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**TEMA:** Direito

**SIMPOSIO:** S10. Democracia deliberativa y vulnerabilidad: participación ciudadana y nuevos entornos digitales

**COMUNICATION TITLE:** The value of new technologies in participatory democracy – the case of the European Citizens’ Initiative

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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.

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 also at European Union. It is a very promising strand that is accessible. 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, in particular by fostering the civic involvement of young people, where increased use of technology can lead to greater adherence.

The right to the ECI was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. 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 a citizen 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 take into account, 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. 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, 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.

Visible on <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/>.

In this context, our research uses the Case study methodology 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.

**Keywords:** European legislative initiative; legislation; European Union, Information Technology, digital participation.

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