Popular Sovereignty vs. the Rule of Law? Defining the Limits of Direct Democracy

Reporting

Project Information

LIDD
Grant agreement ID: 772160

DOI
10.3030/772160

Funded under
EXCELLENT SCIENCE - European Research Council (ERC)

Total cost
€ 1,963,935,00

EU contribution
€ 1,963,935,00

EC signature date
29 May 2018

Start date
1 November 2018

End date
30 April 2024

Coordinated by
UNIVERSITAT ZURICH
Switzerland

This project is featured in...
Periodic Reporting for period 3 - LIDD (Popular Sovereignty vs. the Rule of Law? Defining the Limits of Direct Democracy)

Reporting period: 2021-11-01 to 2023-04-30

Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project

Should it be permissible to launch a citizens’ initiative demanding the reintroduction of the death penalty? May a proposal be put to a popular vote despite the fact that voters are not properly informed about its effects? Should the people be allowed to vote on the adoption of immigration restrictions that violate international law?

With the mushrooming of direct-democratic instruments throughout Europe and the introduction of the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI), the relationship between popular sovereignty and the rule of law is set to become one of the defining political issues of our time. Where should the legal limits of direct democracy be drawn? Who should review compliance with these limits? It is the objective of LIDD to provide the scientific basis for answering these questions.

This European Research Council (ERC) funded project builds on a comparative legal analysis, making it possible to capitalize on the wealth of experience gained with direct-democratic instruments in Switzerland and, more recently, other European states in order to develop general conclusions.

LIDD pursues three main objectives:

1) To help European states to define and apply the limits of direct democracy in an appropriate way
2) To contribute to the development of better institutional and procedural systems for reviewing compliance of direct-democratic instruments with these limits
3) To elaborate specific proposals for improving the admissibility test for the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI)

Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far

New tools and insights to better connect citizens with democracy
Key achievement: Construction of a comprehensive database with detailed information on the direct-democratic instruments existing in all 47 Council of Europe states, including information on the limits imposed on these instruments; verification of all the data through an expert survey; the searchable database is publicly accessible on the project website (www.lidd-project.org).

Further major achievements: Organisation of a workshop with country experts from across Europe as well as members of the Venice Commission on the legal limits of direct democracy in various European states; that workshop will result in an edited collection, to be published by Edward Elgar (editing process ongoing); co-organisation (together with Queen Mary, University of London) of a workshop on agenda initiatives in comparative context; progress made on two PhD theses.

Progress beyond the state of the art and expected potential impact (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)

LIDD represents a leap forward in the research on direct democracy. The project innovatively combines comparative legal analysis with both qualitative and quantitative methods from other social sciences in order to capitalise on the wealth of experience gained with direct-democratic instruments in Switzerland and, more recently, other European states. This will make it possible, for the first time, to arrive at general conclusions as to what legal limits may be appropriate and how compliance with these limits should be reviewed.

Poster presentation LIDD

Last update: 9 July 2023

Permalink: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/772160/reporting