	02/10/2018 ECI(2018)000006	02/10/2019 Support
STOP FRAUD and abuse of EU FUNDS - by better control of decisions implementation and penalties	EN* DE ES FR GA HU NL PL SV	27/09/2018 ECI(2018)000005	27/09/2019 Support
End the Cage Age	EN* BG CS DA DE EL ES ET FI FR GA HR HU IT LT LV MT NL PL PT RO SK SL SV	11/09/2018 ECI(2018)000004	11/09/2019 Support
Permanent European Union Citizenship	EN* BG CS DA DE EL ES ET FI FR GA HR HU IT LT LV MT NL PL PT RO SK SL SV	23/07/2018 ECI(2018)000003	23/07/2019 Support
Stop starvation for 8% of the European population!	EN* BG CS DA DE EL ES ET FI FR GA HR HU IT LT LV MT NL PL PT RO SK SL SV	19/07/2018 ECI(2018)000002	19/07/2019 Support
We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!	EN* BG DE EL ES FI FR HR HU IT NL PT RO SK SL SV	15/02/2018 ECI(2018)000001	15/02/2019 Support
Stop Extremism	DE* BG CS DA EL EN ES ET FI FR HR HU IT LT LV MT NL PL PT RO SK SL SV	12/06/2017 ECI(2017)000007	12/06/2018 Collection closed
Minority SafePack - one million signatures for diversity in Europe	EN* BG CS DA DE EL ES ET FI FR GA HR HU IT LT LV MT NL PL PT RO SK SL SV	03/04/2017 ECI(2017)000004	03/04/2018 Collection closed

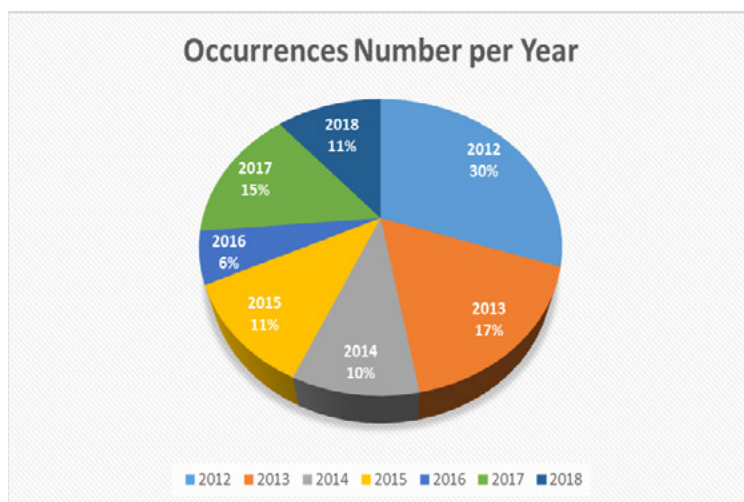
Figure 3 - Open initiatives [Source: (European Commission, 2018)]

6.3. Data analysis

From the information provided, we can verify that the first initiative took place on 05/10/2012. Between 03/12/2012 and 9/07/2018, there were 15 initiatives withdrawn by the organizers. Between 01/11/2013 and 22/05/2018, there were 26 initiatives, which did not gather the required number of statements of support within the 1-year time limit - insufficient support. In addition, between 10/05/2012 and 25/01/2017 there were 4 initiatives that have successfully reached the required number of statements of support.

At present there are eight initiatives taking place, the first began on 02/15/2018 and the last one on 02/10/2018. Within the petitions in progress, are two closed but not yet handled by the commission.

The conclusions presented will, of course, be conditioned by the time period studied.



Graphic 1. Occurrences per year

If we analyze the number of occurrences per year regardless of its success or not (see Graphic 1). It can be concluded that that the year with the highest number was 2012 with a percentage of 30%. And, that during the following years there is no pattern, i.e. i.e. between 2013 and 2018 there are years in which the number of occurrences decreases, and others grow; varying in percentage between 17% and 11%.

From the analysis of the data can be conclude the use of the platform is not significant from its creation to the present. Finally, contrary to expectations, the year with the most successful initiatives was 2012.

However, according to the tendency of more and more the technologies are being used by citizens (themselves increasingly digital) the use of the platform will grow.

7. Conclusion

The idea of strengthening democracy is not limited to or restricts the participation of citizens in procedures for legislative action. Deepening citizenship can allow citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in democratic building. The new idea of making the 'legislative footprint' visible is enhanced through the use of digital media.

What we understand as democracy remains linked to the exercise of individual liberties and to the "drawing" of the structure of the State where the relevance of the citizen is sought. The approximation of each citizen to the European construction remains itself under construction. This interaction with citizens is being and must be increased both the European Union and the Member States, for the sake of democracy, in the "drawing" of the rule of law. The European Citizens Initiative is more of a vehicle in that sense, it is already felt as a political tool to appeal to the citizens' pulsar but has not yet given the necessary results to make itself felt by the ordinary citizen and still lives with technical difficulties in

some way identified and to which the community institutions have already shown themselves to be sensible in order to introduce improvements with changes to the applicable legal regime. As in the Portuguese reality, no legislation has yet been adopted, but at European level, steps are being taken to achieve new legislation.

The use of the European Citizens Initiative has risen so much just yet without ending this year of 2018, in which we already have 6 new initiatives registered. Following the official journal: Commission Decision (EU) 2018/262 of 14 February 2018, OJ L 49, 22.02.2018, 64-65, on the proposed citizens' initiative «We are a welcoming Europe, let us help!». Commission Decision (EU) 2018/517 of 21 March 2018, OJ L 84, 28.3.2018, 25-26, «British friends - stay with us in EU!». Commission Decision 2018 / C 260/07 of 18 July 2018, OJ C 260, 24.07.2018, 6-7, «Stop Starvation for 8% of the European Population». Commission Decision 2018 / C 264/05 of 18 July 2018, OJ C 264, 26.07.2018, 4-5, «Permanent European Union Citizenship». Commission Decision (EU) 2018/1222 of 5 September 2018, OJ L 226, 10.09.2018, 7-8, «End the Cage Age». Commission Decision (EU) 2018/1304 of 19 September 2018, OJ L 244, 28.09.2018, 107-108, «Eat ORIGINAL! Unmask your food». It is curious how the phenomenon of Brexit, with the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union by the mechanism of article 50 TEU, has driven some initiatives.

There is an incentive for European citizens to actively participate in politics and the future of Europe, with digital platforms allowing transparency and visibility. In a course of publicity that should be strengthened however, the European Citizens Initiative in petitions with initiative in organizations or citizens, although it has been growing, it cannot still be considered a “tool” with great usage. On the other hand, it can be seen that the EU is not alien to the era of digital transformation, where the use of Information technologies (IT) are the essence of up-to-date organizations in general, and changes in this field are occurring, creating means supported by technologies to promote greater proximity and interest in the participation of citizens (many of them already intilulados of digital) with the own EU.

It is not yet possible, given the low maturity of the medium used, to draw global conclusions on the change in the reality of political participation through the use of digital platforms as the created for the European Citizens Initiative. The evolution of the use of said platform and as shown in figure 1 does not have a continuous evolution, i.e. increases and decreases in number of uses from 2012 (date of creation) until the date analyzed (2018). In this context, the present research is not considered closed / concluded. It is a work in progress. The future work, the evolution of the platform will continue to be analyzed.

The authors believe that this is an advantageous new form of political participation, with a technological tool that is at the disposal of each citizen but their advantages and disadvantages are not yet sufficiently studied. To do so, we must wait a few years of experience to let the course of history strengthen the data.

8. Bibliographic references

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