

## Call for Papers

**Titel des Papers:** The European Citizens' Initiative and EU Democracy. An Empirical Analysis of a Social Movement Campaign.

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**Abstract (300 Wörter)**

The Treaty of Lisbon (2009) introduced the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Many proponents of this first-ever transnational instrument of direct democracy had high expectations of its democratizing potential. However, although already 63 attempts have been made to launch an ECI, only three of them were successful in collecting one million signatures. Moreover, even these three "successful" ECI mobilizations efforts did not lead to a change in EU policy. This article provides an analysis of one of the "successful" ECI campaigns: Stop Vivisection, an animal rights campaign against animal experimentation in scientific research. The article studies this ECI mobilization effort from a social movement perspective, asking two key questions: Why did the Stop Vivisection organizers manage to mobilize effectively? And what were the consequences of their mobilization effort? In explaining the mobilization effort, I argue that the ECI provides a political opportunity structure that does not incentivize activists to organize truly transnational campaigns embedded in most or even all of the EU member states. Instead, what the ECI necessitates is a focused campaign in at least one large, i.e. populous, country. Then, mobilization in a few more small countries is sufficient to pass the necessary thresholds. In explaining the consequences of Stop Vivisection, I show that ECI mobilization has many different effects beyond the (lack of) policy effect. At least in the case of Stop Vivisection, additional consequences included a deep dissatisfaction with the ECI as a direct-democratic instrument, the manifestation and deepening of intra-movement divisions, the countermobilization of opponents, as well as effects on the social capital of activists. Methodologically, the article relies on interviews with activists and the analysis of publications and websites of social movement organizations as well as of official EU documents. In order to provide additional empirical insights, I refer to the two other instances of "successful" ECI mobilization as shadow cases.

**Keywords**

European Union, Social Movements, Direct Democracy, Comparative Politics.