



ANDRÁSSY  
UNIVERSITÄT  
BUDAPEST

Liechtenstein-Institut  
Forschung und Lehre



Forschungsstelle für  
Bürgerbeteiligung und  
direkte Demokratie  
Universität Marburg



## Conference

### “Political Crisis in Europe - Direct Democratic Answers”

3-5 May 2012

Andrássy German-Speaking University Budapest

## Political Crisis in Europe - Direct Democratic Answers

European democracy is facing a variety of challenges at the present time. New global powers are emerging while the global economy's centre of gravity is shifting, thereby international politics are redefined. Simultaneously, the need for global solutions to global problems like the climate change or the increasing economic imbalances is increasing too. In addition to that, the European states are confronted with a financial crisis that menaces the basis of European integration. Against this background, the success of powers like China which don't follow the Western models of development, seems to call the prevalence of the (European) democratic model into question. Besides these external challenges, democracy is simultaneously confronted with problems from within. People seem to lose their confidence in the effectiveness of democratic governance; governments and other institutions chronically suffer from low levels of trust. While new social movements and forms of political actions gain ground, established actors like parties seem to be unable to offer adequate answers to the pressing questions.

By opening up possibilities for direct involvement in political decision-making, direct democracy fosters popular participation and enhances responsiveness, therefore it can be seen as a tool to overcome some of the shortcomings of today's representative democracy. In recent years, both, the number of states offering possibilities for direct democratic involvement of the citizens, and the use of these instruments have considerably grown. However, the nature of the present crisis calls for swift solutions, thereby favoring executive modes of action over more deliberative or direct democratic forms. Considering these – alleged – contradictions, it's necessary to explore the conditions in which direct democratic instruments can deploy their full potential to enhance representative democracy's problem-solving capacity.

This conference aims at enhancing our understanding of the interplay of direct and indirect democracy and specifying the potentials for solving the actual problems European states are facing. Starting with an overview on the dimensions of the crisis, points of intervention for the application of direct democratic methods are identified. In a second step structures of crisis management, in which well-established direct democratic instruments as initiative and referendums contribute to the solution of the above-mentioned problems, are analyzed. Finally, the presentation of case studies serves to corroborate the theoretical findings.

This conference is the fourth in a series of conferences on modern direct democracy that focus on bringing together researchers working in the field of direct democracy. Starting with an inventory on the state of research and direct democratic experiences (Bendern 2005), the next two conferences dealt with direct democracy at the local level (Marburg 2007) and the problem of minority protection in direct democracy (Bendern 2010). These conferences have resulted in three new volumes in the series on Modern Direct Democracy (VS-Verlag, Wiesbaden) facilitated by Bruno Kaufmann, Wilfried Marxer, Zoltán Tibor Pállinger and Theo Schiller.

Series Direct Democracy in Modern Europe

<http://www.springer-vs.de/Reihe/12590/Direct-Democracy-in-Modern-Europe.html>