

The European Citizens' Initiative

New Opportunities for European Civil Actors?

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Abstract

The European Union is often criticized for its democratic deficit. This criticism has led to a process of including civil society in European governance through consultations, round table discussions and civil dialogue. These steps of inclusion have been oriented towards organized civil society. This study explores the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) a new tool for participation available to all European citizens. The ECI is considered to take a step further in the democratic development of the European Union by inviting all citizens to not only participate but also independently propose legislation. The study aims to understand the opportunities the ECI offer and how civil actors are using these opportunities. A theoretical framework was designed combining theories of Political Opportunity Structures (POS), Europeanization and Usage of Europe. The ECI was investigated through a within case comparison of pilot and official initiatives. A content analysis, a survey and interviews were conducted to approach the initiatives. The findings of the study suggests that the ECI is perceived as an opportunity structure in terms of a step towards direct democracy, policy influence and a stepping-stone for future ambitions. Civil actors have seized the opportunities through strategic, cognitive and legitimizing usage.

Key words: European Union, European Citizens' Initiative, Europeanization, Usage of Europe, POS

Words: 19 979

List of Abbreviations

CBO's	Community Based Organizations
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CSO's	Civil Society Organizations
EC	European Community
ECB	European Central Bank
ECI	European Citizens' Initiative
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EDF	European Disability Forum
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRI Europe	Referendum Institute Europe
JEF	Young European Federalists (Jeunes Européens Fédéralistes)
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NPO	Non Party Organization
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
TANs	Transnational Advocacy Networks
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UEF	Union of European Federalists
UBI	Unconditional Basic Income

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1 Introduction

In the past two decades the civil sphere has received much attention in the European Union (EU) as a means of bridging the “democratic deficit”.¹ This thesis will explore one of the latest institutional developments aimed towards engaging European citizens in transnational politics, the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI). Previous attempts to encourage citizens’ participation and increase representation in the EU have been aimed towards inclusion and consultation of organized civil society. The ECI aims to reach beyond methods of inclusion and the Brussels based civil society to offer political participation to all European citizens. The purpose of this study is to understand the ECI as a political opportunity structure and how these opportunities are being used.

In this first introductory chapter, the emergence of the EU as an opportunity structure is described and the institutionalization of organized civil society in the EU briefly outlined. The chapter will continue to describe the introduction of the ECI in the EU and the exploration of the ECI in previous research. Finally the aim and the research questions are presented.

1.1 Civil Society in the EU

The term civil society has become a “buzz word” in modern political debates often related to ideals of participation and democratic legitimacy. In the context of the EU, civil society has become an increasingly important aspect of representation and legitimacy. The democratic deficit is a dilemma of European governance, which was intensified after the debate over the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.² This debate has among other things led to a process of including civil society in EU decision making. Similar developments of inclusion of civil society can be seen in many countries and in international organizations over the past decades, but there are few examples of the degree of institutionalization that has developed in the EU (Greenwood 2007: 208). The inclusion of civil society has

¹ The democratic deficit refers to the argument that the institutions of the EU lack democratic accountability and legitimacy compared to the national governments of its member states.

² The debate was intensified because the Maastricht Treaty led to increased supranationalism through the three-pillar structure

predominantly been aimed towards organized civil society, civil society organizations (CSOs).³ There is an ongoing discussion within the EU and in academia over the definition of both civil society as a term and of organized civil society as a sector. Definitions may include public interest groups, churches, promotional groups, social movements and even economic groups (Kohler-Koch & Quittkat 2009: 14). The definition may also be related to the understanding of the role of civil society. A wide definition of organized civil society including for example certain economic groups might lead to an understanding focused more on interest representation than on democratic legitimacy.

Discussions of the understanding of civil society are particularly complex because the concept of a European civil society is in some ways related to the discussion of European identity (Rumford 2001, 2003, Armstrong 2002). The concept of civil society within the EU is thus both debated and wide. Despite this, the institutionalization of civil society in the EU has led to the possibility of finding some common ground. In 2001 the European Commission⁴ published a White Paper on European governance with the aim of achieving more democratic forms of governance at all levels within the EU (COM (2001) 428 final). In the White Paper, the Commission stresses the importance of involving civil society organizations in European governance and encourages all institutions to a coherent approach of representation of civil society organizations at the European level. The Commission further issued a communication to establish the grounds for consultation and dialogue, *Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue* (COM (2002) 704 final). In the communication, the understanding of organized civil society is expressed as:

"A range of organizations which include: the labor-market players (i.e. trade unions and employers federations – the "social partners"); organizations representing social and economic players, which are not social partners in the strict sense of the term (for instance, consumer organizations); NGOs (non-governmental organizations), which bring people together in a common cause, such as environmental organizations, human rights organizations, charitable organizations, educational and training organizations, etc.; CBOs (community-based organizations), i.e. organizations set up within society at grassroots level which pursue member-oriented objectives, e.g. youth organizations, family associations and all organizations through which citizens participate in local and municipal life; and religious communities."

This very broad understanding of organized civil society also corresponds to the definition offered by other institutions engaging with civil society like for instance

³ The term Civil Society Organization's (CSO's) is used in EU consultation practice and refers to "a wide range of formal and informal organizations created voluntarily by citizens, which can vary in structure, governance and scope. Their aim is to promote an issue or an interest, either general or specific" (Consultation on Civil Society Organisations in Development, European Commission 2012).

⁴ I will henceforth refer to the European Commission as "the Commission" meaning both the 27 commissioners and the institution itself.

the European Economic and Social Committee (EECS) and can be considered as an overarching definition.

1.1.1 The Institutionalization of Civil Society

The institutionalization of civil society has taken part through a dynamic process of consultation, increasing participation and new methods of governance. Throughout the development of the EU, consultation has been an important feature. Since the 1980s, CSOs have been an integral part of the system of interest representation. In the past decade the consultative status of CSOs has been increasingly influenced by participatory ideals (Kohler & Finke 2007: 210-212, Saurugger 2010).

The institutionalization of organized civil society is argued to serve the ambition of increasing the democratic legitimacy of the union's transnational developments and support further integration in new areas of policy (e.g. Goetschy 2005, Greenwood 2007, Koopmans 2007 etc.). This process has differed among the different institutions, however focus is often put on the Commission as the leading engineer of the institutional developments (Kohler-Koch & Finke 2007: 206). Despite of the prominent role of the Commission, other institutions have also contributed to the participatory developments in the EU. The European Parliament (EP) has developed its structures for institutionalized engagement with CSO's and in 2007 the EP launched its first Citizens' Agora. The Citizens' Agora was created with the ambition of linking the EP and European civil society through open discussions on the EP's legislative agenda (Saurugger 2010: 487). Further, the EESC is charged with the formal task of bridging Europe and organized civil society through hearings, conferences, seminars, information meetings and debates (Kendall 2009: 20). The Council of the European Union⁵ has also been known to interact with CSO's, however in a less formal and rather unstructured manner (Greenwood 2007: 28). The Committee of the Regions (CoR) engages with local and regional stakeholders within civil society through consultation and the sharing of information.

Another method of inclusion that has received much attention is the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The OMC was officially launched at the Lisbon summit in 2000 and marked a shift in the EU philosophy of policy (Armstrong 2003, Ruzza 2004). The OMC is a process of policy-making without the ambition of legally binding law. By a focus on soft law, the ambition of the OMC is to spread best practices and increase convergence towards the main EU goals.

Another discussion related to the institutionalization of organized civil society has been the transnationalization of European CSOs. This process has not been driven by the institutions but has been considered to be an effect of European

⁵ The Council of the European Union is sometimes referred to as 'the Council' or 'the Council of Ministers'.

integration through the political changes in the EU that has led to new roles, possibilities and challenges for civil society. These new functions have subsequently led to a need of increased transnational cooperation and organization. For instance, in 1994 the “Platform of European Social NGOs” was formed which later through the introduction of the “Civil Dialogue” in 1996 acquired a privileged partner status from the Commission (Armstrong, 2002:122). Funding opportunities and consultation is argued to have influenced the operations and specific goals of CSOs and have led to increased professionalization of civil society (Markowitz & Tice 2002, Trädgårdh 2010, Baillie Smith & Jenkins 2011).

The institutionalization of civil society is an ongoing process but many of the examples I have given here are considered a background to the contemporary debate (Greenwood 2007). The European Citizen’s initiative is one of the most recent developments.

1.2 The European Citizens’ Initiative

The European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) was formally introduced in the EU on the 1st of April 2012. Unlike the institutionalized dialogue between Brussels based CSOs and EU institutions, the ECI has the form of a direct participatory tool. A citizens’ initiative broadly refers to procedures that enables citizens to influence the political agenda through collective action (collecting a certain numbers of signatures in support of a proposal), which can lead to a popular vote or a response from a representative body (Setälä & Schiller 2012:1). Different forms of citizens’ initiatives can be found in many democratic systems and are often considered to be a means of increasing democratic legitimacy. The ECI is the first supranational citizens’ initiative and attempts to introduce elements of direct influence in a transnational setting (Auer 2005).

1.2.1 Introducing A Citizen’s Initiative in the EU

The ECI is a new link between the EU citizens and the institutions of the Union. The idea of a European citizens’ initiative was formally introduced at the Convention on the Future of Europe (2002-2003). A discussion of an initiative and a popular vote in the EU had already been advocated by a number of political actors (perhaps most notably by Charles de Gaulle and Altiero Spinelli) and civil society networks (Kaufmann 2012: 230). At the end of the Convention, a citizens’ initiative was included in the drafts for a constitution. Many of the critics of the Constitutional Treaty desired more decentralization and opportunities for citizens to engage with the EU institutions. There were also discussions of how the institutionalization of organized civil society would be able to reach beyond the Brussels arena (Greenwood 2007: 188-190). Further emphasis was therefore put

on the possibilities of the citizens' initiative in the drafts of the Treaty of Lisbon. Finally, the ECI was introduced in the Treaty on European Union (TEU) through article 11.4 stating:

Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

The Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2007 and entered into force in January 2009. That same year, the EP published a resolution *on the Implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative* (EP, 2009) and the Commission launched a *Green Paper on a European Citizens' Initiative* leading to a public consultation process. The formal grounds were complemented by Article 24.1 in the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU). Further in 2011, *Regulation 211* was accepted as the final part of the legislation of the ECI (Regulation 211/2011).

The current procedure of implementing the ECI is first setting up a "citizens' committee" of citizens (old enough to vote in the EP elections) living in at least a quarter of the member states (i.e. currently 7 out of 27). The committee is then the responsible organizer of the collection of at least 1 million signatures (from at least seven countries with a minimum number of signatories depending on population). Signatures can be gathered in both electronic form and paper form within 12 months after registration. An official hearing in the European Parliament (EP) shall follow up initiatives that meet the requirements. The Commission (and other EU institutions, governmental and non-governmental offices across Europe) shall offer assistance and support during the initiative process. An important regulation of the ECI is that a proposed citizens' initiative must not manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties (<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative>).

The official guidelines of ECI's are concerned with the contents of the initiatives but have few restrictions of the form, shape or size of the initiatives. The official website for the ECI (<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/>) provides separate sections for initiatives that are registered, completed (there are none at this time), rejected, obsolete (withdrawn initiatives or initiatives with insufficient support after the collection of signatures) and refused for registration (rejected). The registered initiatives are given space for a brief presentation of the topic, objective, the citizens' committee, reference to an external website, annex material, and a draft legal act.

The ECI was so anticipated that campaigns were launched before its official introduction. Several initiatives referring to the Article 11.4 were brought forward to the Commission and the EP after the first drafts. These initiatives have not been registered as official but are considered pilot initiatives and forerunners of the opportunities of the ECI. Since the 1st of April 2012 initiatives with a variety of shapes and contents have been launched as the first official ECIs.

The ECI allows citizens' to participate in the capacity of democratic actors. So far, politicians, CSOs, medical doctors, religious associations, and economic corporations etc., using their rights as European citizens, have launched initiatives. It is thus difficult to find a collective definition of the actors engaging with the ECI. The ECI is available for all European citizens and once they engage with the ECI they become actors in European politics. I will therefore henceforth use the collective definition "civil actors" to describe and discuss the participants of the ECI.⁶

1.2.2 The ECI in Previous Research

Due to its recent formalization, previous research of the ECI is limited. There are however several academic contributions predating the official launch predominantly concerned with discussing and evaluating its democratic value (e.g. Auer 2005, Boucher 2009). Scholars have also been interested in the formal process of the ECI, the organization of campaigns, collection of signatures and how the process is to be validated (e.g. De Witte et al. 2010, Ohnmacht 2012).

Since its launch in April 2012 and during the writing of this thesis, the journal *Perspectives of European Politics and Society* has published a special issue titled "The European Citizens' Initiative: a First for Participatory Democracy?" (Issue 3 2012). In this special issue, scholars offer their analysis of the ECI from three perspectives focusing on the ECI from a legal and institutional position (Cuesta Lopez 2012, Szeligowska & Mincheva 2012), the contribution of the ECI to the legitimacy of the EU (Monaghan 2012, de Clerck-Sachsse 2012, Bouza Garcia & del Rio Villar 2012) and the impact of the ECI on EU politics (Greenwood 2012, Bouza Garcia 2012, Carrara 2012, Hrbek 2012). These articles offer intriguing first attempts to a study of the ECI in action. The ECI in terms of democratic agency, innovation and steps towards a participatory EU remains a central theme in ECI research. The special issue also suggests several themes and methodological approaches to explore the ECI. For instance, the legal nature of the ECI has been explored through comparisons with national versions of citizens' initiatives and legal analysis. The democratic dimension of the ECI is discussed in relation to theories of participatory democracy, the motifs and roles of CSOs in the operationalization of the ECI and its future role in the public sphere. Finally, the impact the ECI in the European policy process is discussed in relation to actors that may come to dominate the tool (Brussels-based CSOs and political parties) and the importance of resources such as Internet literacy. In the introduction to the journal, editors Bouza Garcia and Greenwood conclude by

⁶ It is common to use the definition of "democratic actors", "civil society actors" or "political actors" in the descriptions of non-state individuals in the political process. In this particular case a variety of actors are engaging in transnational politics by reference to their European citizenship, thus the wider definition "civil actors" seems more appropriate.

stating their expectation of the first period of the ECI to be a lesson of learning (2012: 256).

The ECI has also been the theme in a number of master theses. These have predominantly been focused on the analysis of the ECI as a legal framework (e.g. Sousa Ferro 2008) or through theories of democracy (e.g. Bruno 2011, Troedsson 2012 etc.).

Several handbooks and reports have been published by the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe (IRI Europe) outlining the process of establishing the ECI and pilot initiatives⁷. Several of the reports offer descriptive overviews of the continuous work of establishing the ECI and of pilot initiatives (Berg et al. 2008, Kaufmann 2010). The Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy has also published a number of reports within a working papers series (e.g. Kaufmann & Pichler 2010, 2011, Pichler 2008, 2009).

1.3 The Aim and Research Questions

The ECI is a new tool for civic participation in the EU. In theory, the ECI would imply the possibility for more than half a billion Europeans to influence EU politics between elections. This opportunity goes beyond organized civil society and it contributes to the idea of European transnational citizenship. The ECI has been scrutinized in terms of its contribution to participatory democracy in theory but there is still little empirical knowledge of the practical experiences of the ECI. We know that the ECI is now an available prospect for European citizens, but which are these new opportunities of participation and what are the ambitions of the initiatives that have been launched? Keeping the dominant position of Brussels based interest groups and European CSOs in the civil dialogue in mind it is interesting to consider the potential of the ECI. Initial studies of the ECI have implied that certain groups are more likely than others to engage with the ECI and to successfully organize campaigns (Greenwood 2012, Carrara 2012, Hrbek 2012). With this background, the aim of this thesis is to explore the opportunities the ECI offer European citizens' and how these opportunities are turned into usage of the ECI. The ambition is thus to contribute to the understanding of the ECI as a new political opportunity structure in the EU.

Two general research questions have been formulated as the following:

1. *Which are the opportunities that the ECI offer civil actors?*
2. *How do civil actors use these opportunities?*

⁷ The IRI is described as a transnational think-tank dedicated to research and education on modern direct democracy (<http://www.iri-europe.org>).

2 Theoretical Framework

In order to establish a theoretically embedded analytical framework in the exploration of the ECI, I will combine theoretical discussions of participation in the EU. I will begin by describing the concept of Political Opportunity Structures and how its origin in social movement research may contribute to this thesis. Further, the theoretical basis will to a large extent be influenced by the idea of Usage of Europe, a sub-direction within theories of Europeanization. I will therefore summarize the theoretical discussions of Europeanization with special emphasis on civic participation and usage of Europe. In the final part of this chapter the analytical framework will be presented.

2.1 Political Opportunity Structures

The concept of *Political Opportunity Structures* (POS) was coined among social movement theorists referring to social and institutional variables that may affect the development of collective action (Gamson & Meyer 1996: 275). Theories of political opportunity structures emerged in the 1970's in attempts to understand the incentives to the formation of social movements around the world. In 1986, Herbert P. Kitschelt published an influential comparative study of anti-nuclear movements where he described political opportunity structures as "specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization" (1986: 58). These structures Kitschelt claimed, has an impact on the success or the failure of protest movements to develop. POS have since become an established theoretical approach to the study of social movements. The increased attention to civil society and new possibilities for civic participation has further emphasized the contemporary value of the POS framework. Scholars have argued that we are moving towards a "movement society" (Meyer & Tarrow 1997) or "movement world", where democracy and social protest are mutually reinforced expansions (Goldstone 2004: 342), deriving from the claim that democratization and social movements rest on the same idea of ordinary people being politically worthy of consultation. The basis of POS is the view that exogenous factors may enhance or delimit prospects or limitations, for certain arguments or claims to be enhanced, for particular strategies of influence to be used and for movements to influence mainstream institutional politics and policy (Meyer & Minkoff 2004: 1458). POS is thus a wide

understanding of the role of structural features, which is defined in relation to specific contexts. Further, the extent of the POS depends on the identification of the opportunities by interest groups (Eberlein 2012).

The spread of democracy and rights of political access and participation have led to new opportunity structures and non-state actors are more likely to engage in politics. Political developments around the world have also led to the usefulness of the theoretical ideas of POS in other areas than social movements. In discussions of global governance, POS may offer an approach to understand the strategies and actions of a variety of actors. These actors can be traditional social movement groups but also include different types of interest groups or even corporations. The political process in the EU has led to both new opportunities and challenges for political actors in the pursuit of their interests (Börzel & Risse 2003: 58). The EU as an opportunity structure is not uniform; rather the EU has been known to develop multiple opportunity structures (ibid). Sebastiaan Princen and Bart Kerremans (2008) identify two distinct perspectives where the opportunity structures of the EU are either fixed external constraints on interest groups (an exogenous perspective) or the outcome of social and political process in which interest groups themselves participate (an endogenous perspective). The EU can thus either be viewed as a pre-determined POS (although changes may occur) or as a dynamic structural process where interest groups may themselves influence the opportunities.

Studies of POS in the context of the EU often point to the growing trend of interest group activity at the EU level (Thielemann 2002, Beyers 2002, Greenwood 2007, Princen and Kerremans 2008, Poloni-Staudinger, 2008, De Wilde & Zurn 2012). As a response to emerging POS, for example consultative roles, access to participation and engagement in dialogue, national CSO's have reorganized in international groups or networks (Della Porta & Tarrow 2005). Transnational advocacy networks (TANs) are defined as "relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998: 2). TANs are organized to promote common causes, ideas or norms, and they often involve advocating for policy changes. TANs are by many considered to be emerging as a response to new political opportunity structures (Della Porta & Tarrow 2005, Sikkink 2005, Van der Heijden, 2006 etc.). Further, studies of POS highlight the openness of the EU system and the availability of points of access for actors such as national CSO's, regional coalition groups or TAN's.

In research on the EU as political opportunity structure emphasis is often put on resources. Funding is for instance perhaps one of the most obvious forms of opportunities available for CSO's (Sanchez-Salgado 2010). Political alliances of interest groups or "venue shopping" (in short the act of interest groups seeking out the political arena most responsive to their interests) are also themes that have been explored (Ansell & di Palma 2004, Wessels 2004). Studies have also focused on the use of political opportunities by specific interest groups such as environmental organizations (Richardson & Mazey 2001), women's rights groups (Helfferich & Kolb 2001) or immigrant organizations (Scaramuzzino 2012) etc. The political opportunities structures within the EU are intertwined with

characteristics of multi level governance and the ongoing process of integration. The EU consists of several layers and channels where possibilities may arise for actors seeking to influence policy. The political opportunities are therefore depending on the integration process and the institutional developments.

POS may be facilitative for all kinds of participation for civil society actors. Opportunities may open for those actors that have already been included through the civil dialogue, the OMC or other consultative processes. New opportunities may invite outsider groups with no previous experience of participation (Meyer 2004: 130). The dynamic process of integration is therefore crucial to the understanding of the political opportunity structures of the EU, which will be discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Europeanization

The creation and development of the EU has in many ways reshaped the political landscape in Europe. The integration and the ongoing process of harmonization have at least to some extent affected national politics. A theoretical term coined for addressing the occurrence and results of increased European integration is often referred to as *Europeanization*. Europeanization is theoretically thick in its lack of a single indicator and its multidimensional character (Coppedge 1999: 468). There are therefore several definitions and understandings to be found. A general understanding can be explained as a process whereby domestic policies, politics and polities experience change as a result of European integration. A more precise and often cited early definition describes Europeanization as “a process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making” (Ladrecht 1994).

2.2.1 Theoretical directions of Europeanization

Since the mid 1990s, Europeanization has been established as a popular theory and topic within social sciences. Johan P. Olsen (2002) categorizes Europeanization into five different forms; changes in external boundaries, the development of institutions at the European level, the central penetration of national systems of governance, the exporting of forms of political organization, and the political unification project. These different forms of Europeanization have been studied in several different ways. For example, Europeanization can be viewed as both a top-down and a bottom-up process. Early research within the field focused on top down perspectives where changes at the European level led to changes in the national context. These studies were often focused on structural

arrangements and institutional pressure. Within the Europeanization literature there is still much emphasis on top down adaptations, but there are many new directions. Concepts from neo-institutionalism have also been applied to Europeanization theory broadening the understanding of institutional pressures. For instance studies show how domestic actors find ways of using the EU to create "windows of opportunity" through which domestic change can be brought (Olsson Blandy 2010). Other directions within neo-institutionalism such as rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and historical institutionalism have also inspired studies of Europeanization (Bulmer 2007: 50).

Europeanization has become a common approach to the study of policy changes in Europe. Studies have explored the Europeanization of policy areas such as gender equality policy (e.g. Lombardo & Meier 2006, Martinsen Sindbjerg 2007, Olsson Blandy 2010 etc.), environmental policy (e.g. Jordan & Liefferink 2005), economic policy (Hodson & Maher 2001) social policy (Graziano & Vink 2008, Cerami 2008) etc. Studies of Europeanization seldom focus on general tendencies; rather, research in Europeanization is often centered on specific aspects or concepts within the theory. In comparative approaches it is very difficult to establish the effects of Europeanization because of the domestic settings. A common concept is therefore "the misfit model". The misfit model is a way of controlling how changes at the European level fit with what already exists at the domestic level. Poor fit implies strong adaptational pressure; good fit implies weak pressure (Risse et.al 2001: 2).

Perspectives on Europeanization as a bottom up process has led to new understandings of the European integration process introducing concepts such as *Policy Uploading* and *Usage of Europe*. Policy uploading refers to national policy models or rules being inserted into EU-level negotiations (Howell 2002, Börzel & Risse 2003). Research of policy uploading have studied policy developments as a circular process where member states domesticate the EU by uploading national models while they may be "downloading" policy solutions in other areas (Goetz 2002: 4). Research in the area also focuses on the horizontal transfer of ideas and policies between the member states (Burch & Gomez 2003, Howell 2004, Pernicka & Glassner 2012). In this view the EU has a facilitating role providing an arena and mechanisms (for example the OMC) for inter-state transfer. Usage of Europe extends the view of Europeanization by adding the activity of learning. Coping strategies then refer to usages of the EU (Jacquot and Woll 2003). Usage of Europe suggests a focus on actors using elements rather than institutional pressure; this direction will be explored in section 2.3.

Studies have also focused on the normative pressure of the EU institutions through a sub-direction within Europeanization theory called "framing". Framing is explained as the selective representation of social phenomenon and can occur in individual cases (at the domestic level) or be a collective definition of an issue in the EU (Baumgartner & Mahoney 2008, Radulova 2011: 41). The relationship between the formation of a European ideational consensus (framing) and domestic action has been studied through the focus on regional policy (Kohler-Koch 2002). Europeanization has also been a valuable approach to the study of "Normative Power Europe" (Manners 2002, 2008). In this view the normative pressure of the

EU as a political actor and the spread of “European values” is a form of external Europeanization establishing the EU as soft or civilian power.

2.2.2 The Europeanization of Civil Society

In the first chapter of this thesis I have described the ongoing process of institutionalization of organized civil society in the EU. The view of civil society as a means of bridging the democratic deficit has been much debated but often studied through theoretical frameworks of democratic theory, more specifically deliberative democracy or participatory democracy. European civil society research has been an integral part of the debate of participatory governance (Finke 2007). The attention to civil society at the European level has however also led to an increased focus on civil society actors in Europeanization research.

Within the Europeanization literature there are several directions of civil society research. The combination of Europeanization and Democratization theory is a common approach to the study of civil society in candidate countries or countries outside of the union (Obydenkova 2006, Schimmelfennig 2007, Ketola 2011). In these studies Europeanization refers to the normative power of the EU and the category Olsen (2002: 937) defined as the exporting of forms of political organization. These studies often focus on the categories Olsen described as the development of institutions at the European level (2002: 929) and the EU as a political unification project (2002: 940). The focus on the developments of EU institutions and the role of civil society through a Europeanization perspective can create themes like the socializing functions of civil society (Warleigh 2001, Rek 2007), the Europeanization of the civil society discourse (De Schutter 2002, Smismans 2003, Trenz 2007) and the Europeanization of civil society at the member state level (Gray & Statham 2005). Studies focusing on specific themes like the role of CSO's in the promotion of EU social policy (Geyer 2001) or the OMC (e.g. Radaelli 2003, Borrás & Jacobsson 2004, Pochet 2005, Kohler-Koch 2002, Kröger 2006, 2009, Radulova 2011 etc.) have also benefited from theoretical frameworks of Europeanization.

In recent years the literature on the Europeanization of the civil sphere have focused on new channels for participation. Some claim these channels or tools are merely the EU's using of the CSO's to create an illusion of legitimacy (Parau & Bains 2008). Others focus on how the new possibilities of participation and funding have led to new opportunities (and new challenges) for many CSOs. In this view Europeanization is understood as the process of change in both the domestic opportunity structure and at EU level. The change consists of the redistribution of resources and opportunities and empowerment of civil society actors. This direction is of most relevance to this thesis and will be further developed through the concept of Usage of Europe.

2.3 The Usage of Europe

The term *The Usage of Europe* was first introduced by Sophie Jacquot and Cornelia Woll in the article titled "Usage of European Integration - Europeanization from a Sociological Perspective" (2003). In the article, Jacquot and Woll claim Europeanization research is dominated by the focus on structural arrangements viewing institutional incompatibility as the source of pressure for change. Jacquot and Woll were instead interested in the role of political actors and how they choose and learn outside of institutional pressure. The theoretical framework of usage of Europe is thus a contribution to the understanding of Europeanization as a dynamic process less linear and automatic than it is usually portrayed.

Jacquot and Woll focus on two elements of the Europeanization process, the central role of individual actors and the interaction between the micro level of the actor and the macro level of the political institution. Jacquot and Woll define Usage of Europe as: "practices and political interactions which adjust and redefine themselves by seizing the European Union as a set of opportunities, be they institutional, ideological, political or organizational" (2003: 4). Usage of Europe thus focuses on the effects of European integration and specifically the role of actors and their motives of action in the realization of these effects. In order to speak of usage of Europe it is thus important to study the opportunities the European level might offer, the interaction of actors and the consequences of this interaction. Usage in the shape of practices and political interactions creates what Jacquot and Woll refer to as a "context of reciprocal influence" when actors go back and forward from the European level and the national, regional, local or institutional level on which they act. Usage does not automatically imply impact. The results of usage can be both successful and unsuccessful.

Jacquot and Woll categorize Europeanization research along two axes. The first axis is concerned with the analytical level and goes from macro level of the institutional structure of the EU to micro level, the political actor. The second axis consists of approaches based on assumptions from rational choice theory to more sociological approaches. To analyze the focus of different approaches Jacquot and Woll combined rational institutionalism and sociological institutionalism with both analytical levels leading to a typology of usage, see table 1 below.

Table 1 The Impact of European Integration (Jacquot & Woll 2003).

	Rational Institutionalism	Sociological Institutionalism
Macro / Institutional structure	EU institutions exert pressures on national institutions and actors.	EU Institutions influence the construction of identities and interests of national and transnational actors.
Micro / Actor	Actors facing institutional challenges or opportunities react through strategic interaction.	Actors respond to institutional change through normative and cognitive adaptation.

On the macro level, traditional research within Europeanization focuses on the pressure and the influence of the EU institutions. Jacquot and Woll claim the micro level has been overseen in previous research and usage of Europe is an approach to understanding the bottom two quadrants. The combination of these dimensions leads Jacquot and Woll to the view of usage of Europe as a gradual process where strategic interaction through repetition will eventually lead to normative and cognitive adaptation changing the behavior and the social position of the actor. Three types of usage are identified according to their functionality namely: strategic usage, cognitive usage and legitimizing usage. Strategic usage is described as the transformation of resources offered by the EU with the intention of pursuing a certain goal. The usage is strategic in the sense that the goal is defined and the pursuit is consciously made. The motives of actors engaging in strategic usage can be to influence policy decisions, increase capacity of an institution or organization, gain insight in political processes etc. Strategic usage is the most common of the three forms and applicable to both governmental and non-governmental actors at all political levels. An example of strategic usage could be national CSOs engaging in EU level networks in order to benefit from for example funding opportunities. Cognitive usage covers the interpretation of a political subject. The cognitive usage of the EU is explained as the diffusion of specific ideas leading to a mindset or a framework for the understanding and deliberation of a subject. Cognitive usage is a means for persuasion in for instance a policy process. Cognitive usage is available to actors that are active in a deliberative context. Examples of cognitive usage are found in ideas that have been transformed to EU vocabulary for example, social economy or the principle of subsidiarity. Legitimizing usage is a combination of strategy and cognitive framing in the ambition of reaching legitimacy. Jacquot and Woll give the example of national politicians using European rhetoric to justify national policies (Jacquot & Woll 2003, 2004, Woll & Jacquot 2009).

The application of usages may seem more evident in soft law areas but are also of importance in other contexts of European politics. Judiciary strategies and the procedure for parliamentary transposition are hard elements of European integration that could be studied through their usage framework (Jacquot & Woll 2003: 6). Usage depends on opportunities that actors can seize.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The theoretical discussions I have presented in this chapter will all contribute to the understanding of how European civil actors may perceive and use opportunities of the ECI. With the research questions seeking to understand the opportunities that the ECI offer, the theory of POS is an evident contribution. The transnational European nature of the ECI also leads to a natural inclusion of

Europeanization theory. POS in combination with Europeanization can be seen as incorporated theoretical backgrounds of Usage of Europe. Further, the usage of Europe offers a bridge to the theoretical foundations of POS and Europeanization. This is also how the analytical framework will be designed in this thesis.

The identification of opportunities is an essential part of the understanding of usage. In order to speak of usage, actors must have identified the opportunity. In this sense, the first research question is overarching the second question and the analysis of the ECI, as a POS is the basis for the understanding of usage. Both POS and Europeanization are diffuse theoretical frameworks that require contextual conceptualization. This may be both the strength and weakness of this analytical framework. The combination of POS, Europeanization and the Usage of Europe may however contribute to a deeper understanding of both the macro level opportunity (the ECI) and the micro level usage (civil actors).

These discussions have led to the creation of the analytical framework of this thesis see table 2 below.

Table 2: The Analytical Framework

Europeanization			
Political Opportunity Structure	Usage of Europe		
	Strategic usage	Cognitive usage	Legitimizing usage
The European Citizens' Initiative			
<i>Which are the opportunities that the ECI offer civil actors?</i>		<i>How do civil actors use these opportunities?</i>	

3 Methodology

In order to reach an in-depth understanding of the ECI as an opportunity and element of usage, this study will be designed as a single case study. The case of the ECI will be explored through a within case comparison. This study was conducted through a triangulation of methods using content analysis, survey research and interviews. In this chapter I will describe the within case comparative approach and the different strategies that were employed in the collection of material and the analysis. Finally I will discuss the implications this methodological framework had on the results of the study.

3.1 The Case of the ECI

Defining a case or a selection of cases can be difficult because they may be framed as an instance of several different classes of events. The choice of how to place a case is (along with the theoretical framework) is determining for the next steps of material collection and analytical strategies (George & Bennet 2005: 18). A citizens' initiative is not a new or a unique idea, the concept has existed for a long time in a variety of versions. It could be argued that the ECI is a case of citizens' initiatives or of direct democracy instruments and indeed that is true (and the ECI was recently compared to national initiatives by Víctor Cuesta López, 2012). Placing the ECI in this population of initiatives would however have been problematic. The ECI is the only transnational citizens' initiative of its kind and scope and regardless of its efficiency or value, it is unique. Therefore, I will place the ECI among the other institutional arrangements aimed at increasing legitimacy by participation in the EU. In the introductory chapter of this thesis I have outlined the attention to civil society in the EU and the institutional developments of inclusion of civil society actors. The ECI is an extension of these developments. It would have been interesting to select some of these arrangements or instruments and compare the opportunities they actually offer civil society. These would-be cases are different in form, legal nature, scope and age, which would be reflected in both the material available and in previous research. In practice such a study would suffer from low validity.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the ECI, which is (at this time) best done

through a single case design. Further, this study may contribute to the empirical value of the theoretical framework at stake. Single case studies are often criticized for their risk of incorrect inferences (due to measurement error), the risk of indeterminacy if several explanations are possible and the inability of producing generalizable results (George & Bennet 2005:32, Coppedge 1999: 497). In order to avoid the first risks of empirical weakness, I will conduct a within case comparison. The methodological strategies that will be described further on will strengthen the validity of the results. Further, the ambition is not to be able to generalize the results outside of the case context. Rather it is to produce in-depth and specific knowledge.

3.2 A Within Case Comparison

With any ambition of discussing the process of Europeanization, a comparative approach is well suited. Because of the broad understanding of Europeanization, it is through the empirical research we can understand the dynamics at play that are often best illustrated through comparison. The effects of the EU and the impact of new channels for participation are examples of "real world problems", where comparative research can act as an important bridge between theory and practice (George & Bennet 2005: 265). Because the ECI is a tool aimed at the civil sphere, the societal value of the results may be high. Further, as the ambition of the study is based on the understanding of the EU as a POS and of Usage of Europe, a comparative approach may contribute to achieve high conceptual validity (George & Bennet 2005: 19, Adcock & Collier 2001). In order to conduct a within case study of the ECI I will treat existing initiatives as analytically equivalent phenomena (George & Bennet 2005: 19). At the time of writing, 22 initiatives have been launched at the official ECI website.⁸ In the introduction I mentioned that several pilot initiatives were launched before the official introduction of the ECI. In 2010 the Green European Foundation published *The European Citizens' Initiative Handbook* (main author was Bruno Kaufmann) mapping out 25 pilot initiatives launched between the years 2004-2009. The experience of these pilot initiatives may be valuable to the understanding of the ECI and they may also compensate for the relatively short experience of the official ECIs. The ambition was therefore to include all pilot initiatives and official ECIs in a comparative study. In reality this proved very difficult as many of the pilot initiatives had inactive websites and no contact details were available. In order to include all initiatives this study would have to rely on previous research and reports, which would have endangered a systematic comparison. The total population was therefore limited to the access to primary sources of information (texts, websites or contact persons). Out of the 25 pilot initiatives 13 could be included in the selection leading to a total population of 35 initiatives, a list can be found in Appendix A.

⁸ By official ECIs I mean the all initiatives that have been received by the Commission.

Because of the nature of the research questions, all of these initiatives and their experiences are valuable. In order to make a selection of cases it could have been plausible to study only the pilot initiatives. It would however have been difficult to ensure the validity of the study using this selection as no official requirements had been established at their time of launch. Another possibility would have been to look only at the initiatives with official status. This would have led to methodological challenges of comparing ongoing initiatives in the different stages of the ECI and to treat the categories according to their status (active, rejected or withdrawn) would have been difficult with such a small sample. The ECI invites all European citizens to launch an initiative. The initiatives are therefore very varied in scope, theme and organizers/sponsors ranging from politicians, the German Catholic church to the European Esperanto Union. Selecting only a few initiatives would thus lead to a highly contextual result. Because the organizers are so varied it would be difficult to make a purposeful selection. Some of these actors have not been engaged in the civil sphere before and there is little research to support the categorization of such a wide group of actors. In order to be able to answer the research questions with empirical support it was thus best to include as many cases as possible.

3.3 A Combined Methodological Strategy

The methodological framework was designed based on “triangulation”. Triangulation implies applying both quantitative and qualitative approaches independently and combining the interpretation of results (Denzin 1978). The importance of greater integration of methodological approaches in the social sciences has been an ongoing academic debate (e.g. Achen & Snidal 1989, Tarrow 1995, Bennet 2002, Lieberman 2005). Triangulation and mixed method designs have proven to provide pragmatic advantages in exploring complex research questions (Lieberman 2005, Loehnert 2010). A triangulation strategy provides the possibility of letting statistical analysis guide case selection for in-depth research. The qualitative analysis can be used to assess the plausibility of observed statistical relationships between variables, to generate theoretical insights and to develop better measurement strategies (Lieberman 2005). The combination of results for interpretation is a means of putting “qualitative flesh on quantitative bones” (Tarrow 1995: 473). The analytic process of a combined method strategy can however be complex, time consuming, and expensive. It was therefore important to plan thoroughly and consider the value of a combined methodological strategy for this study carefully. Several factors influenced the decision to use triangulation: the recent introduction of the ECI, the variation among the initiatives (both in terms of status and scope) and results of previous research. Previous research of the ECI has predominantly focused on the legal dimensions, democracy dimensions or the involvement of specific groups (politicians or CSOs). In order to give well-supported answers to the research questions, all of these dynamics are at play. A strategy of triangulation was therefore chosen to capture both general and specific tendencies and allow the

variation of the initiatives to become a resource rather than a constraint.

The study was conducted in three steps. The first step was a content analysis. The results of the content analysis created an overview of the initiatives and assisted the understanding of the ECI as a POS. The second step was a survey aiming to understand the experiences and the ambitions of initiative organizers. The third and final step was interviews aimed at producing in-depth knowledge. These steps have been integrated with the analytical framework in the below table 3.

Table 3: The Methodological Strategy

Europeanization			
Political Opportunity Structure	Usage of Europe		
	Strategic usage	Cognitive usage	Legitimizing usage
The European Citizens' Initiative			
<i>Which are the opportunities that the ECI offer civil actors?</i>		<i>How do civil actors use these opportunities?</i>	
Step 1: Content Analysis Step 2: Survey Step 3: Interviews			

The content analysis will act as a first approach to the research question and provide a description of the basic characteristics of the initiatives. The survey will address the perception of opportunity and usage of the representatives and finally the results of the content analysis and the survey will be explored through interviews. Each of these steps will be described in the following sections.

3.3.1 Content Analysis

A content analysis is a structured way of collecting and organizing a given material. By classifying textual material it is reduced to more relevant and manageable data (Krippendorff 1980). The standardized format allows the creation of inferences about the characteristics and the meaning of the material. There are no systematic rules or procedure for analyzing data in a content analysis; the key feature is the classification of text into much smaller content categories (Weber 1990). The aim of the content analysis was to provide a manageable overview of the initiatives and the coding scheme was therefore designed with an ambition of reaching quantitative results.

The coding units (the material) used for the analysis consisted of the official statement of each initiative. The material varied in form but were similar content (e.g. background, mission statement, campaign information etc.) The initiatives were written in different European languages but most of them had an English

translation. The ones that did not (3 initiatives) were translated into English.⁹ The content analysis was conducted by a thorough reading of the texts while asking questions according to a coding scheme¹⁰. The coding scheme is divided in four parts, policy categories, initiative ambition categories and initiative status categories and initiative representative professional fields. In cases where an initiative could be placed in more than one category, the category that was most suitable was chosen.

The material was coded depending on the policy area they target. On the official website of the EU, the active policy areas of the union is divided in 13 groups namely, 1) agriculture, fisheries and food, 2) business, 3) culture, education and sport, 4) customs and tax, 5) development and humanitarian aid, 6) economy and finance, 7) employment and social affairs, 8) enlargement of the EU and foreign affairs, 9) environment and energy, 10) justice and citizens' rights, 11) regions and local development, 12) science and technology, 13) transport (http://europa.eu/pol/index_en.htm). These categories were used to determine the initiatives targeted policy area. All of these areas are explained on the Commission's website by overviews and references to legislation. Coding the initiatives was thus based on this information. The alternative "other" was included to facilitate any initiative that may not be aimed at policy or at an existing policy area. The policy area categories aimed to understanding if the POS of the ECI was related to certain policy areas. It was also interesting to consider this category in combination with other categories. For instance, are actors in a certain professional field more likely to see opportunities in specific policy areas? One difficulty that arose with this category was how to consider the Commission's demand that an ECI must fall under fields where the Commission has the power to propose legislation. Some of the initiatives were rejected with reference to this guideline. It could therefore be argued that the rejected initiatives could not be placed within these categories. The rejected initiatives could however be placed in the broad policy areas but could still be distinguished through the initiative status category.

The initiative ambition categories are based on the aim to influence policy. The categories have been created based in the ambitions of policy change, policy innovation, proposed policy support, proposed policy rejection, policy removal or other. This category was created with the ambition of understanding the opportunities the actors behind initiatives consider the ECI to offer. For instance, is the ECI considered to be a tool for influencing the political agenda or do actors engage with the ECI as an opportunity to respond to policy proposals?

The initiative status categories refer to the status of the initiatives as either pilot, registered, rejected or withdrawn. These categories were already known and not a result of the coding. On its own, this category offers no analytical insight but these categories were added in order to control the results of the other categories.

⁹ All three initiatives without English translations were written in French. I translated these myself.

¹⁰ The Coding scheme can be viewed in Appendix B.

The regulations of the ECI state that only a citizen's committee can launch an initiative. Pilot initiatives were often organized by organizations and previous research has suggested that CSOs or political parties may be particularly likely to engage with the ECI (Greenwood 2012, Hrbek 2012). As these previous studies have focused on only a group of initiatives it would be interesting to produce a larger systematic overview of the different actors engaging with the ECI. Again because of the new regulation such a comparison is difficult to conduct and it is often difficult to establish the organizers behind a citizens' committee. In order to still account for the different actors engaging with the ECI, the professional fields of the initiative representatives was studied. The categories were based on the findings of previous research and divided according to: civil society field, political field, academic field, corporate field and an alternative for other groups labeled "other". Only the formal representative was included and not the other members in the citizens' committee. It was at times difficult to place the representatives in the respective categories. For instance several of the representatives had academic titles (PhD or professor) but were also civil society leaders. In these cases I tried to determine their professional role or their source of income. The political field and the corporate field were easier to distinguish; these persons were members of parliament (at the European, national or regional level) or CEOs at large corporations. It would have been ideal to be able to trace all the organizations, political parties or corporations that have been active in the initiatives but since such a study was not possible at this time, the result of these categories may act as an indication of a theme that could be further explored in the future.

There is little room for interpretation in the categories available in the coding scheme. The material at hand had a common context and the amount of texts was manageable. There was therefore little risk of subjective interpretation and low reliability (Weber 1990, Krippendorff 2004: 215). The Content analysis could thus provide a reliable first overview of the initiatives.

3.3.2 A Survey

Surveys provide systematic observations through fixed sets of questions that can be administered in different ways. The population of 35 initiatives was chosen based on the possibility of finding material for a systematic textual comparison. With the ambition of conducting a survey, this selection proved more difficult. Although the background information was obtained for all of these initiatives it was difficult to find contact details.¹¹ Finding the contact details for the representatives was a lengthy process of requesting information from the involved organizations. Many of these initiatives are organized on voluntarily basis and representatives often have full time jobs. The survey was sent to a total number of

¹¹ Some of the pilot initiatives dated back to 2004 and the representatives were no longer in the same organization or role. The email addresses found in the material were often invalid.

32 representatives. Out of these 32; the response rate was 68% (22 responses). Despite the fact that the representatives of pilot and rejected initiatives were much more difficult to get a hold of, this does not seem to have had an impact on the response rate. The respondents gave answers to all questions with the exception of the final part of the survey concerned with results. Two of the respondents felt it was too early to give a response. The non-response analysis however revealed that very few women participated (a majority of the initiatives were represented by men but there was still a notable lack of female respondents) and few of the most recent initiatives (launched in October or November 2012) responded. As this thesis does not have the ambition of a gender based analysis and it is likely that the recently launched initiatives had gained little experience so far, the non-response analysis did not pose any problems. The response rate was considered as acceptable.

The survey was designed as an Internet based self-completion survey. The survey was sent by e-mail to one respondent per initiative and administered using Google Forms. The targeted respondents were the official representatives of the initiatives. In cases where this person was unable to respond, the use of proxies (meaning the target respondent has someone else answer the questions for them) was accepted if this person was listed in the citizens' committee. This selection of respondents was motivated through the wish of avoiding overlapping responses, responses outside the population and with the aim of gaining key actor insight. Each of the respondents was sent an email informing them of this study and why they had been selected to participate in the survey. In cases of no response, two reminders followed, the first (where possible) by telephone and the second by email.

The survey consists of objective questions, general in the sense that they ask neutral questions of a descriptive nature and subjective questions collecting information of values, opinions and attitudes. Because this survey was based on self-completion and because the respondents were professional and busy with other engagements it was important to keep the survey short. In this study the survey therefore benefits from the complementary content analysis (where descriptive basic information is found) and the following interviews (providing an opportunity to gain in-depth insight). The questions of the survey were therefore chosen to target the variety of actors and their experiences and attitudes towards the ECI.

The survey was designed in three parts.¹² The questions were formulated based on the theoretical framework. The first part was titled "My general understanding of the prospects of the ECI" where the respondents rate their agreement with general statements of the opportunities and the constraints offered by the ECI. These questions aimed to discover the POS. The second part "My

¹² Before the survey was sent to the respondents, the survey form and questions were presented and discussed at a seminar. The discussions and the feedback from the seminar participants led to the rewriting of questions that had been criticized for using specialist terms.

experience of the initiative that I represent/represented” consists of statements of the experience of the ECI. These questions aimed to discover dimensions of usage. The final part ” Comments or experiences I would like to add” is an open question where the respondent may reflect freely. The survey can be viewed in Appendix C.

The survey aimed to produce both quantitative and qualitative results. The questions of the general understanding of the ECI and the usage of the ECI were designed with a scale answers (1-5). These were translated in descriptive statistics. Further, the survey had several open-ended questions resulting in qualitative data. The survey was available in English only, which may have affected the result. Some of the respondents asked for explanations of some of the statements before completing the survey. In these cases an explanation of the nature of the question was given along with a brief description of how they should think when replying. The linguistic barrier did however not appear to be a great obstacle and all the respondents had a workable knowledge of English or access to translation services.

3.3.3 Interviews

In a third and final step, interviews were conducted. The interviews were the last part of the data collection process and had the ambition of deepening the understanding of the material and the results that had already been collected through the content analysis and through the survey. Interviews are a valuable qualitative approach because they may obtain thoroughly tested knowledge through careful questioning and listening. There are few standard procedures of conducting research interviews. In the study at hand, the interviews were a final methodological step, which had several implications on the design of the interview. Firstly the aim of the interviews was to gain in-depth knowledge and deepen the understanding of phenomena that had already been observed. The results of the previous parts pointed to perception of certain opportunities of a variation of actors with different ambitions. The content analysis and the survey revealed that certain professional groups were common among the representatives and that some of these groups were engaging in different forms of usage. Further, the variation in target policy areas, thus the different causes the initiatives sought to promote presented different directions that could have relevance to the results. The interviewees were therefore chosen to represent and offer insight in this variation. The interviewees represent initiatives with different status, different policy categories and different professional fields. All the interviewees had perceived opportunities in relation to the ECI and had engaged in different forms of usage.

A semi structured interview format was chosen to allow a predetermined structure with open-ended questions and informal probing. The semi-structured interview is often organized through an interview guide rather than specific questions (Devine 2002: 198-199). The design of the interview guide was based

on the research questions and on the empirical findings of the previous research steps.¹³ Despite of this well-informed background, the interview guide could contribute to a dynamic interview where new insights could arise rather than only confirm what had already been observed. The selection of interviewees was based on the results of the content analysis and survey. Only the initiatives that were part of both could thus be selected. The interviews were however limited in number, in part due to the fact that substantial material has already been collected but also due to lack of time. The selection of interviewees was strategic and could avoid a selection bias, which is often difficult to do in a comparative context (George & Bennet 2005: 22-23). Four of the interviews were conducted in English and one in Swedish. The interviews were conducted using Skype, telephone or email. It would have been preferable to conduct personal interviews given the increased possibility of reading and interpreting a situation. The choice of interviews using these mediums was however made because of the geographical distance and time limitation at hand. The initiative representatives are located in several different countries in Europe. Traveling to all locations would have been both time-consuming and costly. Further, almost all of the representatives of the initiatives have other professional occupations. It would therefore have been difficult to arrange personal meetings. Interviews conducted via telephone allowed direct interaction and could maintain a high quality of the interviews while still being flexible and effective in terms of time and cost. The email interviewees were conducted when a Skype or telephone interview was impossible to arrange. The two email interviews did not allow for spontaneous probing but all the themes in the interview guide were covered and these interviews had the benefit that the interviews attached more information and references to the understanding of their experiences. Further, all the interviewees had official roles and were used to participation in interviews, the responses in email interviews were therefore well elaborated.

The length of the interviews varied between 30 minutes and 70 minutes, the email interviews also produced rather long transcripts. The Skype and phone interviews were recorded using a digital recording device upon the consent of the interviewees and later transcribed.

3.4 Methodological Reflections

The triangulation of methods in this study proved a useful way to gather empirical data despite of the recent introduction of the ECI. The content analysis and the survey captured patterns of perception of opportunity and of usage; these results led to a strategic selection of interviewees that could further reveal the dynamics at play. The integrated analysis of the study showed the benefits of triangulation

¹³ The interview guide can be viewed in Appendix D.

in social science research. The content analysis and the survey would have offered very descriptive analyses on their own, and the interviews would likely have offered a more general understanding without the initial results of the content analysis and survey to guide the questions. The descriptive results of the content analysis and the survey were in line with previous research results, which can be read as a sign of validity. The integration of methods proved very valuable when conducting the interviews as I had already acquired a certain level of understanding of the ECI and of the initiatives when the interviewees were contacted. This also meant that the questions could be selected to explore the previous results and gain deeper knowledge.

The material available for the content analysis presented a great variety in length, scope and even form. While most of the initiatives were textual documents with a similar structure, some initiatives were presented only through a twitter account, a Facebook group or YouTube video. The initiative did however share a context that made it possible to use the coding scheme. The problem however arose in the following step when the survey was to be sent to all representatives. Finding contact details that were up to date was difficult, time consuming and as I have stated before three of them could never be found. Some of the representatives had actively asked the Commission to remove their contact information from rejected initiatives, some had changed their names and some did not wish to be associated with the initiatives any longer.

Further, getting the respondents to participate in the survey was a challenge and it was often not until a personal contact had been established (by phone or by a probing email) that the respondents agreed to participate. Contact was established with many of the respondents that did not respond but they were unable to find the time to complete the survey. Many of the representatives are engaged in the initiatives solely on a voluntary basis and therefore had little time to answer questions. This became an issue while conducting the interviews. Some of the interviewees were never able to find the time for a phone interview, they were however kind enough to participate in email interviews. The quality of the interviews in terms of the information gathered varied slightly but maintained high quality according to the interview guide. The interviewees had five different nationalities and a certain level of cultural sensitivity was important both when establishing the contact and when conducting the interview. The cultural difference and the linguistic barrier did however not pose a problem in the interviews nor did it affect the outcome of the analysis.

4 Analysis

In this chapter the results of the study are analyzed according to the research questions. The chapter will begin with a brief discussion of how the background theories of POS and Europeanization have contributed to an understanding of the ECI. Further, three areas of opportunities that were uncovered by the analysis will be presented, the ECI as a step towards direct democracy, the opportunity of influencing the policy process and the opportunity the ECI offers as a stepping-stone. Each area is discussed in relation to the research questions; the identification of opportunity and the usage of the ECI. The results of the three parts of the study will be discussed starting with the quantitative findings of the content analysis and/or the survey.¹⁴ The results will then be further explored through the qualitative findings; the open answers in the survey and/or the interviews. The analysis thus follows the methodological strategy of adding qualitative depth to the quantitative descriptions. This chapter's final section deals with the constraints of the ECI and suggests how these may deepen the understanding of the results of this study.

4.1 Understanding the ECI, the role of POS and Europeanization

The work with this thesis departed from the assumption that the ECI could be viewed as new political opportunity structure, an institutional result of European integration. The decision to use the theoretical lens of *Usage of Europe* led to the understanding of *POS* and *Europeanization* as prerequisite theoretical discussions. Both *POS* and *Europeanization* are incorporated in *Usage of Europe* but were still specifically related to the case of the ECI. I will therefore begin this analysis with a brief discussion of the role of these theoretical directions in this study and present some of the results that are to be treated as background the analysis.

The ECI is political in nature and is indeed an opportunity structure in the sense that initiatives have been launched (hence opportunities have been seized) with reference to 11.4 ever since 2004 (8 years before the official establishment). The ECI is a result of European integration and the opportunities it entails can be considered as effects of Europeanization along with previous institutional

¹⁴ All the results of the survey that will be discussed in this chapter are presented in Appendix E.

developments. Previous research on the EU as a POS have either considered it as a pre-determined POS where actors identify the opportunities and then engage with the existing opportunities or as a structural process where interest groups may themselves influence the opportunities (Princen & Kerremans 2008). These academic discussions are interesting to consider in relation the ECI.

Firstly, it can be discussed when a POS is established or when a Europeanization process begins. The process of establishing the ECI has been long and has engaged a variety of actors and political levels in Europe. Europeanization is a multi-leveled process and it can be difficult to separate forces of Europeanization from effects of Europeanization. The ECI could be considered as both a result of Europeanization and as a driving force of Europeanization. Similarly if we speak of an official venue, policy or institution, a POS is a predetermined set of opportunities that in the case of the ECI was introduced in April 2012. If on the other hand we approach the concept of a POS with a wider understanding, a POS may be created at its first mentioning in debates, in the process of legislation or in a pilot phase. The understanding of a POS is then extended to a discursive reference. In the case of the ECI, this would mean that the POS was introduced many years ago. These discussions became important in the analysis of the results of this study. Ignoring the process of establishment of the ECI could lead to serious misunderstandings. The ECI has offered discursive opportunities for many years and those opportunities influenced how the formal and more practical opportunities have been designed, are portrayed and perceived by different actors in the EU.

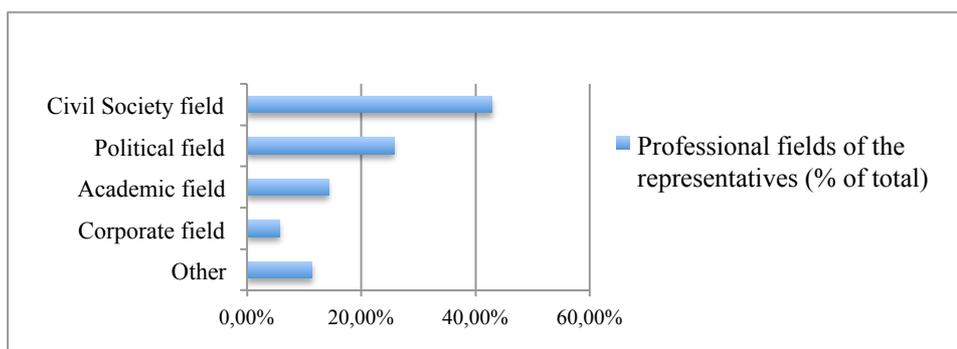
Studies of POS have often been focused on civil society actors or social movements and the ECI differs in the sense that it is difficult to find a common definition of the audience or the potential users of the POS. An important part of identifying a POS and pointing out specific opportunities is to understand the public. A POS is created when an audience perceives the political opportunities. The audience facing the ECI as a new POS may identify it as either a predetermined structure or may seek to influence the opportunities it could potentially offer. The content analysis revealed the composition of professional fields among the representatives. This result should be understood as a background to both opportunity and usage. Chart 1 below describes the division of professional fields.¹⁵ Like previous research has implied, many of the representatives had professional careers within the civil society field. A substantial group of representatives were professional politicians. There was also a notable group active within academia and in the corporate field. In the category for “other” all the professional fields that did not make up a group were placed. The composition within these fields was varied. Some of the representatives had careers in European politics; Brussels based organizations or European research

¹⁵ It was at times difficult to place the representatives in the categories, for instance several of the representatives had academic titles but were also civil society leaders. In these cases I tried to determine their source of income. A person with a PhD serving as the director of a large CSO would be placed in the civil society field whereas a professor active in a CSO but holding an official role at a university or research institute would be placed in the academic field.

institutes while others had little experience outside the national contexts. The variation points to a need to consider the ECI as both a force and a result of Europeanization. Many of the civil actors had been involved in the very creation of the ECI, an Europeanization process. Among the representatives of the initiatives were professional groups (e.g. regional politicians, journalists previously active on the national level only, teachers, etc.) with little previous experience of European politics. This speaks of a Europeanizing effect of the ECI.

Further, the composition of actors did indeed seem to have significance to the perception and usage of the ECI, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Chart 1: Professional Fields of the Representatives



4.2 A Step Towards Direct Democracy

The official launch of the ECI in April 2012 was much anticipated in the European civil sphere. For many, this was the goal of a very long process of discussions, consultations and legal drafts. Advocates for more influences of direct democracy embraced the idea of a citizens' initiative hoping it would bring citizens more influence in the European policy process. The very idea of a European citizens' initiative became an opportunity to seize.

4.2.1 Identifying the Opportunity

The results of the survey showed that many of the respondents viewed the ECI as a new opportunity for civil participation. 95% of the respondents agreed that the ECI provides opportunities as a new channel for civil participation.¹⁶ 66% of the

¹⁶ Henceforth when I speak of agreeing responses I am referring to the combined percentage of respondents in the categories "strongly agree" or "agree" in the survey.

respondents agreed that the ECI would be an opportunity for new civil actors to participate in the policy process. These statements are both concerned with the ECI as a democratic development. The process of drafting the ECI was centered on the democratic potential of the ECI. Through the creation of a citizens' initiative in the EU, politicians spoke of institutional measures for participatory democracy (Greenwood 2012: 325). The fact that a majority of the respondents also believed the ECI to open the door for participation of new civil actors speak of how the opportunities of the ECI may differ from the previous consultations and inclusions of civil society. The ECI is a new POS in the sense that it is (at least in theory) open to all European citizens and offer the chance of proposing policy rather than reacting on proposed policy. In this sense the ECI can be characterized as a POS for participatory democracy.

The anticipation of the ECI as participatory tool was further understood through the open questions in the survey. To some, the level of participation the ECI may encourage is a step in the right direction and may offer an opportunity for further democratic developments in the EU. Some of the respondents indicated that this opportunity had been identified several years ago and that they had actively been working towards a participatory design of the ECI or even enhancements to direct democracy. For them, the idea of a citizens' initiative in Europe was a tangible opportunity to influence the very political organization of the EU. One of the respondents described his involvement stating *"I used to be one of the main stakeholders in the process of bringing the ECI into European legal reality and I have been doing a lot of transnational campaigning and activism"*(Survey, open question). Several respondents added comments relating the ECI to direct democracy, one suggested, *"ECI is the original citizens' voice, a form of direct democracy that EU needs very much"*(Survey, open question).

The largest professional field identified by the content analysis was civil society. In this field, many of the representatives had backgrounds within organizations or institutes focused on promoting democracy. During the interviews it became clear that these organizations have been part of the process of establishing the ECI and the initiatives they have launched were meant to draw attention to the democratic potential of the ECI and to improve its design. Carsten Berg, director of the ECI Campaign is one of the advocates for the ECI as a democratic development.¹⁷ Berg's advocacy started in the context of the Young European Federalists (JEF) and he later participated in the Convention on the Future of Europe as representative for Mehr Demokratie, a large non-party organization (NPO) promoting democracy in the EU. During the Convention, Berg and many others were actively engaged in the lobbying for a European citizen's initiative:

"One goal was to reflect and work for the inclusion of direct democracy within the constitutional texts and then the second point was to have direct democracy

¹⁷ The ECI Campaign is a grassroots coalition of democracy advocates involving over 120 European NGOs (<http://www.citizens-initiative.eu/>).

about the constitutional convention, to have a public vote on the constitutional texts. So we were actually campaigning for participatory and direct democracy in the Constitutional Convention”(Interview, Carsten Berg 20 November 2012).

For Berg, the ECI is a step towards direct democracy. Organizations and politicians had discovered the opportunity of an ECI as a democratic development before and during the Convention. The organizations mentioned here (the ECI Campaign, JEF, Mehr Demokratie) are only a fraction of the actors that were involved in the campaigning, lobbying and the consultation process predating the formal launch of the ECI.

In the interviews, discussions of further developments of the ECI were often expressed with regards to a European referendum. To some this would be a welcome development. Klaus Sambor, the representative for an initiative titled Universal Basic Income (UBI) described his hopes for the future of the ECI as the following:

“The ECI is a very big instrument, a positive instrument. We want to elaborate it to a European referendum so that the citizen’s fully can decide for themselves what they want” (Interview, Klaus Sambor 26 November 2012).

Another group had identified the direct democratic opportunities of the ECI and discussions of enhancements but were opposed to such a development. Instead they expressed a fear that the ECI would be “hijacked” by advocates for direct democracy. For instance, the editor of the Oneseat Initiative campaign and member of the Swedish liberal party (Folkpartiet) Anders Manell stated:

“Some of these organizations and actors are obsessed with the idea of a referendum and direct democracy. For us politicians this is not of great importance, in fact we do not want referendums” (Interview, Anders Manell 06 December 2012).

This is a rather expected standpoint of professional politicians in representative democracies. The fact that this representative had identified this opportunity of developments towards direct democracy and how certain actors have framed the ECI does however indicate that this is indeed an identified opportunity.

The idea of direct democracy is central to the discussions of the ECI and an important part of the perception of the opportunities the ECI offer. To some, the ECI is a step in the right direction that should or even must be enhanced. To others it is a successful democratic innovation. The opportunities in relation to democracy does not seem to be perceived as predetermined or fixed, the ability to influence the development of the opportunity itself appears appealing to some of the representatives.

4.2.2 Usage of the ECI as a means towards Direct Democracy

The democratic opportunities that the ECI offer have been transformed to usage. In the most notable cases, using the ECI as a means towards direct democracy was a *strategic* endeavor. The survey revealed that a majority (72%) of the respondents had engaged with the ECI in order to discover its potential as a new participatory tool. The agreeing responses came from all professional fields signaling a curiosity among the different actors. It is not likely that all of these respondents wished to discover the ECIs potential as a step towards direct democracy. Rather, they wished to discover and evaluate the ECI as a means to participate in the policy process, perhaps with little ambition of democratic development. The statement does however still suggest that the usage is strategic in the sense that discovering a potential is an intended goal.

Some of the respondents signaled that their initiative had *legitimizing* value. Legitimizing usage is the most complex and specific form of usage as it includes a mix of both strategy and cognitive framing (Jacquot and Woll 2003: 7). In the survey 19% agreed that the initiative they represented was launched as a way to justify the need for their work, organization or movement. Among these respondents were the representatives of the initiatives aiming to promote the ECI. The purpose of legitimizing usage is perhaps why the actors did not seek to influence the implementation solely by lobbying policy makers. The legitimizing usage of the ECI could strengthen their position.

The interviews developed understanding of usage and offered more support to the predominance of strategic usage in relation to the ECI as a step towards direct democracy. After the ECI had been drafted in 2006, Berg and the ECI Campaign launched an initiative titled “the Initiative for the Initiative”. Like the title implies the initiative was aimed towards creating a campaign around the ECI itself. The initiative was organized by a coalition of NGOs and student associations proposing that the ECI procedure should be implemented with citizen-friendly rules. The ECI campaign is still active and act as a “watchdog” of the ECI. The ECI campaign is also in regular communication with decision makers within the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. They organize events, participate in hearings and continue to encourage citizens to get involved in advocating for citizen-friendly implementing regulations for the ECI (<http://www.citizens-initiative.eu/>). In August 2012 another initiative aimed at improving the ECI was launched titled ‘Central public online collection platform for the European Citizen Initiative’. The fact that these campaigns were initiated is perhaps not so remarkable, but it is interesting to consider that these ambitions of enhancing the opportunity structures are pursued within the ECI itself using the existing guidelines and regulations. It could have been assumed that efforts to change and improve the ECI would have been directed directly at the Commission or the EP through lobbying or recommendations rather than attempting to mobilize the support of one million citizens that would lead to an official hearing. Instead, the representatives of these initiatives engaged in usage of the very opportunity they aim to influence. These actors are actively engaging with the ECI seeking to change the opportunities

from within the current opportunity structure. This form of usage is strategic in a sense that the goal is clearly defined and sought after using the material elements of launching initiatives. Considering the results of the survey with regards to legitimizing usage, the initiatives discussed above were both represented in the agreeing responses indicating legitimizing usage. Further, the attraction of attention to the ECI as an opportunity for direct democracy (which was revealed in 4.1.1) is also a form of framing, *cognitive* usage. By spreading the understanding of the ECI as a step towards direct democracy these organizations are engaging with cognitive usage of the ECI. Both the legitimizing and the cognitive usage in this case depart from a strategic ambition of using the ECI to promote democratic developments in the EU. Seizing the ECI as a means towards direct democracy is therefore essentially a strategic action.

The opportunity of using the ECI to promote participatory or even direct democratic ideals in the EU is a good example of the interaction between the macro level and the micro level in a Europeanization process. Representatives are engaging in learning activities and using the opportunities of the ECI to influence the future of the ECI itself.

4.3 Influencing the Policy Process

The perceived opportunity of exercising influence in the policy process through the engagement with the ECI was an anticipated result. The Commission describes the ECI as an opportunity for EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies (<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative>). Despite the notion of influence being a rather expected within the POS, the study uncovered a deeper understanding of this opportunity.

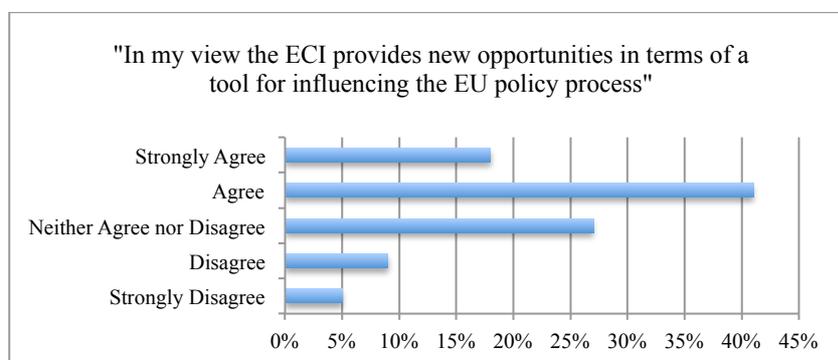
4.3.1 Identifying the Opportunity

A majority of the respondents in the survey agreed that the ECI provides opportunities of influencing the policy procedures. It is however quite surprising that 20% choose a neutral response and 15% did not agree with the statement, see the below chart 2.

The population of respondents has actively engaged with the ECI, yet a group of respondents did not consider policy influence to be an opportunity, an intriguing result. The ECI Campaign has estimated that a campaign for collecting one million signatures for an initiative will cost approximately 1 million euros (<http://www.citizens-initiative.eu/>). Keeping this large sum in mind, not to mention the time and additional resources invested in a campaign, it is odd that so many of the initiative representatives do not believe in the opportunity to influence policy. This could be the result of the experiences of the initiatives so far and not the initial perception of opportunity. It could also be viewed as a result in support of the two other dimensions of opportunity that I have identified. If

other opportunities are attracting initiatives, the opportunity of policy influence may not be as important as one would have imagined.

Chart 2: Perception of the opportunity to influence policy



Despite this the design of the ECI requires policy proposals falling within the competence of the Commission. Out of the Commission’s 13 policy areas, 10 were represented in the initiatives.¹⁸ Table 4 describes the variation in policy areas in relation to the initiatives’ status. The initiatives aimed towards different policy areas both before and after the formal launch of the ECI. The policy area that stands out is “Justice and Citizens’ rights”. A total of nine initiatives have been launched within this policy area. This category attracted initiatives before the formalization of the ECI and the Commission has rejected none of the initiatives.

Table 4 Policy Areas and Initiative Status

Policy Area	Initiative Status				Percentage (n= 35)
	Pilot	Registered	Rejected	Withdrawn	
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	3	0	0	1	11,4 %
Culture, Education and Sports	0	2	2	0	11,4%
Development and Humanitarian Aid	1	0	0	0	2,9%
Economy and Finance	0	0	2	0	5,7%
Employment and Social Affairs	2	0	1	0	8,6%
Enlargement of the EU and Foreign Affairs	1	1	1	0	8,6%
Environment and Energy	0	3	1	0	11,4%
Justice and Citizen’s rights	3	6	0	0	25,7%
Science and Technology	1	2	0	0	8,6%
Transport	1	0	0	0	2,9%
Other	1	0	0	0	2,9%

¹⁸ The three policy categories left out were “Business”, “Customs and Tax”, and “Regions and Local Development”, these areas were however represented in the initiatives that could have been placed in several categories but predominantly belonged in another category. For instance, the initiative with the aim of ensuring the EU citizenship of Catalonians in the case of a secession of Catalonia from Spain could have been placed in the policy category “Regions and local development”. Because such legislation would treat Catalonia as a new state independent of Spain and thus not a formal member state, the initiative was placed in the category for “Enlargement of the EU and Foreign affairs”.

This could be seen as an expected result due to the nature of the ECI as citizens' tool to influence policy. Further, we know that many of the representatives were employed by CSOs, which commonly engage in causes related to justice or citizens' rights. Two other policy areas have attracted four initiatives each: "Culture, Education and Sports" and "Environment and Energy". These are also policy areas that often attract citizens' attention at the national level. "Culture, Education and Sport" represents policy areas that often are a part of citizens' daily life. "Environment and Energy" represents political issues that have received much attention in the past decade and engaged citizens worldwide. The opportunity of influencing policy thus appears to have especially attracted causes that concern citizens' daily lives and believes. These areas are also often promoted by civil society, the biggest professional group that has so far engaged with the ECI. Almost all the initiatives in these categories were represented by a civil society professional. The initiatives were also coded according to their policy ambition. A majority of the initiatives proposed *policy innovation*, that is suggested new proposal for legislation. There were also initiatives that aimed towards *changing existing policy* but very few that aimed towards *supporting* or *rejecting policy* proposal. A successful proposal for policy innovation would support the perception of the opportunities of policy influence. Proposing policy change is a way to respond to current policy and could be argued to grant less independence to the citizens' influence. It is interesting to see that the initiative ambitions are quite equally spread among the different policy areas. The areas with a higher percentage of policy innovation proposals are the categories with the most initiatives. This speaks of the initiators hope that policy innovation may be a plausible outcome of a successful initiative.

The opportunity to influence policy was also discussed in the interviews Alain Brun, representative for an initiative titled "Let me Vote"¹⁹, reflected on the ECI as an opportunity to influence policy:

"Supposing we are successful in the collection of signatures, we do think that the Commission will have to launch the EU legislative process" (Interview, Alain Brun 02 December 2012)

Most of the interviewees were optimistic to the opportunity of influencing policy although they were all aware of the risks of little outcome. The ECI does not have mandatory status, which means that there is no guarantee of the opportunity of influencing policy. Both respondents of the survey and interviewees brought up the opportunity to influence policy through other institutions should the Commission reject their initiative or decide not to propose policy. Alternative routes would be to engage the Ombudsman or the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). These two institutions must not be considered separate

¹⁹ The initiative titled 'Let me Vote' propose the strengthening of the rights granting EU citizens residing in another member state the right to vote in all political elections in their country of residence, on the same conditions as the nationals of that state.

opportunity structure but are part of an extended view of the ECI. The representatives perceived the possibility of pursuing an initiative through these institutions only by first being accepted as an ECI. One respondent to the survey described what the citizens' committee felt was the main reason of seizing the opportunities of the ECI:

“One major difference between an ECI and a Non-ECI is the status of having legal standing in the court of law. If the 7 EU citizens (and the supporting groups) behind a particular ECI don't feel the Commission has treated the ECI hearing adequately, they can obtain legal standing status in the ECJ and raise a case against the Commission” (Survey, answer to open question)

The “UBI” was rejected by the Commission (on the grounds of the proposal falling outside of the Commission's competence) and the citizens committee is now preparing to make a second attempt. To them the possibilities of contacting the Ombudsman or the ECJ are essential to the opportunities the ECI offer:

“We have taken into account that if we are not satisfied with the Commissions reaction we have the possibility of going to the ECJ or to the Ombudsman for such things” (Interview, Klaus Sambor 26 November 2012).

The ECI is viewed as an opportunity to influence policy in a number of policy areas. Most notably, representatives have identified the opportunity to put issues in the area of Justice and Citizens' Rights on the agenda. This is however likely to be a result of the dominance of professionals in the civil society field engaging with the ECI and the nature of these issues being “citizens friendly”. The opportunities of influencing the policy process through the ECI can be both direct and indirect forms of influence. There are no examples of successful completions of an ECI at this time, but a majority of the representatives are hopeful that it may lead to policy influence. The opportunity structure also offers the possibility to appeal rejections or failure to propose policy through other institutions. These possibilities appear to be a calculated part of the perceived opportunity.

4.3.2 Usage of the ECI to Influence Policy

I have given several examples and quotes where the ECI was perceived as an opportunity to influence policy. Some of the pilot initiatives are indeed considered to have successfully influenced the policy agenda although no formal reference was given. In 2010 Greenpeace presented one million signatures demanding the halt to approvals of new genetically modified (GM) crops, which was later absorbed in policy (<http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/gmo/legislation>). The European Emergency Number Association (EENA) launched an initiative to promote high-quality emergency services reached by the number 112 throughout the EU. In 2009, before a significant number of signatures were reached the issue was absorbed into a public policy measure by EU institutions (Greenwood 2012: 326).

In these cases it is however difficult to speak of usage as these were pilot initiatives that were absorbed by the Commission's initiative.

We can speak of a form of *strategic usage* by simply looking at table 4 (p. 33) where the targeted policy areas are described and where a majority of initiatives proposed policy innovation. These forms of strategic usage are however incorporated in the opportunity structure itself. Engaging with the ECI presuppose that some sort of policy initiative is made. In the survey a majority of the respondents agreed that their initiative was launched as a way to influence the content and orientation of policy in the EU (78%), to challenge current policy position alternatives (82%) and to mobilize support in order to demand policy change (72%). These statements all speak of strategic usage of the ECI to influence the policy process. Policy influence in these statements can however be obtained without mandatory status of the EU. Initiatives challenging current policy and positioning alternatives can also be argued to employ *cognitive usage*. By positioning an alternative and successfully mobilizing the support needed, a policy area will be framed in a certain way suggesting that the ECI is used in a cognitive manner. Some of the interviewees and respondents also stated they used the ECI as way of convincing EU institutions of a need for policy.

70% of the survey respondents agreed that the ECI is an opportunity to alert attention to causes or actors of an initiative and could be used to spread the understanding of a cause in the EU (73%). In the initial analysis of the survey, these results were not related to the usage of the ECI in order to influence policy however two of the interviewees argued that attention to actors and causes could be away of influencing the policy process in a more subtle way:

"We could go to politicians and say this is a European citizen's initiative, we want to set Social Europe enhancement on the agenda and they have to believe that it is a good idea because we have at the moment at dramatic social situation in many countries. We have to solve it, we have to have a social Europe" (Interview, Klaus Sambor 26 November 2012).

"We will also contact and try to influence policy makers. The ICE is a way to speak with them on a solid basis and therefore to influence them. We already have developed contacts with Members of the European Parliament for example" (Interview, Alain Brun 02 December 2012).

The usage of the ECI to influence policy by alerting attention or even persuading the EU institutions of the urgency of a cause illustrates clear examples of cognitive usage. Cognitive usage is common in the contexts of policy interpretation and persuasion. Spreading the interpretation and the understanding of the social situation in Europe would provide a framework for understanding and deliberating the benefits if UBI. Cognitive usage provides the vectors for persuasion within a policy discussion (Jacquot & Woll 2003: 7). Seizing the opportunity to influence policy through persuasion and promoting a certain interpretation is a cognitive usage of the ECI and but may in many cases be an unconscious usage. Although a majority of the respondents in the survey agreed

they had engaged in this form of usage (the statement of alerting attention to a cause), very few reflected further on the value of this usage.

Alexis Anagnostakis, representative for Greece's debt relief movement, launched "a Europe for Solidarity" suggesting that public debts, which falls under the category of the "odious debts" (the "Greek debt") be written off. He reflected on his usage of the ECI, as a way of bypassing policy proposals that he felt was otherwise not going to be proposed:

"Governments and the Troika would never set such an issue on the EU agenda. With ECI, there was a chance that the citizens' voice would be heard in the EU decision-making progress" (Interview, Alexis Anagnostakis 11 December 2012).

This quote illustrates strategic usage of the ECI to set issues on the policy agenda that member states or EU institutions are unlikely to propose.²⁰ This usage is also evident when studying the variety of initiatives that have been proposed with innovative policy agendas. For instance, it seems very unlikely that a policy proposal to recommend singing the European anthem in Esperanto (<http://www.europo.eu/en/european-anthem>) or to boycott Switzerland (<http://www.swissout.eu/>) would be initiated by the EU institutions. The ECI however provided this opportunity.

Seizing the ECI as means to set otherwise sensitive or provocative issues on the agenda also suggest a certain level of *legitimizing usage*. The acceptance of these causes as official transnational ECIs adds legitimacy to the proposals. The initiative to write off the Greek debt could for instance gain legitimacy by becoming a European cause rather than its current status as a national movement. The high stakes of this initiative is perhaps why the organizers have turned to another strategic usage. The initiative was rejected by the Commission in September 2012 on the grounds of falling outside the legislative competence. The organizers have now filed an appeal against the Commissions rejection to the General Court.²¹ This act could again be considered both strategic and legitimizing usage of the extended POS of the ECI. It is strategic in the sense that the organizers are actively seeking legal justice and legitimizing by insisting on their initiative and its place at the European level.

²⁰ The term 'the Troika' is commonly referred to as the presence of the EU, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal.

²¹ The General Court is an instance of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The CJEU consists of three courts: the ECJ, the General Court and the Civil Service Tribunal (<http://curia.europa.eu/>).

4.4 The ECI as a Stepping-Stone

The launch of a transnational campaign aiming to collect one million signatures attracts attention. The ECI Campaign has suggested that an initiative would need to recruit at least 100 NGOs in at least eight EU Member States for a campaign to be successful. Previous experiences of campaigns of this size have led to an estimation of the need for at least five conversations to achieve one signature (<http://www.citizens-initiative.eu>). Building alliances is a requirement for a successful initiative but may also be an opportunity. By gaining the official status of an ECI, new alliances can be approached that may be valuable to the organizers of an initiative outside the context of the ECI.

4.4.1 Identifying the Opportunity

The demand of the ECIs to fall under the legislative competence of the Commission has led to the rejection of several initiatives yet still these initiatives are proposed, rewritten and the rejection appealed. A successful ECI will not have mandatory status, why then are these organizers going to such lengths just to reach official status? Further, the results of the content analysis showed that a majority of the initiatives suggested policy innovations, which also seemed the most likely to be rejected (because of the competence demand). The opportunity of alliance building may offer some explanation to these intriguing results.

80% of the survey respondents agreed that the ECI offered opportunities in terms of reaching and connecting with actors and organizations around Europe. A transnational campaign requires organizers to connect with individuals and organizations in other member states, which can offer new opportunities in terms of networking. In section 2.1 the concept of venue shopping was mentioned in relation to previous studies of the EU as a POS. This opportunity can be viewed as a form of venue shopping. Previous studies defined venue shopping as interest group's strategic search for the political arena that is most responsive to their interests (Ansell & di Palma 2004). The ECI extends the political arena by making all European citizens political actors. The ECI therefore offer new opportunities of seeking alliances and serving as a stepping-stone for future political advancements. Despite of the view of alliance building as a prerequisite, this opportunity appears to have independent value.

The survey revealed that many of the respondents had hopes that this opportunity would be extended in the future, that media would pay more attention and that coalitions would last beyond the campaigns of initiatives:

"I hope it'll become a tool that journalists will take a look at when thinking about what people/civil society is expecting and worried about"(Survey, open question).

“The ECI will be a chance to build long-term trusted networks of cooperation”
(Survey, open question)

The interviews further revealed that this opportunity was sometimes a calculated strategy behind initiatives. The representative for the UIB initiative explained that they (the organizers, the citizens’ committee and Attac) had already identified the alliance they were seeking but they needed the official status of an ECI to be able to persuade them. Because the UIB initiative was rejected, they will launch a rewritten initiative in January 2013. The new initiative will have a softer approach and would only suggest that the Commission issues recommendations that member states explore the possibility of introducing UIB. The initiative is thus no longer aimed at influencing policy (at least not in a direct sense) but the organizers hope that an official status facilitates the alliances they need to continue their work to persuade governments of the UIB. The Attac group for UIB hopes to build alliances with trade unions. The representative explained this ambition stating that:

“We have to convince trade unions because they are representing all the people more or less, working with low income and they would have enough money to support such actions” (Interview, Klaus Sambor 26 November 2012).

Building alliances with trade unions would for the Attac group mean the possibility of gaining the resources they need for a successful ECI campaign but perhaps more importantly, be the partnership they need to get governments to consider UIB programs. Launching an initiative can lead to visibility of an actor, cause or organization. The attention of an initiative can also create opportunities of strategic alliances, media coverage and career developments.

4.4.2 Usage of the ECI as a Stepping-Stone

Despite the fact that many of the initiatives had only recently launched their ECI, a majority of survey respondents agreed (70%) that their initiative had led to increased visibility for their cause. This suggests that the opportunity the ECI offer as stepping-stone has been used although it might not have been the sole ambition. Some of the respondents said they had received more attention than they had thought possible while other hoped the opportunity of exposure would with increase in the coming years.

Only 40 % of the survey respondents agreed that the organization behind the initiative had gained visibility. Among the agreeing respondents, almost all represented pilot initiatives, which may explain the result. It is possible that the opportunity of alerting attention to organizations altered with the official guidelines demanding that only citizens’ committees can be official organizers. This may however have been the catalyst for the creation of a new opportunity. The ECI demands that a citizens’ committee consists of citizens from different member states. This provides an excellent opportunity to create new

organizations. The situation brings together an international composition of individuals engaged in a cause and it would seem quite natural that these persons form an association, forum or an organization during or after a campaign of an initiative. For one of the registered initiatives this has already become a reality. The citizens' committee of the initiative titled 'High Quality European Education for all' has formed an association called MEET (<http://euroedtrust.eu/home>). This could be argued as a form of *legitimizing usage* of the ECI. The formation of the transnational organization is legitimized by the engagement of the ECI. Using the rhetoric of the ECI (e.g. the voice of the citizens) is a reference to Europe, which may act legitimizing to national publics choosing to support or participate in the organization. It will be interesting to see if this association will continue with activities after the campaign and if other initiative will result in similar formations.

Further, the interviews gave a deeper understanding of the value of the ECI as a stepping-stone, and how representatives of initiatives were using this opportunity. Cecilia Malmström initiated the Oneseat Initiative campaign in 2006 to mobilize citizens' support for establishing Brussels as the only seat for the European Parliament (instead of moving back and forth from Brussels and Strasbourg). Anders Manell, the editor of the Oneseat campaign, suggested that launching a citizens' initiative was discussed before the organizers had even agreed on a cause:

"We discussed different questions it could be. We talked about agricultural policy and some other issues"(Interview, Anders Manell 06 December 2012).

Discussing an ECI before having agreed on an issue to be lifted, suggest strategic usage. This is not strategic in the direct senses of democratic development or policy influence that was discussed in the above sections. Rather, the attention to an initiative may lead to opportunities of coalitions and visibility and act as a stepping-stone for careers or political agendas. Anders Manell further described how the initiative has been valuable to his career and even more so to Cecilia Malmström, currently the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs:

"It is important not to underestimate how this issue had significance for Cecilia Malmström, she became very very famous with this question and it was important for her career. She received much media attention in Sweden but especially at the European level and we succeeded in getting attention to her. She participated in TV programs in almost all European countries and it gave effect. She became a Swedish minister, the Swedish EU minister and then a Commissioner. I have been able to use this experience in my political and professional career. I was able to continue from party politics and people know that I am good at campaigns and forming public opinion" (Interview, Anders Manell 06 December 2012).

These descriptions of the Oneseat initiative suggest that the initiative was strategically launched to reach the European arena. The organizers of this initiative were politicians; this form of strategic usage may be especially

employed in the context of politics where visibility and influence over public opinion is crucial. The ability to mobilize the support of over one million individuals may be valuable in a number of professions and like the quote suggest the experience of a transnational campaign can facilitate career moves. This may be an opportunity that organizers are aware of, but will not want to draw attention to as it might undermine the cause. For instance, most of the interviewees did not want to reflect on questions of personal gains of an initiative campaign. Further it is again important to remember the professional fields of the representatives. It is likely that professional advancements are less accepted ambitions among civil society organizations compared to the other fields.

The mobilization of support may also lead to unforeseen opportunities of both coalitions and visibility. The campaigning process is dynamic in the sense that it may not always be possible to plan approaches, they may happen as an effect of new contacts or coverage in situations that were unforeseen. Establishing an understanding of a cause in the transnational sphere is a form of *cognitive usage*, when a specific interpretation is advocated. If this interpretation makes use of references to Europe it can also be a form of legitimizing usage. Alain Brun, representative of the Let me Vote initiative described the status of the initiative:

“For the time being we are in the process of building a coalition of partners (like Social partners, citizens’ associations, youth organizations, academic communities, cultural circles) to engage with us. This means also involving media and reach out to potential signatories via social media, webpage, Public Relations etc. Contacts are being developed with visibility partners, multipliers and national media correspondents, like EurActiv. Thanks to the European Institute in Florence on citizenship and nationality matters, we have launched a forum last spring. It received a lot of valuable contributions from teachers, citizens, and Members of European Parliament” (Interview, Alain Brun 02 December 2012).

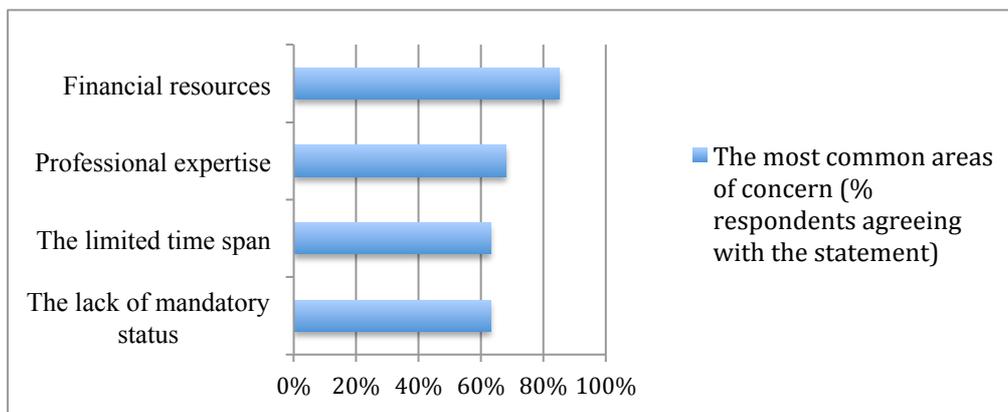
This quote illustrates both cognitive and legitimizing usage. The organizers are engaging in the cognitive spreading of an understanding of the inability to vote in countries of residence without citizenship. This understanding makes use of references to European identity and European citizenship, which increases its legitimacy as a European cause. These usages appear to have led to valuable coalitions that may benefit the cause and the actors engaged in a numerous ways. Although the interviewee did not suggest that this was a strategy, the quote also signals the engagement in venue shopping.

The usage of the ECI as a stepping-stone appears to be valuable to many of the representatives but very few were consciously using the opportunity. This is perhaps an opportunity that will become more evident when the ECI is better established in Europe.

4.5 Constrained Opportunities

The results of the survey and the interviews spoke loudly of the constraints to the opportunities the ECI offer. Constraints are the antagonists of opportunities in a POS and the value of a POS cannot be understood without accounting for the constraints. The ECI was only recently implemented and it is the first attempt of a transnational citizens' initiative. It would therefore be expected that the first months would be shaky and that difficulties would arise. For instance, representatives of initiatives have experienced technical problems with the tool for collection signatures. There is however other constraints that are more related to the design of the citizens' initiative. In the below chart 3, the four most common challenges among respondents are presented.

Chart 3: The most common areas of concern



85% of the respondents identified the financial resources required for a campaign as a constraint. This result is not surprising. The Commission offers no funding associated to the ECI and initiative campaigns must find sponsors independently. In the previously discussed results it was identified that quite a large number of the respondents did not believe that the ECI would successfully influence the policy process in the EU, yet they are still engaging in initiatives despite the financial strains. This is an interesting result suggesting that initiators are either taking a great risk in launching campaigns or they consider the other opportunities valuable. It is likely that both of these arguments are at stake.

Further, the professional requirements (e.g. the creation of collection tools, legal advice for the formulation of policy drafts and translations of the campaign) were viewed as a constraint by the respondents. These requirements are of course also related to the financial resources but it may also be a sign that the ECI will continue to the professionalization of the civil sphere. The opportunities that were identified were often used with a strategic ambition. If these opportunities of venue shopping and political advancements become better known, campaign strategies could become an area where outside expertise is brought in (for instance through PR agents or professional communicators).

The limited time span for the collection of signatures is in a way also related

to the question of financial resources but would have been a calculated plan of the initiative strategy at an earlier stage. This is however not only a question of resources. The requirements for the collection of signatures for instance are varied depending of national authorities. The national authorities in the member states must verify the validity of signatories' statements of support for initiatives and must certify the number of valid statements collected in each country (<http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/how-to-signup>). The requirements of personal identification may create a data protection risk that may lead to hesitant signatories. The creation of an efficient and secure collection tool is therefore also at stake in the limited time span.

The lack of mandatory status of the ECI was a concern of the respondents. None of the currently registered initiatives have presented their signatures to the Commission and the pilot initiatives that did reach one million signatures did not have official status. Some of the pilot initiatives did reach one million signatures but it is difficult to consider if these would have been successful with the current guidelines.²² Anders Manell, who is the representative of one of these successful initiatives (Oneseat Initiative) suggested that pilot initiatives were a learning experience for the Commission and that some of the guidelines and restrictions are likely to be based on these experiences.

“The pilot initiatives gave the Commission a chance to evaluate citizens’ initiatives before they became reality, they realized it will be very difficult to handle all these initiatives, issue statements and comment all questions. I can be an idea to “hide” behind strict guidelines and restrictions so that it becomes almost impossible to achieve a successful initiative” (Anders Manell, 11 December 2012).

This quote suggest that the Commission actively chooses to interpret article 11.4 in the TEU and impose guidelines to inhibit the full potential of the ECI. The Commission’s interpretation was also a topic in the other interviews although the suggestions of the inhibition were less direct than the above. For example, Carsten Berg explained that:

“The issue exclusion is not explicitly mentioned in the regulation. The Commission’s interpretation is that article 11 would only provide for ECIs proposing secondary law, so only policy proposals and would not allow for proposals that would change primary law. I think this is another big problem because ECIs have already been rejected. It was never the intention to reduce the ECI to only secondary law. So for example the initiative against atomic energy was rejected and the initiative that tackled the issue of having only one seat for the parliament instead of two. We knew about the interpretation and we are fighting against this but we didn’t succeed on that yet” (Carsten Berg, 20 November 2012).

²² OneSeat Initiative, 1million4disability and GMO Initiative all reached more than one million signatures.

It is possible that the Commission has actively engaged to delimit the POS of the ECI. Whether this is an attempt to keep the workload manageable, avoiding initiatives with sensitive political nature or a resistance to direct democracy, it is an interesting discussion. The POS of the ECI is constrained. Some of these challenges are likely to pass with experience while others appear to be conscious attempts to delimit the POS and ensure that the usage of the ECI is kept to a manageable level that can be overseen by the Commission.

5 Concluding Discussion

In this thesis I have explored the opportunities of the ECI and how these are perceived and used by civil actors. Three different aspects of opportunity were uncovered in terms of: development towards direct democracy, influencing European policy, and using the ECI as a stepping-stone to further advancements. At the time of writing, ECI has only been a formal reality for nine months yet this study has produced findings of civil actors' perception of a new political opportunity structure. Previous research has focused on the democratic potential of the ECI and the likely users of this new tool. Although this study showed similar results in terms of the relationship to participatory and direct democratic development and the use by certain professional fields, this study offers an overview of the early experiences of the ECI that has not been empirically studied to the same extent before. Further the analytical framework proved useful to the understanding of the opportunities and the different forms of usage. It was at times difficult to separate the perception of opportunity from usage, as the initiatives were all examples of a seized opportunity. The categorization of strategic, cognitive and legitimizing did however make it possible to point to specific activities and ambitions. This study may thus also offer a theoretical contribution. There are few empirical studies of civil actors' usage of the EU (studies of policy entrepreneurs for instance often focus on political or corporate actors) and this study offer new support of the usage activities of these actors in an Europeanization process. An interesting result in relation to the theoretical contribution of the study is that representatives from all professional fields were engaging in all three types of usage. Jacquot and Woll suggest that cognitive usage is likely to be employed by CSOs and legitimizing usage by politicians. No such tendencies could be observed in this study, rather all professional groups engaged in all forms of usage (although strategic usage was the dominant form). This could in part be a reflection of the embedded strategic usage of all initiatives; an initiative would not have been launched without (at least to some extent) a clearly defined goal, but it also suggests the need for a deeper understanding of the different (and perhaps changing) roles of actors in European politics.

It would have been interesting to study the composition of citizens' committees or make a more systematic comparison of the representatives. For instance why have these individuals been selected as the representatives and what are their actual roles? Are they front figures or experienced leaders?

It will be interesting to see what the future holds for the ECI. Will the ECI offer a real chance of more direct democracy in the EU or will it become a tool for venue shopping and political exposure? The results of the study may reflect the initial stages of a new political tool in the EU but it signals some tendencies of whom is likely to engage in the ECI (or even in a transnational citizens'

initiative), what opportunities are available and how they are used. I expect the ECI to become a theme in social science research as it provides new opportunities to study multi leveled Europeanization. The ECI reaches from individual citizens to the highest political level, which invites a wide range of research agendas to produce meaningful knowledge of this new European opportunity.

6 Executive Summary

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) was officially introduced in the European Union on 1st of April 2012. The ECI is anticipated to offer European citizens the opportunity of proposing legislation. The opportunities perceived by the civil actors that have engaged with the ECI (through the launch of initiatives before and after the formal introduction) however suggest that the ECI is political opportunity structure in a wider sense. The ECI opportunities aside from the proposal of policy which civil actors may use. These opportunities are however more or less constrained which could be a conscious move by the Commission.

In the past decades participation of civil society in the EU has been considered a method of increasing the democratic legitimacy. The ECI marks a shift to the previous consultations with organized civil society that have predominantly engaged with Brussels based civil society organizations (CSOs). The ECI is open to all citizens but is regulated by conditions established by the EU. An ECI must be organized by a citizens' committee consisting of member from at least one quarter of the member states (currently 7 out of 27). Further, the initiative may only propose legislation on matters where the EU has the competence legislate. The citizens' committee must then gather one million signatures corresponding to the Commissions requirements (signatures must be collected from at least seven member states and the signatures must have passed a control of validity by national authorities). The signatures must be collected within one year after an initiative has been registered.

Previous research has explored the ECI through legal analysis and through theories of democracy. Previous research has also suggested that some professional groups are more likely to engage with the ECI, political parties and CSOs. Given the uniqueness of the ECI as the worlds first transnational citizens' initiative and the suggested shift from the privileged role of Brussels based CSOs this study tried to answer two research questions:

- 1. Which are the opportunities that the ECI offer civil actors?*
- 2. How do civil actors use these opportunities?*

The research questions were guided by theoretical drawings of Usage of Europe a sub-direction deriving from criticism of Europeanization. Europeanization is a theoretically thick concept for the study of the process whereby domestic policies, politics and polities experience change as a result of European integration. The ECI can be viewed as an effect of Europeanization and offers new opportunities to European citizens. The analytical framework was therefore designed through the integration of theories of Political Opportunity

Structures (POS), Europeanization and Usage of Europe. Usage of Europe emphasizes the learning activities at the micro level (actors) through the engagement with the EU macro level. Through the focus on actors, Usage of Europe suggests that Europeanization can be understood as actor's usage of the opportunities offered by the EU. Three types of usage are distinguished; strategic usage, cognitive usage and legitimizing usage.

The research questions were investigated through a within case comparison. 35 initiatives (with both pilot and official status). The methodological framework was explored through a method of triangulation, combining quantitative and qualitative methodology. A content analysis was conducted to produce a descriptive overview of the initiatives, their policy ambitions and the professional fields of the representatives. A survey was sent to the representatives producing both statistical knowledge of the perception of the ECI and qualitative insight through open-ended questions. Finally the results of the content analysis and the survey led to a strategic selection of interviewees were the initial results were further explored.

The findings suggests that the ECI is a Political Opportunity Structure and provides opportunities in terms of democratic developments, influence in the policy process and as a stepping stone for further advancements of an actor or a cause. The professional fields that were represented in the initiatives had similar perceptions of this opportunity but differed in the ways the engaged in usage of the ECI. The ECI is a constrained opportunity, which affects the prospects of usage of the ECI. The following points were highlighted in the analysis.

- The representatives of ECIs often have a professional background in the civil society field, the political field or the academic field. However, within these fields several of the representatives had no prior experience of the political process at the European level.
- The ECI has been perceived as an opportunity that is still open to influence. The opportunities of the ECI are not predetermined, civil society actors have engaged in the creation of the ECI and continue to influence its potential through the use of existing opportunities.
- The opportunity of influencing policy through the ECI is not limited to the proposal of policy. Initiatives may influence policy by approaching European politicians, national governments or EU officials. The contact with these actors is facilitated by the status of an official ECI. The POS of the ECI also include the opportunity to appeal rejections or the inaction of the Commission in case of a successful initiative to the Court of Justice of the European Union or the Ombudsman.
- The experience of an initiative campaign can lead to advancements of both the actors and causes behind the initiatives. The attention and the process of coalition building is an important part of a campaign and if managed well these experiences can lead to new opportunities outside of the contexts of the ECI.

Representatives of initiatives may have career advantages and organization/causes may connect with valuable partners.

- Civil actors engage in strategic, cognitive and legitimizing usage of the ECI. Strategic usage is the most common form of usage whereby actors use the opportunities perceived with a clearly defined goal and strategic ambition. Both cognitive and legitimizing usage was uncovered whereby civil actors use the ECI to promote a certain understanding of their cause or use the rhetoric of the EU to increase the legitimacy of their cause.
- The ECI is constrained by the strict regulations and interpretation of the Commission that delimits initiatives to propose secondary law. The financial constraints, the need of professional expertise and the limited time span for collecting signatures were identified as challenges to the opportunity structure. The lack of mandatory status was perceived as a constraint and it was suggested that the interpretation of the Commission was consciously made in order to exercise control of the ECI.

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List of Interviewees

Anagnostakis, Alexis (Representative for Greece’s dept relief movement and “One Million Signatures for a Europe of Solidarity”) Email interview 11 December 2012

Berg, Carsten (director of the ECI Campaign and representative of the “Initiative for the Initiative”) Skype Interview 20 November 2012

Brun, Alain (substitute and member of the citizen’s committee for “Let me Vote”) Email interview 02 December 2012

Manell, Anders (Editor for the campaign of “Oneseat Initiative” and member of the Swedish liberal party, Folkpartiet) Telephone interview 06 December 2012

Sambor, Klaus (Coordinator of the Attac group for basic-income-guarantee and representative for Universal Basic Income ECI”) Telephone interview 26 November 2012

Appendix A. List of Initiatives

The list includes all initiatives in the population in alphabetical order and with their year of launch. The three initiatives that could not be included in the survey are numbers: 9, 15 and 18.

1. Abolición en Europa de la tauromaquia y la utilización de toros en fiestas de crueldad y tortura por diversión (Abolition of bullfighting in Europe as well as the use of bulls in festivals of cruelty and torture for fun) (2012)
2. Central public online collection platform for the European Citizen Initiative (2012)
3. Création d'une Banque publique européenne axée sur le développement social, écologique et solidaire (Creation of a public European bank for social, ecological and solidarity developments), 2012
4. Eat Greener Initiative, 2009
5. Efficient 112 all over Europe, 2007
6. End Ecocide in Europe: A Citizens' Initiative to give the Earth Rights, 2012
7. EU Directive on Cow Welfare, 2012
8. European Initiative for Media Pluralism, 2012
9. For a European Referendum on the EU Constitution, 2007
10. Fortalecimiento de la participación ciudadana en la toma de decisiones sobre la soberanía colectiva (European Citizens' Initiative EU Internal Enlargement), 2012
11. Fraternité 2020 - Mobility. Progress. Europe, 2012
12. Free Sunday Initiative, 2010
13. GMO Initiative II, 2010
14. High Quality European Education for All, 2012
15. High Quality of Public Services, 2006
16. Initiative for the Initiative, 2005
17. Initiative of applied anthroposophy, 2007
18. Initiative pour un Service Civil Européen (initiative for a European civil service). 2006
19. Let me Vote, 2012
20. My voice against nuclear power, 2012
21. One Million Signatures for "a Europe of Solidarity", 2012
22. One of Us, 2012
23. Oneseat Initiative, 2005
24. Partnership instead of membership for Turkey, 2005
25. Pour une gestion responsable des déchets, contre les incinérateurs (For a responsible waste management, against the use of incinerators), 2012
26. Recommend singing the European Anthem in Esperanto, 2012
27. Single Communication Tariff, 2012
28. Stop vivisection, 2012
29. Suspension of the EU Climate & Energy Package, 2012
30. Termination of the contract of Free Movement of Persons with Switzerland by the EU, 2012
31. Unconditional Basic Income, 2012
32. Water and sanitation are a human right, 2012
33. 1million4disability, 2007
34. 30 km/h - making the streets livable!, 2012
35. 8hours campaign, 2009

Appendix B. Coding Scheme

Coding Scheme for Content Analysis	
Policy Categories	Initiative Ambition Categories
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Policy change
Business	Policy innovation
Culture, Education and Sport	Support for proposed policy
Customs and Tax	Proposed policy rejection
Development and Humanitarian aid	Policy removal
Economy and Finance	Other
Employment and Social affairs	Initiative Status Categories
Enlargement of the EU and Foreign affairs	Pilot initiative
Environment and Energy	
Justice and Citizens' rights	Registered initiative
Regions and Local development	
Science and Technology	Rejected initiative
Transport	
Other	Withdrawn initiative
Initiative Representative Field	
Political field	
Civil society field	
Academic field	
Corporate field	
Other	

Appendix C. The Survey

The European Citizens' Initiative

- A survey of the experiences of a European citizens' initiative.

Please answer these questions based on your own view and experience of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI). Please note that you have the possibility of specifying another alternative at the end of each question. At the end of the survey you have the possibility of describing other experiences you may have, but you felt were missing in the questions.

The survey consists of three parts and will take approximately ten minutes to complete.

Part 1: My general understanding of the prospects of the ECI

Please answer these questions according to how you feel the ECI may lead to new opportunities (A) for the citizens of the EU and how these opportunities may be constrained (B) by a variety of factors.

A) In my view the European Citizens' Initiative provides new opportunities in terms of...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...a new channel for civil participation.					
...the possibility for new civil actors to participate in the EU.					
... a tool for influencing the EU policy process.					
...alerting attention to causes and actors of an initiative.					
...possibilities of reaching and connecting with individuals and organizations in several member states.					
...adding legitimacy to a national cause (by the extension to the European level).					
...organizations getting the attention of new potential sponsors.					
...bypassing constraints at the national level.					
...other, please specify.					

B) In my view, the process of a European Citizen's Initiative may be constrained by...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...the formal demands for the organization of an initiative (e.g. the creation of a citizen's committee).					
...the financial resources needed for mobilizing support of the initiative.					
....the expertise needed for launching and carrying out the initiative (e.g. the creation of collection tools, translations, legal advice etc.).					
...the limited time span for the collection of signatures (12 months upon the registration of an initiative).					
... the lack of mandatory status (or definition of the legal nature) of initiatives presented to the Commission.					
...the difficulty of collecting the required number and nationalities of signatories.					
...difficulties of cooperation (between sponsors, organizers or individuals).					
...the data protection risk (the high level of personal data required for signature collection).					
...other, please specify:					

PART 2: My experience of the initiative that I represent/represented.

In this part, please answer the questions with regards to the specific experiences you gained from being part of an initiative.

1) The initiative was titled:

1) The organizers of the initiative was:

(Name for example the organizations, professional groups, companies, transnational activists, etc.)

A) Launching our citizens initiative is/was a way of...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

...influencing the content and orientation of policy in the EU.					
...challenging current EU policy and positioning alternatives.					
...discovering the potential of the ECI as a new participatory tool.					
...establishing our cause/movement in the European civil sphere.					
...seeking new partners and sponsors for collaboration.					
...mobilizing the support we need to demand policy change in the EU.					
...spreading our understanding of an issue in the EU.					
...linking the European civil sphere to the political issue of our initiative.					
...spreading the values of our organization.					
...creating awareness of the social reality of the EU.					
...promoting the status of our cause in the EU.					
...gaining the support of the general public.					
...increasing the legitimacy of our cause by transnational participation.					
...justifying the need of our work/organization/movement.					
...other, please specify					

F) In my opinion our initiative has had results in the nature of...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...increased visibility for our cause.					
...increased visibility for our organization.					
...increased visibility for the European Citizens' Initiative.					
...increased recognition for our cause.					
...increased recognition for our organization.					
...increased recognition for the European Citizens' Initiative.					
...other, please specify.....					

PART 3: Comments or experiences I would like to add

G) Please describe your comments or experiences that you feel may value this survey.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Appendix D. Interview Guide

Statement

This interview will be used in a study of the European Citizen's Initiative. You have already responded to the survey, with this interview I am interested in a further understanding of your responses and your experiences of the initiative you represent. I will ask you question about your perception of the ECI, your initiative and opportunities and challenges you have met through the experience of launching a transnational citizen's initiative.

If you do not wish to answer a question or if you need to interrupt the interview, please feel free to let me know. If you have any questions regarding the material and/or your participation, you can contact me at any time. Can I have your consent to record the interview?

Interview Questions

Theme 1 “The new possibilities of an ECI”

Q1: How did you become involved in the initiative you represent?

Probing questions: Professional background? Experiences? Values?

Q2: Why did you (the group that you represent) decide to launch a citizens' initiative?

Probing questions: Why was this an opportunity? Why not use other routes?
What was the initial ambition?

Theme 2 “Experiences of initiatives”

Q1: What has been the experience of your initiative?

Probing question: Current status? Preparation for launch? Successful collection of signatures? Rejection? Next steps?

Q2: What have been the challenges of you initiative?

Probing questions: Resources? Formal demands? Transnational campaigning?

Theme 3 “Usage of the ECI”

Q1: In which ways have/are you been able use the fact that your initiative is an ECI (or was launched in reference to the ECI)?

Probing questions: Policy advocacy? Pressuring decision makers? Attention?
Reaching partners?

Q2: Have there been any unexpected benefits of running an initiative?

Probing questions: New partners? New opportunities?

Q3: What do you think have been the benefits of the attention you have received as a transnational citizens' initiative?

Probing questions: Spreading information? Increased visibility?
Acknowledgement of a situation?

Q3: Do you think that the status of an ECI may increase the legitimacy of the cause/policy proposal you represent?

Probing questions: The value of a transnational citizens' initiative? The voice of the European citizens? Increased legitimacy in national contexts?

Q4: What do you think of the prospects launching initiatives that fall outside the Commissions competence or running citizens' initiatives outside the structure of the ECI?

Probing questions: Why are initiatives launched that are likely to be rejected?
The value of the ECI vs. a reference to the citizens' initiative?

Theme 4: "The future of the ECI"

Q1: If initiatives are indeed successful in the collection of one million signatures, what do you think will be the result?

The Commissions rejection? Other institutions? Potential appeals?

Q2: How do you think the ECI will develop in the future?

Probing question: Policy change? Referendums? Attention? Who will use it?

Appendix E. Results of the Survey

The results of the survey are discussed in the chapter 4 and some of the tables and charts are presented. The results that are not illustrated in chapter 4 but mentioned in the analysis are presented here.

1.A

In my view the European Citizens' Initiative provides new opportunities in terms of...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...a new channel for civil participation.	63%	32%	0%	0%	5%
...the possibility for new civil actors to participate in the EU.	25%	41%	20%	9%	5%
...alerting attention to causes and actors of an initiative.	32%	36%	22%	5%	5%
...possibilities of reaching and connecting with individuals and organizations in several member states.	40%	40%	15%	5%	0%

1.B

In my view, the process of a European Citizen's Initiative may be constrained by...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...the formal demands for the organization of an initiative (e.g. the creation of a citizen's committee).	18%	27%	14%	36%	5%
...the financial resources needed for mobilizing support of the initiative.	32%	55%	8%	0%	5%
...the expertise needed for launching and carrying out the initiative (e.g. the creation of collection tools, translations, legal advice etc.).	50%	23%	17%	5%	5%
...the limited time span for the collection of signatures (12 months upon the registration of an initiative).	41%	23%	5%	31%	0%
... the lack of mandatory status (or definition of the legal nature) of initiatives presented to the Commission.	36%	32%	9%	23%	0%

2 A.

Launching our citizens initiative is/was a way of...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
...influencing the content and orientation of policy in the EU.	41%	36%	18%	0%	5%
...challenging current EU policy and positioning alternatives.	55%	27%	8%	5%	5%
...discovering the potential of the ECI as a new participatory tool.	36%	36%	18%	5%	5%
...mobilizing the support we need to demand policy change in the EU.	36%	36%	23%	0%	5%
...spreading our understanding of an issue in the EU.	32%	41%	14%	8%	5%
...spreading the values of our organization.	36%	32%	18%	5%	9%
...justifying the need of our work/organization/movement.	14%	5%	36%	18%	27%

2.B (N.B. Some of the respondents choose not to answer this question. Due to the recent launch of their initiative they felt they could not yet give satisfactory answers to these questions. The total number of respondents (n) is therefore presented in this table.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Number of respondents (N)
...increased visibility for our cause.	20%	50%	25%	0%	5%	20
...increased visibility for our organization.	15%	25%	45%	10%	5%	20