

PRESS RELEASE, FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION, Thursday, 7. May 2009

After the decisions in the Czech Senate and in the European Parliament: the new European Citizens' right surmounts two major hurdles

## SUMMIT IN SALZBURG TO SET OUT DEMOCRATIC GUIDELINES FOR THE EU CITIZENS' INITIATIVE RIGHT

Salzburg/Brussels – in time for this year's Europe Day and shortly before the elections to the European Parliament, two major hurdles on the path to the introduction of the European Citizens' Initiative right have been surmounted this week: on Wednesday, the Czech Senate (the second chamber of the Czech Parliament) ratified the new EU Treaty, whose Article 11.4 will introduce the first direct-democratic instrument at the transnational level. In Strasbourg, a clear majority of the European Parliament voted in favour of a citizen-friendly implementation of the new instrument, which will allow a million EU citizens from several member states to propose a new law and place it on the agenda of the European Commission.

*“We need to rise to the challenge of bringing more democracy in Europe”,* says Johannes Pichler, the director of the Salzburg-based Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy, who is the co-host, together with the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, Europe's premier democracy think-tank, of the Salzburg summit. The meeting will pick up the ball passed on from Prague and Strasbourg and elaborate guidelines for the future implementation and use of the European Citizens' Initiative. The summit will agree a resolution to be formally presented to the EU institutions.

The Salzburg Resolution for a citizen-friendly EU Initiative Right will stress that this new instrument presents a great opportunity for the democratisation of European democracy, in that it will create for the first time a direct line between the citizens and the EU institutions. The Resolution will include a proposal for the creation of an independent **European Initiative Agency**, whose job would be to advise and support initiative committees. *“The new instrument must not create new hurdles, but remove old ones”,* stresses Bruno Kaufmann, President of IRI Europe. He also makes the point that accredited initiative groups should in future receive **financial and logistical support**, in the same way as European party groupings already do.

The Salzburg summit will include representatives from across the whole of Europe and beyond, because the introduction of a transnational direct-democratic instrument is seen in Asia and America as a major milestone in the development of democracy – one in which Europe is a step ahead of other parts of the world.

*The Salzburg Citizens' Summit can be followed live online at [www.legalpolicy.eu](http://www.legalpolicy.eu); background material is available at [www.iri-europe.org](http://www.iri-europe.org).*

*Further information can be obtained from the media contact person for the Salzburg Citizens' Summit: Bernadette Maria Kaufmann, Tel. +43 (0) 662 84 39 80, [office@legalpolicy.eu](mailto:office@legalpolicy.eu) or from: Bruno Kaufmann, President, IRI Europe, +46708234469, [kaufmann@iri-europe.org](mailto:kaufmann@iri-europe.org)*