

# Europeans meet Swiss Democracy

International Seminar of Young European Swiss | YES

9 – 11 March 2012, University of Zurich, Switzerland

This two days' seminar at the University of Zurich is an opportunity for dedicated young Europeans to come together in order to learn more about the Swiss system of direct democracy and to discuss how more direct democracy could be achieved on a European level.

## Contact

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Questions regarding application and travel: Christa Preisig and Larissa Meier, [seminar.yes@gmail.com](mailto:seminar.yes@gmail.com)

## General information

**Participants:** Thanks to the co-funding of the European Youth in Action programme, financial support for 40 places reserved for participants of official partner organisations is provided. Additional spots on personal expense may be offered upon request.

**Application:** Please send a brief motivation letter (max. 300 words) explaining in short your study and work/internship background and experience and interest with direct democracy). Please indicate on the application form your priorities of the 5 different workshops. Deadline for applications is 31 January 2012. Please send the application form to the following address:  
[seminar.yes@gmail.com](mailto:seminar.yes@gmail.com)

**Accommodation:** All participants will stay in 4-bed dormitories at the [Zurich Youth Hostel](#).

**Participation fee:** 80 Euro (includes: 2 nights in youth hostel, city transport, 2 dinners, 2 lunches, coffee break. Travel cost may be partially refunded, depending on the available quota per partner country).



**EUROPEANS MEET  
SWISS DEMOCRACY  
YES INTL SEMINAR  
ZURICH 2012**

## Overview of the seminar

Time	Event	Aim
<b>FRIDAY 9 March 2012</b>	Arrival at Zurich Airport / Check-in at youth hostel / Dinner / International Party	All participants bring delicacies from their home countries
<b>SATURDAY 10 March 2012</b>		
09:00 - 09:15	Welcome note	
09:15 - 09:45	Input speech: Historical evolution of direct democracy in Switzerland	Participants will learn more about the evolution of direct democracy in Switzerland as a unique tool of direct political participation of citizens
09.45 - 10:15	Coffee break	
10:15 - 10:45	Input speech: Political consequences of direct democracy in Switzerland	Participants will learn more about the challenges of Swiss direct democracy and the effects of an intensive public debate
10:45 - 11:30	Input speech: Direct Democracy on a European level, crisis of democracy in Europe	Reflections by a Swiss MP about democracy in Europe
11:30 - 12:00	Input speech: European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)	The state and remaining challenges of the ECI will be presented in general
12:00 - 13:30	Lunch at University of Zurich	
13:30 - 16:30	Workshops in small groups	Topics: 1) ECI 2) Limits of direct democracy 3) Political campaigning 4) Federalism and direct political participation 5) More tools of direct democracy in EU member states
16:30 - 17:00	Coffee break	
17:00 - 19:00	Public panel discussion on the advantages and challenges of direct democracy	A Swiss politician, political scientist, and jurist will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy. This part will be open to the public
19:00 - 20:30	Apéro after the panel discussion	
21:00 - 24:00	Dinner in Old City and social event	

<b>SUNDAY 11 March 2012</b>		
09:00 - 09:45	City tour	Walk from the lake through the Old City up to the University of Zurich
10:00 - 12:30	Workshops	Participants will draft a raw version ECI and develop the basic concept to implement the initiative
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 - 15:30	Presentation and discussion of workshop results in plenary session	Each group will present its initiative and discuss it with the other participants
15:30 - 16:00	Final note and farewell	

## **Topics of workshops** (Saturday 1.30 – 4.30pm)

### **1) European Citizens' Initiative**

Participants will first learn more about the ECI and then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this new tool for direct democracy on European level. Furthermore, the remaining challenges and the means how to best use and implement this new political instrument will be discussed.

### **2) Political Campaigning**

Representatives from civil society movements will share their experience with direct democracy in Switzerland. Participants will learn more about the basics needed to launch a people's initiative. The basics for successful communication through new and old media will also be discussed.

### **3) Limits of direct democracy**

This workshop will discuss the question if there must or should be several limits to direct democracy. As this question has recently become hotly debated in Switzerland, people's initiatives that violate international law and the consequences of their adoption will be discussed as well.

### **4) Federalism and direct political participation**

Given the important role of federalism and autonomy of cantons in Switzerland, this workshop will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of federalism, not only on the national but also on the European level. Furthermore, different instruments of direct political participation (mainly people's initiative and referendum) will be discussed.

### **5) More tools of direct democracy in EU member states**

As demands for more direct democratic participation of citizens have recently grown stronger all over Europe, this workshop will discuss the future of direct democratic participation in EU member states (also with examples such as the referendum on Stuttgart 21 or the cancelled referendum in Greece).