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European Citizens Summit in Salzburg welcomes EU Parliament Resolution on the new initiative right and suggests specific improvements

## "EUROPE MAKES WORLD HISTORY WITH NEW CITIZENS RIGHT"

Salzburg/Brussels – Europe is about to take a historic step in democratization. Overshadowed by other political Europe topics, half a billion collective EU citizens have been given the right by the new EU Lisbon Treaty to take action across borders in the legislative process of the EU. In the future, one million Europeans will be able to present a legislative or treaty amendment proposal just as the Parliament and the Council already can today which compels the Commission to act upon it.

On Europe Day, democracy specialists from across Europe and the world gathered in Salzburg at the invitation of the Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy as well as the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, in order to confer on guidelines for the implementation requirements.

The Salzburg Summit here expressly affirmed the resolution adopted by the European Parliament in its last session about the new initiative right which places citizens in the future on the same level with the Commission just like Parliament and the Council.

"The European Parliament has stipulated the central principle of free signature gathering", Andreas Gross commented, Social Democratic Group Chairman in the parliamentary assembly of the Europe Council and added: "In some aspects it would be possible to improve the suggestions of the EP further. This includes the extension of the proposed time frame for the collecting of signatures from twelve to eighteen months. "Now it's the Commission's turn", emphasized Anne-Marie Sigmund, the former President of the European Economic and Social Committee: "From now until the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty, Brussels can still accomplish important preliminary work".

The Salzburg Citizens' Summit further expanded the preparation efforts for a Europe-wide initiative infrastructure. This should allow all Europeans to actively participate in future transnational agenda settings. "It will be decisive", explained Prof. Johannes Pichler, director of the Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy, "that future EU citizens' initiatives receive financial and logistic support from the EU in the same way as political parties represented in the EP do."

"We propose the organization of a European Citizens Initiative Office", said Bruno Kaufmann, President of IRI Europe, at the conclusion of the Salzburg Summit: "This office should be given a clear assignment and contribute to the citizen-friendly and pro-democratic use of the new instrument". In the coming six months, several task forces appointed by the Salzburg Summit will further develop implementation criteria and present a summary resolution at the beginning of the coming year. "This is world history in the making", a representative of Korea Democracy Foundation declared at one point in the Summit. She observed the deliberations in preparation for the "Global Forum on Direct Democracy" to take place in Korea, mid-September.

*Further details as well as the original text of the "Salzburg Manifesto" can be found online at*

*[www.legalpolicy.eu](http://www.legalpolicy.eu) or [www.iri-europe.org](http://www.iri-europe.org).*

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