

Marcin RACHWAŁ

Poznan

## Citizens' initiatives in Switzerland

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to determine the role of popular initiative in the political system of Switzerland. The term 'popular', or 'citizens' initiatives' refers to the procedures that allow citizens to bring new issues to the political agenda through collective action, that is, through collecting a certain number of signatures in support of a policy proposal. Citizens' initiative in Switzerland allows for any group outside parliament to put a proposal on the table. The proposal has to suggest a constitutional amendment. Changes to laws or any other government regulations cannot be the subject of a popular initiative at national level in Switzerland.

Of the 174 initiatives that have made it to the polls, only 18 (10 per cent) had been approved prior to 2010, all the others were rejected. Initiatives are launched for numerous reasons. The agenda-setting effect is relevant for all initiatives. Parties and interest groups also launch initiatives for more strategic reasons. In Switzerland the institutions of direct democracy, including the popular initiative on constitutional amendments, play a most prominent role, both in terms of frequency and in terms of impact, in a political system shaped by consensus politics and a rather stable party system.

**Key words:** direct democracy, popular initiative, Switzerland

---

### Introduction

**D**ue to tradition (mainly the Greek one), for a long time it had been thought that democratic governance could only occur in a direct form. In the eighteenth century, individual authors began to notice that by combining the democratic principle of governance by the people with a non-democratic concept of a representative system,<sup>1</sup> a totally new shape and dimension could be applied to democracy. The transformations which the theory and practice of democracy have undergone by including the concept of a representative system have had far-reaching consequences. The most important one was based on the fact that the governance of the people does not have to be associated with a small country any more, but could embrace large communities. As a result, direct and indirect democracy has been created.

The basic criterion for distinguishing between the above models of democracy is who and under what procedures is given the right to make decisions. Indirect democracy means that making decisions is the domain of the elected representatives, who do it according to their own conscience and experience. In this model, the role of a subject is lim-

---

<sup>1</sup> The representative system was not invented by democrats; it was introduced in England and Sweden as an institution of monarchic and aristocratic governments. The only notable exception in the Middle Ages was the Swiss Confederation (Dahl, 1995, p. 46).

ited to choosing their representatives once every few years. However, the essence of direct democracy is that important decisions are made by citizens themselves. Nowadays, there exist the following forms of direct democracy: referendum, plebiscite, popular initiative, veto of the people, popular consultations, recall, popular assembly and participatory budgeting.

In Switzerland, the institutions of direct democracy include popular assembly (*Lands-gemeinde*), popular initiative, referendum and veto of the people (Marczewska-Rytko, 2012, p. 284). The aim of this study is to determine the role of popular initiative in the political system of Switzerland. Therefore, in the remaining part of the paper, this form of direct democracy is subjected to a detailed analysis.

### **Citizens' initiatives as a form of democratic participation**

The term *popular* or *citizens' initiatives* refers to procedures that allow citizens to bring new issues to the political agenda through collective action, that is, through collecting a certain number of signatures in support of a policy proposal. Policy proposals included in initiatives can either be submitted to a popular vote (a referendum) or be dealt with in parliament or other representative body (Schiller, Setälä, 2012a, p. 1).

The term *full-scale initiative* is used for initiatives which are followed by a ballot and the term *agenda initiative* is used for initiatives which are dealt with by a representative body. Like referendums, citizens' initiatives are regarded as forms of direct democracy as they allow citizens to be directly involved in the policy-making process. As already indicated, popular initiatives are often linked to a referendum, although this is not always the case (Schiller, Setälä, 2012a, p. 1).

Agenda initiatives seem to be more easily acceptable to those who tend to be sceptical about referendums and who trust the capacity of parliamentary institutions and procedures to bring about considered and enlightened decisions. It is also notable that, compared with initiatives leading to referendums, the interests of minority groups could be expected to be considered more in parliamentary procedures which involve deliberative processes, most importantly in committees. The institution of agenda initiative does not conflict with the idea of parliamentary sovereignty and it does not change the distribution of institutional power in representative democracies. In fact, agenda initiatives can often be seen as a compromise between promoters and opponents of direct democracy, and for this reason they are perhaps a highly viable option for expanding opportunities for citizen participation. Indeed, agenda initiative institutions are relatively widespread in Europe, and they are also used in some of those US states which do not allow a full-scale initiative (Cronin, 1989, p. 241–242).

The Swiss institution of popular initiatives on constitutional amendments is a good example of a full-scale initiative, whereas, for example, the Spanish initiative institutions are a clear-cut case of agenda initiative practices. In some countries, such as Austria and Poland, only forms of agenda initiatives are available, whereas Latvia and Switzerland provide only a full-scale initiative. In other countries, both kinds of initiative institutions exist (for example Italy, Lithuania and Slovakia).

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) in the Lisbon Treaty is a new type of agenda initiative institution.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the ECI, the initiative is not directly submitted to a legislative procedure in the European Parliament and the Council, but is submitted to the Commission, which has the formal competence to introduce legislative acts. The Commission also has the authority to decide whether it will submit a legislative proposal suggested in an initiative. Thus, the procedure involves more steps than normal agenda initiatives and follows the very complex legislative process of the European Union (Pichler, 2012, p. 245–251; Jabłoński, 2010, p. 107–122; *Rozporządzenie...*).

### Development of the institution of direct democracy in Switzerland

Switzerland formed as a modern state out of 25 cantons and half-cantons in 1848, with universal (male) suffrage. The new state was initially designed as a representative system. Although the first Constitution had a clause that constitutional amendments had to be subjected to a popular vote, so-called compulsory referendums, and it was possible to ask for a total revision of the Constitution through collecting signatures, it was never the intention of the constitution-makers that there would be regular and frequent amendments to the Constitution (Kobach, 1994, p. 101). The mandatory referendum was mainly a concession towards the Catholic minority, to make sure that constitutional amendments could not easily be pushed through by national legislatures (Lutz, 2012, p. 17).

Citizens' rights to influence policy-making were introduced in 1874, when the 1848 Constitution was revised entirely. The new Constitution allowed for any law passed by parliament to be challenged through the collection of 30,000 signatures. This new right did not allow citizens to set the political agenda themselves; however, it gave the opposition the possibility to challenge laws passed by the parliamentary majority and make them the subject of a popular vote (Lutz, 2012, p. 17).

The citizens' initiative was introduced in Switzerland in 1891. By collecting 50,000 signatures in 18 months, citizens could present proposals for constitutional amendments. If the required number of signatures was collected, a popular vote would take place. A similar process of the introduction of direct democracy took place at the cantonal level during the second half of the nineteenth century (Lutz, 2012, p. 17–18). What is both important and interesting is that when direct democracy was introduced Switzerland had already been an established representative democracy for some time.

Direct democracy is central to the political process in Switzerland. Nowadays, citizens are asked to decide on single or several issues at the polls from two to four times each year at the national level. There is a fixed calendar, currently until the year 2033, with four annual dates when votes will take place (*Blanko...*).

---

<sup>2</sup> "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 procedures and conditions required for such a citizens' initiative shall be determined in accordance with the first paragraph of Article 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union" (*Treaty...*, art. 1).

Sometimes there is nothing to vote on, so the date is not used. However, since 1968 there have been at least two annual votes on several issues every year.

To sum up, two factors, the lack of strong party organisations and the weak labour movement, helped to facilitate the introduction of direct democracy. The political parties in Switzerland were not like the strong organisations they are today, but were rather loose organisations, mainly formed around parliamentary groups with limited coordination capacity. As a consequence, individual members of parliament played a much more important role in policy-making than the party leadership. There was not yet a strong labour movement in the nineteenth century when direct democracy was introduced, which posed a big threat to the established elites later on. The most significant conflict dimension between Catholic conservatives and liberals in Switzerland during the second half of the nineteenth century was mainly cultural, not socio-economic. Concerns raised in later debates that direct democracy would lead to increased wealth redistribution were not at all central in the debate (Lutz, 2012, p. 19).

### **Popular initiative in the light of the Constitution of Switzerland**

The citizens' initiative allows for any group outside parliament to put a proposal on the table. The proposal has to suggest a constitutional amendment. Changes to laws or any other government regulations cannot be the subject of a popular initiative at national level. At the cantonal level, however, many cantons allow initiatives that suggest changes of laws, rather than the cantonal constitution (*Popular...*).

It is worth mentioning here that attempts have been made to establish popular initiative on ordinary laws at the central level in Switzerland (Sarnecki, 2003, p. 18–20). Those who supported the adoption of the legislative initiative argued that it would be a kind of safety valve for the discontent of the nation. They pointed to the fact that such initiatives were present in all cantons. It was argued that the vast majority of popular initiatives on amending the Constitution which had been reported on the federal level related to the matter of ordinary legislation (Aubert, 1977, p. 305). Opponents, on the other hand, claimed that such an extension of direct democracy would weaken the parliament's authority as a legislator. They argued that, in accordance with the principles of a modern federal state, the elected parliament should be the only legislator. This enables it to guide the legislative work, set priorities and implement statutory aims. Furthermore, the introduction of a civic legislative initiative would weaken the bicameral federal system (Grabowska, 2009, p. 155).

During a meeting of the parliamentary committee, two experts presented their views on the extension of the popular initiative matter by adding a legislative initiative. The first of them, Professor E. Grisela, was opposed to the introduction of a legislative initiative on the grounds that it would weaken the position of the cantons in relation to the Confederacy, and in view of the fact that acts should not be created by random individuals or committees. Another expert was A. Kölz, who claimed that because of the good experiences that the cantons had in this area, the request for extension of the popular initiative subject by adding a legislative initiative should be taken into account. Moreover, he reminded that parliament was overloaded with constitutional popular initiatives, which, in fact, re-

lated to ordinary laws. The majority (92:78) of the National Council did not accept applications aimed at extending the constitutional matter by adding a civic legislative initiative to it (Grabowska, 2009, p. 155–156).

The general principles of the citizens' initiative are outlined in Articles 138 and 139 of the Constitution. The Constitution formally distinguishes between a total and a partial revision of the Constitution, although the former has no significance in practice and has never been used. This is why this paper is mainly about partial revision of the Constitution.<sup>3</sup>

According to Article 139 of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, any 100,000 persons eligible to vote may within 18 months of the official publication of their initiative request a partial revision of the Federal Constitution. A popular initiative for the partial revision of the Federal Constitution may take the form of a general proposal or of a specific draft of the provisions proposed.<sup>4</sup>

If the Federal Assembly is in agreement with an initiative in the form of a general proposal, it shall draft the partial revision on the basis of the initiative and submit it to the vote of the people and the cantons. If the Federal Assembly rejects the initiative, it shall submit it to a vote of the people; the people shall decide whether the initiative should be adopted. If they vote in favour, the Federal Assembly shall draft the corresponding bill (*Federal Constitution...*, art. 139).

An initiative in the form of a specific draft shall be submitted to the vote of the people and the cantons. The Federal Assembly shall recommend whether the initiative should be adopted or rejected. It may submit a counter-proposal to the initiative (Musiał-Karg, 2012, p. 124). The function of the counter-proposal is usually to decrease the likelihood of an initiative to pass. Often it leads to the withdrawal of the original initiative.

Article 139b of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation regulates the procedure applicable to an initiative and counter-proposal. The people shall vote on the initiative and the counter-proposal at the same time. The people may vote in favour of both proposals. In response to the third question, they may indicate the proposal that they prefer, if both are accepted. If, in response to the third question one proposal to amend the Constitution receives more votes from the people and the other more votes from the cantons, the proposal that comes into force is that which achieves the higher sum if the percentage of votes of the people and the percentage of votes of the cantons in the third question are added together (*Federal Constitution...*, art. 139b).

These regulations have been in place in principle since 1891.<sup>5</sup> The largest change was the increase in the number of signatures from 50,000 to 100,000 for popular initiatives in 1977. This change was related to the introduction of female suffrage in 1971, whereby the

---

<sup>3</sup> Art. 138. Popular initiative requesting the complete revision of the Federal Constitution: "Any 100,000 persons eligible to vote may within 18 months of the official publication of their initiative propose a complete revision of the Federal Constitution. This proposal must be submitted to a vote of the People" (*Federal Constitution...*).

<sup>4</sup> If the initiative fails to comply with the requirements of consistency of form, and of subject matter, or if it infringes mandatory provisions of international law, the Federal Assembly shall declare it to be invalid in whole or in part.

<sup>5</sup> It must be mentioned that art. 139b was adopted by popular vote on 9 Feb. 2003.

number of eligible voters doubled.<sup>6</sup> While the number of signatures remained fixed, the percentage of signatures required among those with the right to vote had decreased constantly, as the number of voters increased over time. When the initiative was introduced in 1891, 50,000 signatures accounted for about 7.6 per cent of the citizens with the right to vote. This had decreased to about 3 per cent by the end of the 1960s, followed by a sudden drop when female suffrage was introduced. A correction was made in 1977 when the signature requirement doubled, but the percentage has decreased further in recent years. Currently, about 2 per cent of the citizens with the right to vote have to sign an initiative in order to call for a popular vote (Lutz, 2012, p. 22).

There are much higher requirements for a full-scale initiative in other European countries. For example, the signatures of 10 per cent of the electorate are required in Latvia, 300,000 signatures in Lithuania (about 11.4 per cent) and 350,000 in Slovakia which is about 8.2 per cent. Also in many German states 10 per cent are required, whilst Hesse or Sarre set an extremely high threshold of 20 per cent of registered voters (Schiller, Setälä, 2012b, p. 247).

Signature thresholds for agenda initiatives are usually significantly lower than for full-scale initiatives. In Italy 50,000 voters are required, which is only about 0.1 per cent of the whole electorate. In countries with agenda initiative institutions only the following numbers of signatures are required: Austria – 100,000 (about 1.6 per cent), Spain – 500,000 (about 1.5 per cent) and Poland – 100,000 (0.3 per cent). Hungary requires 50,000 signatures (0.6 per cent), Lithuania – 50,000 signatures (1.9 per cent) and Slovakia – 100,000 signatures (2.3 per cent) for an agenda initiative. In several German states signature requirements are about 1 per cent or less of registered voters (Schiller, Setälä, 2012b, p. 247).

### Administering citizens' initiatives

Prior to the start of the collection of signatures, the Federal Chancellery checks the 30 signature list and declares in a ruling whether the signature list corresponds to the form prescribed by law. This preliminary check by the Federal Chancellery includes checking whether the title of an initiative is misleading, or if it contains commercial advertising or personal publicity or gives rise to confusion; and examining whether the text of the initiative is the same in all the official languages (*Federal Act...*, art. 69). This usually means that the Chancellery translates the text of the initiative.

The Federal Chancellery does not check the content or wording of the initiative text (Braun, 2008, p. 30). Both the title and the text of a citizens' initiative are determined by

---

<sup>6</sup> Direct democracy can sometimes obstruct changes of the utmost significance for the development of modern statehood and democracy. This was the case of granting voting rights to women in Switzerland. Although many European and other states granted the rights to vote and stand for election to women in the 1920s and 1930s, Switzerland needed much longer to introduce this change: on the federal level, women's suffrage was granted as late as 1971, and the last to enjoy the right to partake in the political life of their canton were the women of Appenzell Innerrhoden, granted the right in 1990 (Musial-Karg, 2012, p. 113–131).



the proponents of the initiative. However, the proponents do not have an entirely free hand: they must bear in mind certain restrictions on what can be proposed arising from national and international law.

After the preliminary check, the Federal Chancellery publishes the title and text of the initiative, together with the names of the authors in the *Official Federal Gazette* (*Federal Act...*, art. 69). Starting from the day of publication of the *Federal Gazette*, the initiative committee has to collect 100,000 signatures and get the certificates of eligibility to vote of the people on the signature lists from the cantonal/communal offices within 18 months. After expiry of the period allowed for the collection of signatures, the Federal Chancellery checks the validity of the signature lists and establishes whether the popular initiative contains the required number of valid signatures. The Federal Chancellery publishes the ruling on the success of the signature lists in the *Official Federal Gazette* together with details of the numbers of valid and invalid signatures for each canton (*Federal Act...*, art. 72).

What is important is that an initiative is not put to a vote immediately. After an initiative has been handed in, the government writes a report on behalf of the parliament in which the government expresses its view on the proposal. The parliament will then in turn debate the initiative and take a position.

The parliament has the possibility to declare an initiative invalid on two conditions (*Federal Constitution...*, art. 139.3). The first is 'the requirements of consistency of form, and of subject matter', which means that there should not be more than a single issue in a single initiative. For example, one cannot combine an increase in taxes with a limitation on the number of foreigners in the same initiative, because a voter may be in favour of one but against the other, and as a consequence cannot really vote yes or no. The second condition is if an initiative 'infringes mandatory provisions of international law'. The Swiss legal tradition includes general legal norms deeply rooted in Western societies, such as the banning of torture, genocide or slavery.<sup>7</sup> The parliament in general has been very hesitant in declaring initiatives invalid. Only four initiatives have ever been declared invalid. If in doubt, the parliament has tended to declare an initiative as valid, mainly because signatures have been collected already (Lutz, 2012, p. 24).

Initiatives require a double majority: a majority of the total votes and a majority of the cantons (*Popular...*). This is the same as for compulsory referendums. The cantonal vote is determined by the majority vote of the respective canton.

Importantly, launching a popular initiative can cost a considerable amount of money. The committee has to pay all the costs for setting up and reproducing the signature lists

---

<sup>7</sup> In concrete cases, it is sometimes unclear what the mandatory provisions of international law include and there are debates on that. An example is an initiative to prohibit the building of minarets which was voted on in 2009. Circles around the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the Swiss Democratic Union (EDU) launched a federal initiative called "Against the construction of minarets" and began to gather signatures on 1 May, 2007. A little more than a year later the initiative, with well over 110,000 signatures, was filed with the Federal Chancellery. Although the draft bill conflicted with the right to freedom of religion as enshrined in the Swiss Constitution and in international law, the parliament declared it to be valid, since it did not violate *ius cogens* – the peremptory norm of international law (Danaci, 2012, p. 155–164; Marxer, 2012, p. 7–8).

and for any posters, advertisements, public stands or other signature-collecting activities. In the last few years all the initiatives which have been successful have cost about 150,000 francs (*Popular...*).

### Popular initiative in practice

Between 1891 and 2010, a total of 281 initiatives were handed in. However, of those, 29 per cent were withdrawn at a later stage. That an initiative is declared invalid is a rare event. Only four initiatives have ever been declared invalid. Two additional initiatives have been declared as fulfilled by the parliament, which had adopted a similar proposal already (Lutz, 2012, p. 27).

Of the 174 initiatives that made it to the polls, only 18 (10 per cent) got approved before 2010, all the others were rejected. In general, the approval of an initiative has been a very singular event until recently. With very few exceptions, the government and the parliament have always been against an initiative. Between 1949 and 1982 not a single initiative was passed. However, the rejection of initiatives was no longer the norm in the last 30 years: 11 out of 18 approved initiatives were passed in the last 30 years. Four of those initiatives were on environmental issues, two (UN membership, the national day to become a public holiday) were supported by the parliament and the government. Four issues specifically related to crime and foreigners were passed against the will of the parliament and the government. Those four issues have one common aspect – that they were launched by right-wing groups or parties, and in each case there was a discussion as to whether they should be declared invalid or not, because in each case it would have been difficult to implement the initiative without violating the international commitments of Switzerland. In all the cases, the parliament opted not to declare the initiative invalid (Lutz, 2012, p. 27).

The first initiative under the current system, put to the vote in 1893, called for a ban on the Jewish method of slaughtering of animals without stunning them first. It was accepted, against the advice of parliament (*People's..., Initiatives...*).

Initiatives are launched for multiple reasons. The *agenda-setting* effect is relevant for all initiatives. An initiative stimulates public debate, because the media report on the topic on various occasions: when it is launched, when it is handed in, when the government and the parliament debate it, and of course prior to the vote on the initiative. This gives visibility to both the issue at stake and the group behind the initiative (Lutz, 2012, p. 27).

Parties and interest groups also launch initiatives for more *strategic reasons*. In many cases, an initiative does not make it to a vote because the committee which launched and handed in the initiative withdraws the proposal. This is usually done when the government and the parliament propose a compromise which fulfils some but not all parts of the initiative. In these cases, the parliament and the government think that the initiative may tackle a valid question but that the proposal goes too far, and as a consequence they put a counter-proposal on the table. Usually the parliament and the government also calculate what the chances of the initiative are if they do not present a counter-proposal (Lutz, 2012, p. 28).



There are also other, less policy-oriented reasons why an initiative is launched. Very often, especially in recent years, initiatives are launched in order *to mobilise voters*. About 35 per cent of initiatives are launched by parties only, another 15 per cent by parties and interest groups together. In half of the cases the leading organisation is not a party. However, even in those cases individual members of parliament from one or more parties are part of the committee that launches an initiative, and parties often support signature collection. Parties do this more and more in direct relation to the electoral cycle. They know that it is important to dominate the campaign agenda in order to win elections. One way to dominate the agenda is to launch an initiative in the election year, or possibly to try to make sure that the vote itself takes place in the election year (Lutz, 2012, p. 28).

### Conclusion

Popular initiative is an effective means of active citizen participation in the process of governance. Regardless of the final result, it ensures that all citizens, particularly those who are deprived of political representation in the parliament, can determine socially desirable objectives for future statutory regulations. Moreover, it shapes the conditions for verification of the process and of the nature of the member activities of the representative body. Thus, the use of the popular initiative allows citizens not only to affect the current parliament operations, but it also becomes a reference point for the future political assessment of their representatives' actions (Jabłoński, 2002, p. 648–649).

In Switzerland, most subject matters can be proposed in a constitutional initiative (Musiał-Karg, 2012, p. 123). The Swiss parliament only checks the initiatives according to very fundamental criteria, such as coherence with the basic norms of international law. There is no constitutional court with a review function. Only on a couple of occasions has the Swiss parliament declared an initiative invalid on substantial grounds, such as violation of international treaties or on grounds of the lack of unity of form.

As is well known, in Switzerland the institutions of direct democracy, including popular initiative on constitutional amendments, play a most prominent role, both in terms of frequency and in terms of impact, in a political system shaped by consensus politics and a rather stable party system. Since the optional referendum has a well-established decision-controlling function, popular initiative can, indeed, concentrate on agenda-setting and policy-promoting activities. This can be realised not only by successful ballot votes, but also by initiating public debate on new issues.<sup>8</sup> Since the Swiss parliament and government operate in terms of consensus politics there seems to be an open space for innovative agenda-setting outside of the main political forces. In recent years, this opportunity has increasingly been used by right-wing populist movements which have successfully raised controversial issues such as the ban on minarets and the deportation of criminal foreigners. The success of these initiatives has raised demands for stricter parliamentary

---

<sup>8</sup> In Switzerland only some 10 per cent of initiatives put to the vote have succeeded (18 of a total of 174). However, in Switzerland the impact of initiatives cannot be measured just by their success at the ballot, as some initiatives have led to legislative changes through parliamentary negotiations.

control over the contents of initiatives (Schiller, Setälä, 2012b, p. 255–256). This has also increased caution towards popular initiatives and other direct democratic devices outside Switzerland.

### References

- Aubert J. F. (1977), *The Swiss Federal Constitution*, in: *Modern Switzerland*, ed. J. Murray, Palo Alto.
- Blanko-Abstimmungstermine*, [http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/va/vab\\_1\\_3\\_3\\_1.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/va/vab_1_3_3_1.html), 8.07.2014.
- Braun N. (2008), *Direct democracy in Switzerland*, in: *Direct Democracy: The International IDEA Handbook*, eds. V. Beramendi, A. Ellis, B. Kaufman, M. Kornblith, L. LeDuc, P. McGuire, T. Schiller, P. Svensson, Stockholm.
- Cronin T. E. (1989), *Direct Democracy. The Politics of Initiative, Referendum, and Recall*, Cambridge.
- Dahl R. A. (1995), *Demokracja i jej krytycy*, Kraków.
- Danaci D. (2012), *The Minaret Ban in Switzerland: An Exception to the Rule?*, in: *Direct Democracy and Minorities*, ed. W. Marxer, BERN.
- Federal Act on Political Rights of 17 December 1976* (Status as of 1 January 2013).
- Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of 18 April 1999* (Status as of 23 September 2012).
- Grabowska S. (2009), *Formy demokracji bezpośredniej w wybranych państwach europejskich*, Rzeszów.
- Initiatives populaires – Répertoire chronologique*, [http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/pore/vi/vis\\_2\\_2\\_5\\_1.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/pore/vi/vis_2_2_5_1.html), 10.07.2014.
- Jabłoński M. (2002), *Obywatelskie prawo inicjatywy ustawodawczej*, in: *Prawa i wolności obywatelskie w Konstytucji RP*, ed. B. Banaszak, A. Preisner, Warszawa.
- Jabłoński M. (2010), *Demokracja partycypacyjna w Unii Europejskiej. Rozważania na tle wprowadzenia instytucji obywatelskiej inicjatywy ustawodawczej*, “Przegląd Sejmowy”, no. 4.
- Kobach K. W. (1994), *Switzerland*, in: *Referendums around the World. The Growing Use of Direct Democracy*, eds. D. Butler, A. Ranney, Washington.
- Lutz G. (2012), *Switzerland: Citizens’ Initiatives as a Measure to Control the Political Agenda*, in: *Citizens’ initiatives in Europe. Procedures and consequences of Agenda-Setting by Citizens*, eds. M. Setälä, T. Schiller, Basingstoke.
- Marczewska-Rytko M. (2012), *Popular initiative and referendum in Switzerland (2000–2010)*, “Studies in Politics and Society”, no. 9.
- Marxer W. (2012), *Foreword*, in: *Direct Democracy and Minorities*, ed. W. Marxer, BERN.
- Musiał-Karg M. (2012), *Demokracja bezpośrednia a wprowadzenie praw wyborczych dla kobiet – przykład Szwajcarii*, “Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne”, no. 4.
- Musiał-Karg M. (2012), *Elektroniczne referendum w Szwajcarii. Wybrane kierunki zmian helweckiej demokracji bezpośredniej*, WNPiD UAM, Poznań.
- People’s rights in Switzerland*, [http://www.swissworld.org/en/politics/peoples\\_rights/peoples\\_rights/](http://www.swissworld.org/en/politics/peoples_rights/peoples_rights/), 10.07.2014.
- Pichler J. W. (2012), *The Commission’s Regulation Proposal on the European Citizens’ Initiative*, in: *Direct Democracy and Minorities*, ed. W. Marxer, BERN.
- Popular initiatives*, <https://www.ch.ch/en/popular-initiatives/>, 10.07.2014.
- Rozporządzenie Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady (UE) Nr 211/2011 z dnia 16 lutego 2011 roku w sprawie inicjatywy obywatelskiej*, Dziennik Urzędowy Unii Europejskiej L 65 z 11.3.2011.

- Sarnecki P. (2003), *Zgromadzenie Federalne. Parlament Konfederacji Szwajcarskiej*, Warszawa.
- Schiller T., Setälä M. (2012a), *Introduction*, in: *Citizens' initiatives in Europe. Procedures and consequences of Agenda-Setting by Citizens*, eds. M. Setälä, T. Schiller, Basingstoke.
- Schiller T., Setälä M. (2012b), *Comparative Findings*, in: *Citizens' initiatives in Europe. Procedures and consequences of Agenda-Setting by Citizens*, eds. M. Setälä, T. Schiller, Basingstoke.
- Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007 (2007/C 306/01).*

---

## Inicjatywa ludowa w Szwajcarii

### Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu było ustalenie roli, jaką pełni inicjatywa ludowa w systemie politycznym Szwajcarii. Inicjatywę ludową (obywatelską) możemy zdefiniować jako procedurę, która umożliwia obywatelom przedstawienie swoich propozycji ustawodawczych (konstytucyjnych) poprzez zgromadzenie wymaganej liczby podpisów pod wnioskiem. Inicjatywa ludowa w Szwajcarii pozwala grupom obywateli złożyć propozycje w zakresie zmiany konstytucji. Należy podkreślić, iż na poziomie federacji nie funkcjonuje inicjatywa w zakresie ustawodawstwa zwykłego.

Spśród 174 inicjatyw ludowych, które zostały poddane pod głosowanie w referendum, do roku 2010 jedynie 18 (10%) zyskało aprobatę większości. Pozostałe wnioski odrzucono. Inicjatywy są zgłaszane z różnorodnych powodów. Elementem wspólnym jest efekt tworzenia programu politycznego. Partie polityczne oraz grupy interesu podejmują inicjatywy także z powodów strategicznych. W Szwajcarii instytucje demokracji bezpośredniej (w tym inicjatywa ludowa) odgrywają istotną rolę, zarówno w zakresie częstotliwości stosowania, jak i pod względem wywieranego wpływu, w systemie politycznym ukształtowanym przez politykę porozumienia i dość stabilny system partyjny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** demokracja bezpośrednia, inicjatywa ludowa, Szwajcaria

