

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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General information

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

Application: Please send your application form (download it here: http://communicate-europe.co.uk/fileadmin/files_jef-europe/JEF_INFO/Info_Issue_18_2011/YES_application_form.pdf) as soon as possible to: 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, 2 apéros, coffee break. Travel costs may be partially refunded, depending on the available quota per YiA programme country).



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

Overview of the seminar

Time	Event	Aim and place
FRIDAY 9 March 2012		
Afternoon	Arrival at Zurich Airport and check-in at youth hostel	Participants will be lead by locals to the youth hostel
18.00 – 19.00	Registration and welcome of participants	Europa Institute at the University of Zurich (EIZ), Hirschengraben 56, Zurich
19.00 – 20.00	Welcome note and speech by public figure (tbc)	EIZ
20.00 – 21.00	Apéro	EIZ
21.00 – 23.00	Spaghetti Dinner à discretion	Restaurant Commihalle, Stampfenbachstr. 8
SATURDAY 10 March 2012		
09:00 - 09:15	Presentation of the two days and guests	University of Zurich, room SOC-1-106, Rämistr. 69
09:15 - 10.00	Input speech by Andi Gross (Swiss MP and member of Council of Europe): Crisis of democracy and need for more political participation on European level compared to the 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 and reasons how to implement more democracy in Europe
10:00 – 10.30	Coffee break	
10:30 – 11.15	Input speech by Francis Cheneval (Prof. of political philosophy at the University of Zurich): Political consequences of direct democracy in Switzerland and Europe	Participants will learn more about the challenges of direct democracy in general, the effects of an intensive public debate and perspectives of more democracy in Europe
11.15 - 11:45	Q&A session with the two speakers	
11:45 - 12:15	Input speech by Luca Lionello (JEF Europe): European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)	The state and remaining challenges of the ECI will be presented in general as well as the involvement by JEF Europe of the development of the ECI
12:15 - 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 / Panellists: MP Christa Markwalder, Prof. Francis Cheneval, Prof. Christa Tobler, Pauline Gessant	A Swiss politician, political philosopher, professor of European law and the president of JEF Europe will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy. This part will be open to the public
19:00 - 20:30	Apéro	
21:00 - 02:00	Dinner at Old City followed by party	Restaurant-Brasserie Johanniter, Niederdorfstr. 70
SUNDAY 11 March 2012		
09:00 - 09:45	City tour	Walk from Bürkliplatz through the Old City up to the University of Zurich
10:00 - 12:30	Workshops	Participants will draft an raw version of a possible 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 lance 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' 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).