Real Democracy (Direct Democracy) & Feasible Implementation

This article collection is against the doctrines which state "We cannot change the system" or "There is no better system than the current one"!

1) 2 pages document about the implementation of Real Democracy (Direct Democracy) today:
https://pantelicgr.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/real-democracy-direct-democracy-feasible-implementation.pdf
(or https://issuu.com/pantelicgr/docs/real_democracy__direct_democracy___)
2) 1 page document about the continuance of an indicative operating framework which aims to unanimity and respects fundamental human rights of individuals and minorities:
https://pantelicgr.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/real-democracy-direct-democracy-indicative-operating-framework.pdf
(or https://issuu.com/pantelicgr/docs/real_democracy__direct_democracy____0ff33bf90d304d)

Pericles Network (is a way of implementing Direct Democracy which was developed many years ago in "National Technical University of Athens"):
1) https://pantelicgr.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/pericles-network-sun01.pdf
(or https://issuu.com/pantelicgr/docs/pericles_network_-_sun01)
2) http://www.ntua.gr/periklesnet/page3/page3.html
(or http://old.ntua.gr/periklesnet/page3/page3.html)

Vio.Me. (a self-managed factory in Thessaloniki, Greece):
1) https://roarmag.org/films/vio-me-global-uprisings/
2) http://www.viome.org/search/label/English

Initiative 136 (a self-management initiative to stop water privatization in Thessaloniki, Greece):
1) http://www.enetenglish.gr/?i=news.en.economy&id=838
2) http://www.136.gr/article/citizens-bid-control-thessalonikis-water

The paradigm of frequent referendums by people's initiative in Switzerland for validating laws made by citizens or for cancelling laws made by their government:
1) http://direct-democracy.geschichte-schweiz.ch/
2) http://direct-democracy.geschichte-schweiz.ch/switzerlands-system-referendums.html

View and download all the above in one PDF file:
https://issuu.com/pantelicgr/docs/real_democracy___feasible_implement
(or there is also a wordpress PDF file link in the corresponding online post)

I wish Freedom to all of you!

Real Democracy (Direct Democracy) & Feasible Implementation

Maybe "Indignados Movement", "Square Movement" and "Occupy Movement" have been transferred to citizens' committees and collectives in various neighborhoods, but their political position about the establishment of Direct Democracy is the only way to get rid of the corruption of today's political system (You may see here the Direct Democratic procedure for the new Constitution of Iceland):

It is the most pure and fair structure of a human society (until today, August of 2011) because of the simplest reason that decisions are directly formed and taken by the people: the citizens of that human society.

In order for **Direct Democracy** to be clear, **Representative "Democracy"** will be defined.
Democracy simply means that people decide about their own issues.
Indirect (Representative) "Democracy" is a social structure where decision making is taken by elected representatives of people, not by the people themselves.
In a version of Representative "Democracy" which is today's **Parliamentarism** decisions are taken by elected members of Parliament who are not committed by law to follow the will of citizens (for example referendums by initiative of the people or members of Parliament), not even for important issues like Education, Health and Economy.
Also, there is no accountability of Parliament Members to the people and furthermore, there is no capability for people to replace some of Parliament Members during their 4 year mandate if they are considered incapable by the people.
Finally, Parliament Members maintain "legislative immunity" so that the law cannot affect them and they remain undisturbed while they violate the laws of the society which they are supposed to serve.

There is no real Democracy today because Parliamentarism is established which results to Parliament Members' lawlessness and the violation of citizens' will.

In **Direct Democracy** every citizen:
- votes for proposals and not for representatives
- proposes and forms issues and solutions for voting

Thus, it is clear that **real Democracy is Direct Democracy** and in order for it to be established, citizens must handle all matters of their society and not to let any elected "leaders" to betray people's trust like nowdays.

All the above analysis is about the **political dimension** of a Democratic society.
Another equally important dimension is the **economic** one which affects the production and the distribution of products and services and thus the quality of people's life.

The current economic system is the financial one and it is called **Capitalism**.
In Capitalism, owners of large funds (capitalists/bourgeoisie) who mainly are industrialists, shipowners and big bankers control the production and work of the people, present produced wealth as their own and **always function their businesses based on profit and not on society needs**.
So, the few and financially strong decide and dictate the many and financially weaker citizens, employ people (often without insurance) and fire people according to their own interests as they do not have the obligation to care about the workers' survival and needs.
A predictable consequence of the above is the high unemployment…

Thus, **Capitalism cancels Democracy** because in this situation citizens are forced to become hostages of financially strong in order to survive and moreover, they do not have the time to think, to express themselves and to be free for deciding about social issues.

The solution to this economic problem is the **self-organization** of society which is the collective organization of economy by working citizens using **Direct Democratic procedures** in businesses and production units.

So with this way, there is no exploitation of humans by humans and furthermore, all workers in every workplace take equal responsibility for the business to succeed, they can equally satisfy their needs with progress and co-operation with the other workplaces of society and to be more productive when they want it.

Thus, **real Democracy is Direct Democracy in politics and economy** because this way **equality, freedom, justice** are truly ensured and **honest communication, solidarity, understanding** are making progress between the people. All these with the use of current **technology** can easily bring **social prosperity and specifically education, health, entertainment and comfort for all people** on condition that citizens rule their own lives.

There are many ways for Direct Democracy to function and there could be more of them providing citizens to discuss with each other. An indicative way is shown below:

Citizens from across the country are organized depending on the scope of issues:
- in local level (municipalities, cities etc) for local issues (decentralization)
- in periphery level (county etc) for periphery issues
- in country level for issues of all citizens in that country

For the decision procedure in **each level, there can be applied combinations of the ways below**:

There has already been developed the "**Square Movement**" across all country (information on: http://realdemocracygr.wordpress.com/ and http://www.youtube.com/user/RealDemocracyGr).

Every local central square is now a collective organ and citizens:
1. gather and express opinions with equally distributed time
2. submit proposals and suggest changes in proposals which have already been suggested
3. vote for the final proposals which have been formed
4. for each voted proposal, some volunteers, elected or selected by drawing lots of the gathered people, take to implement it if it is decided by the assembly
5. on regular dates, for example every week, the ones who have taken to implement the decisions account to the citizens' assembly and apologize for the results to the citizens' assembly and some of them may **be directly replaced** if the citizens' assembly decides so
6. the implementation groups have their own meetings related to their issue and all citizens may join them in order to ensure their correct and transparent operation

For efficient and comprehensive participation of citizens in the Direct Democratic procedure, there may be designated equal viewing time for each person or team in communication media (Mass Media, Internet etc) using priority order or drawing lots so that they express their proposals. The final proposals for voting are logged and gathered and a ballot paper which contains those proposals is made by a team of elected/selected people by drawing lots/volunteers. And then, **there are at least 4 complementary ways for the final decisions to be made**:
1. traditional voting using ballot box in cities, municipalities etc
2. the "Perikles Network" of the "National Technical University of Athens" which is a comprehensive proposal (information on: http://www.ntua.gr/periklesnet/page3/page3.html or http://old.ntua.gr/periklesnet/page3/page3.html)
3. terminal machines like today's OPAP – Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports
4. e-voting (many secure ways on the Internet)

For serious issues, citizens can demand from persons who take to implement the decisions:
- written commitment for the completion of the implementation within a defined time interval.

Real Democracy (Direct Democracy) & Indicative Operating Framework

As for legislative drafting committees (where drafting of laws takes place) or the other organs which are decided/defined or withdrawn exclusively and only by the general assembly of citizens (which is the only organ that validates the proposals concerning the satisfaction of society's needs), re-election limits are needed and specifically these are the establishment of restricted number of mandates and non-consecutive mandates of directly revocable members who are selected by the general assembly of citizens mainly using drawing lots and possibly using election. And that's because many times the permanence of specific persons in positions of responsibility leads to corruption, spoils system, personality cult and nepotism in public life. Moreover, drawing lots ensures the avoidance of personality cult (in contrast to election which is affected by popularity of persons), trains all citizens in several positions of responsibility by having them switch every such a position, thus promotes the responsibility of citizens and furthermore, this randomness of the access of citizens to such positions could protect public interest because that's generally satisfied by citizen participation in commons. All these combined with direct revocability of members by the general assembly of citizens ensure that, in the end, public interest and social needs would be satisfied, even when some members (tend to) do arbitrariness against society because in this situation citizens can anytime replace them with new uncorrupted members.

Also, in (Direct) Democracy the best co-decision procedure is the synthesis of the proposed solutions after an in-depth conversation which aims to unanimity and respect of fundamental human rights of individuals and minorities (like the right of human life, freedom of speech, equality, equal access to education and health etc) and the acceptable ways of co-decision may be the following ones with sequential priority order depending on the urgency of situations:
1) unanimity (100% of the general assembly of citizens)
2) approximate unanimity (for example 95% of the general assembly of citizens)
3) increased majority (for example 2/3 of the general assembly of citizens)
4) majority (50% +1 vote in the general assembly of citizens)

One additional concern for the solution of an issue and the simultaneous respect of documented minority proposals related with this issue could be the creation of a priority list with the solutions which are going to be applied starting with majority proposals and then continuing with minority ones depending on how much they are being accepted, for example:
1) majority proposal #1
2) majority proposal #2 (it is applied in case of failure of the above proposal)
3) minority proposal #1 (it is applied in case of failure of the above proposal)
4) minority proposal #2 (it is applied in case of failure of the above proposal)
etc.

Finally, if 1% of citizens collect signatures for petition, a referendum may take place regarding any issue and any solution which are proposed by citizens providing the fundamental human rights of individuals are not violated (a related analysis has already been done above).

Democracy is a method of Public Administration that derives its name from the Greek words Demos (Citizens, City, State) and Kratos (Rule, Power). Ideally it means the Rule of the Citizens.

It is known and practiced today as a method of public voting at selected time intervals or (at its best) as an opportunity for referenda on a limited number of issues per year.

All of the above are parts of what is known as Representative or Indirect Democracy.

The Pericles Project suggests an alternative system that replaces all the existing "democracy" methods while introducing the possibility for improved local direct citizen affairs management. It derives its Principles from an historic period, that of the Golden Age of Pericles in Ancient Athens, and it introduces practices that potentially actively involve all citizens (Direct Democracy) in the Public Decision Making Process (PDMP).

One of the reasons that any involvement of great numbers of citizens was impossible to date, was the cost of technology and the fear that any access to E-Democracy would be limited to an elite that had access to and was familiar with computers.

Although computer technology addresses any problem involving big numbers of data, on its own does little for the project. Studies in M.I.T. on the subject, show that computers and the underlying technology are simply magnifiers of infrastructure quality. If the notions supported are not correct their computerised version will be worse. In other words, "the concept" remains the main paradigm of solving problems involving social parameters.

Working on these ideas, the Pericles proposal argues that it is possible to realize a pilot system which will improve the immediacy that is lacking in present day "Democracy". As a novel application it is not expected to be engaged as a "committing" mechanism, but -initially- as a communication expediting agent. In the early stages it will ideally be a system of improved communication among local or broader authorities and the citizens.
This is why the Pericles Project brings together principles from the disciplines of Political Science, Communication, and Computer Science.

In brief, local citizens are provided with a smart card (that is not personal or identifiable in anyway, yet it does optionally contain some demographic info about the user) which they may use in the following ways:
- Deposit opinion on any issue of local, regional or national importance. They do this by utilizing user friendly kiosks[1] with touch screens, easily accessible in the city. Each process is open for at least one week during which the voter may make use of the system at his/hers convenience. This particular function is "sealed" and is not accessible through the internet. All other functions are internet friendly[2]
- Introduce issues of importance to themselves or any small interest group. They then solicit through the system public support to their proposed issue, which when reaching a critical percentage, i.e. 6% of the voting body, will automatically be upgraded to an issue under vote.
- Support, ignore or reject issues that fellow citizens have suggested as important for an election process.
- Download information on issues that are currently being decided upon, or those coming up shortly.
- Educate themselves on the main features of the system.
- At a later development stage, citizens are allowed to tele-confer through the public system.
- Disabled citizens needs are taken into account

Fig. 1. Architectural design of PERICLES kiosks NETWORK kiosk

---

[1] *The terminal stations (touchscreen kiosks) are positioned in central places of the communities, housed in low cost structures which aesthetically are linked to classic Hellenic architecture and connected to the network central computers (Pericles Intranet).*

[2] *In a few years' time, when no "computer illiteracy", or public trust issues are present, all functions will be available on the net*

The following paragraphs briefly describe the main features and functions of the system in an application chronological order (specific example refers to a small city which is later to become a member of the broader network. Most of the following entries chronologically overlap):

- System Installed and Tested
- System citizen-education actions commence.
- Local authority officials trained
- Local "constitution" of system finalized -according to system parameters- and made public.
- Local system information campaign commences. Call for citizens to get their cards.
- City council selects a number of initial issues.
- Supporters and opponents of initial issues are informed and provided with the fundamental means to author their views on the Pericles Citizen Information Subsystem (both on system network and the internet)
- Citizens consult the system on the issues on which they are called to decide in i.e. 2 weeks time. They do so over the net while those with insufficient means or skills do so in the public kiosks.
- Citizens vote on the above issues.
- Citizens -at any time period- introduce their own issues and seek support
- Citizens -at any time period- decide on whether other citizen issues should be part of a later election process / referendum
- Voting Period closes at a predetermined date. The electronic "ballot box" opens at the presence of reps of the supporters of the issues involved, the local authorities and the System Auditor.
- The results are made public and forwarded to the local executive bodies which are bounded by system basic choice parameters referring to the degree of commitment or simple consultation value of the process.
- The results are further interpreted on the basis of the demographic information that was optionally provided by the voters during the voter's "registration" to the system. That info has been "registered" in their cards and allows for such a process.

The Project consists of the following subsystems:
The **Democracy Station Network (DSN)** consists of the sealed system of linked hardware that makes access possible, located in public places.
The **E-Pericles System** is the network that provides for all kinds of Internet usage.
The **Pericles.net** subsystem is the high security sealed software that handles the voting process.
The **Aspasia.net** subsystem is the one availing information to all citizens on issues before and during any e-democratic process.
The **Kleisthenis.net** subsystem is the public teleconference carrier.

The proposed experimental system of direct democracy has these goals:

- The study of a prototype model of authority-citizen communication, aided by technology.
- To study and apply methods for citizens incremental education to the notions of direct democracy.
- To provide a prototype concept of opinion polling, where the people are part of the query creation mechanism.

Possible outcomes of this implementation can be new concepts concerning public decision making, as for example the notion of **"fractional vote"**[3].

---

[3] *Individual vote is weighted according to different criteria. For example a woman's vote may count as 1.3 a man's vote in an abortion ballot. This notion could be very useful in marketing research, as well.*

Vio.Me: self-organization in Greece — a documentary

June 5, 2013

Photo: Raul Godoy de Zanon

COMMONS & COOPERATION

This short documentary by Global Uprisings tells the inspiring story of the Greek workers who recovered and self-manage their factory in Thessaloniki.

DIRECTOR
- **Brandon Jourdan**
- **Marianne Maeckelbergh**

Global Uprisings is an independent news site and video series dedicated to showing responses to the economic crisis and authoritarianism. Since 2011, Brandon Jourdan and Marianne Maeckelbergh have been travelling, researching, and making documentary films.

The workers at the Vio.Me. Factory in Thessaloniki, Greece have quickly grown into a symbol of self-management internationally. After going on strike and occupying their factory, on February 12, 2013 they re-opened the factory and started production under workers' control. For many, the factory represents a new potential way forward for unemployed workers in Greece – seizing the means of production, running factories without bosses, producing only goods that are needed, and distributing them through solidarity networks.

"Every extra profit we make will be given out to people who need it. Our plan is to offer help to unemployed people or others who are in great need," says Dimitrios Koumasiouras, a worker from Vio.Me.

This film tells the story of how the worker's re-opened the factory under self-management and looks to where the factory is headed now:
https://vimeo.com/67236882

Thessaloniki citizens' initiative seeks investors to buy city water company

Group proposes social management through local-level cooperatives
Updated At: 16:07 Monday 13 May 2013

According to the initiative's manifesto, the government's privatisation plan is another case of implementation of the model 'privatisation of the profits, socialisation of the loss'

Thessaloniki citizens take part in a protest against the privatisation of the city's water company Eyath (file photo)

A citizens' initiative in Thessaloniki citizens is seeking the help of an international consortium of socially responsible investors to acquire a 51% stake in the city's public water company Eyath, which the government is seeking to privatise.

The government last February announced a public tender to sell the controlling stake in Thessaloniki Water Supply & Sewerage (Eyath).

Initiative 136 is among four investment groups that have expressed interest in the international tender for the purchase of a 51% stake in the company.

The citizens' initiative opposes the privatisation of the company and proposes its social management through local-level cooperatives.

The name of the initiative comes from dividing the estimated value of Eyath by the number of users, which produces the symbolic number of €136.

According to the initiative's manifesto, the government's privatisation plan for Eyath "is another case of implementation of the model 'privatisation of the profits, socialisation of the loss'".

"Water is the ultimate commodity that nature offers us and the United Nations has recognised that the access to clean water and sanitation is a human right," Initiative 136 says.

They stress that Eyath is an efficient and profitable company that offers quality water services in low prices, without ever reporting any financial loss. The company's profits during the last 5 years were €75m, while the price of the takeover after the collapse of its stock market value is not more than €55m.

http://www.136.gr/article/citizens-bid-control-thessalonikis-water

The citizens' bid to control Thessaloniki's water!

"Citizens' Union for Water"

PRESS RELEASE
May 2, 2013

10 points of the Expression of Interest for the acquisition of 51% of Thessaloniki Water Supply & Sewerage SA (EYATH), submitted by "Citizens' Union for Water" to TAIPED.

The Union of Non-Profit Water Cooperatives of the Municipalities of the Thessaloniki area under the name "Citizens' Union for Water", created through the actions of "Initiative 136", which has been struggling for two years against the privatisation of EYATH and in favour of citizen´s control over Thessaloniki's water, presented at a press conference the 10 key points of the Expression of Interest for the acquisition of 51% of EYATH, submitted by the "Citizens' Union for Water" to Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (TAIPED).

The presentation was made by Lazaros Aggelou, spokesperson of the «Citizens' Union for Water», Kostas Nikolaou, PhD, Chemical and Environmental Sciences, member of the Water Cooperative of the 5th Municipal Community of Thessaloniki and Kostas Marioglou, vice president of EYATH workers' union, member of the " K136 Solidarity " cooperative.

The 10 points of the presentation are:

1. "Citizens' Union for Water" is a Union of Social Cooperative Water and Sewerage Companies of Thessaloniki that has the aim of acquiring and managing EYATH and of providing water to households and businesses under the principles of high quality, low prices, environmental protection, democratic operation and social justice. Our proposal utilizes the successful experience of the largest and most successful citizen participation in share acquisition, that of British Telecom and British Gas, **with a significant comparative advantage: the goal of non-profit management and operation.**

2. Our program is summarized as follows:

i. Citizens who wish to become members of the primary municipal cooperatives of water will be able to make a simple application to these cooperatives.

ii. Some of the most important Social Responsibility Investors (SRIs) in the world, as well as microloan funds will be allowed to provide microloans, financing any prospective members in order to ensure equal opportunities to participate in the cooperatives, regardless of their financial situation.

iii. The SRIs will direct funding to members of the cooperatives rather than the cooperatives themselves or the Citizens' Union for Water. In this way the Citizens' Union for Water and the cooperatives will be completely free of debt.

iv. We will use a major provider of financial services to municipal organizations for water and sewerage, US Bank NA.

v. Citizens' Union for Water will use its own methods for distribution of cooperative shares. These methods may include the distribution of shares over periods of time which may extend to ten years or more in duration.

3. We offer positive responses to concerns regarding the denationalisation of EYATH:

• To concerns that the sale of vital infrastructure such as water supply and sewerage services to multinational corporations will have a negative effect on the local community and the environment. Notable examples include Paris, Berlin, London and many other cities in Europe, USA, Canada and worldwide.

• To concerns that the current value of the 51% may be too low, as the financial crises in southern Europe have depressed market prices. However, if the beneficiaries of any future appreciation of the value of the company are the Greek citizens, acting as its owners, the profits from appreciation would not be lost to Greece and its citizens. Instead, they would be reinvested into the Greek economy.

• To concerns that a prospective foreign owner might wish to shed a lot of jobs, as they may have other employees who could fulfil roles within the business once acquired. If the company is acquired by the citizens this risk will not exist.

The idea of citizens' acquisition of EYATH has been very well received by the vast majority of the population, as well as by local institutions across the political-ideological spectrum. Specifically,

a) the municipal councils of any and all municipalities that are provided with water by EYATH have issued unanimous resolutions against the privatization of EYATH, its sale to multinationals and foreign investors,

b) at the initiative of the EYATH Workers' Trade Union, a Steering Committee of institutions and citizens of Thessaloniki who oppose the privatization of EYATH has been established with the participation of several local authorities, workers' syndicates, citizens' movements, etc.

c) The Regional Union of Municipalities of Central Macedonia, at a meeting held specifically for discussing our proposal, has taken a unanimous decision to claim the management of EYATH from the Greek State and if this is not achieved, to cooperate with the Initiative 136 (the Citizens' Union for Water) for the acquisition of EYATH by the citizens, with the support and participation of the Municipalities of Thessaloniki.

In 2010, the United Nations recognized that the access to clean water and sanitation is a human right. Furthermore, the European Parliament recognized that water is a common resource of humanity and access to potable water is a fundamental human right. The cooperative management of water supply and sewerage is not an isolated local phenomenon but occurs in countries with different climatic, economic, social and political conditions. Examples of such cooperative management systems can be found in Finland, Denmark, Italy, USA, Canada, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Bolivia, Philippines, etc.

4. The global experience and international research studies of the World Bank, the European Parliament, research centres, and U.S. universities, came to the same conclusion, namely, that everywhere in the world privatization has been accompanied by the degradation of water quality, increase in water loss, deterioration of infrastructure and increase in prices. Based on the above, a comparative evaluation between private management of water supply and sewerage and management by cooperatives of citizens-consumers shows that private management scores negatively on 15 evaluation criteria, while on the same 15 criteria, management by the citizens scores positively.

5. The first 6 cooperatives created so far, which participate in the Union of Cooperatives, are: 1st, 4th and 5th Municipal Community of Thessaloniki, Municipality of Pilea-Hortiatis, Municipality of Evosmos-Kordelio and Solidarity I136 (allowing participation of non-residents of Thessaloniki from Greece and the rest of Europe).

The cooperatives of the 3rd Municipal Community of Thessaloniki, Municipality of Kalamaria and Municipality of Ambelokipoi-Menemeni are now in a process of formalisation. More local water cooperatives are underway in all the remaining municipalities in the greater area of Thessaloniki.

Each new cooperative is integrated in the union, as established by the statute of both the Union and the cooperatives.

The aforementioned cooperatives correspond geographically to 55% of the population of Thessaloniki that is served by EYATH.

6. Citizens' Union for Water is being assisted by the following team of specialist companies: **Bondholder Communications Group** (BondCom). (The initiative to support the goals of Citizens' Union for Water is led by Robert Apfel, BondCom's President and philhellene, with extensive experience in the securities market and banking sector. Recently, the company successfully completed the Hellenic Republic debt restructuring, which involved over €200 billion of debt securities and was the largest sovereign debt restructuring in history), **John Redwood** and **Citigate Dewe Rogerson**.

7. Simultaneous with the signing of the EAYTH Share Purchase Agreement (i.e., the settlement date), the ownership and stewardship of Citizens' Union for Water will be structured in the following manner:

Potential cooperative shares are projected to be at least 520,000, corresponding to an equal number of water meters of EYATH. They will be acquired through the registration in the Union's cooperatives of citizens-consumers, workers, households and businesses in Thessaloniki, of the citizens of Greece and the Greeks of the Diaspora, of all citizens of the world.

Two procedures of registration to the cooperatives will operate simultaneously:
a) of the SRIs and
b) of the water cooperatives according to the provisions of their statutes.

Direct funding of citizens will be provided by a group of 22 Socially Responsible Investors (SRIs) from France, Italy, England, Germany, Denmark, Norway and the USA. This group comprises ethical - non-profit - social cooperative banks with self-managed collectives that provide microcredit, social cooperatives, trade unions' mutual funds, fair trade promotion funds, non-profit institutions, institutions operating within the framework of social and solidarity economy. Their activity involves financing, through microcredits, initiatives that promote access to water, hygiene, sanitation, environmental protection, tackling poverty etc. by the citizens.

The SRIs have affirmed that they do not, for themselves, express a desire to be long term owners of the shares of Citizens' Union for Water. The total amount of funds available to these SRIs exceeds €30 billion.

8. Brief description of the strategic approach of Citizens' Union for Water regarding the transaction.

We will rely on one of the most valuable elements of the water supply and sewerage system: its qualified personnel. We will rely on the personnel's knowledge to promote the improvement of water supply in Thessaloniki.

We are being aided by Social Responsibility Investors. We will build on their investment, and carry forward their mission of improving the lives of the people of the Earth.

9. Steps we have taken to ensure the continuity of the existing management team and personnel.

Citizens' Union for Water has communicated with the existing employees and senior management of EYATH. As a group, they are well trained and have produced commendable results, which are evident in the company's Annual Reports and Financial Statements. This group should be retained. The management team consists of senior managers of EYATH and covers all critical managerial and operational areas in the organizational chart of the company.

10. Our proposal clearly outlines the objectives and the strategy to achieve them, regarding a) provision of water b) sewerage c) operational improvements c) new operational units, while special emphasis is given to addressing the issue of the increased rate of water leakage in the network of EYATH (currently 26%).

Switzerland's Direct Democracy

Definition of Direct Democracy

Direct Democracy can be defined as a form or system of democracy giving citizens an extraodinary amount of **participation in the legislation process** and granting them a **maximum of political self-determination**.

Origins of Switzerland's Direct Democracy

In Switzerland, *Direct Democracy* has a long tradition: The **origins of Direct Democracy** can be traced back to the late the middle ages: archaic forms (assemblies of the electorate discussing and deciding major political issues) have been practised in part of the country since the founding of the Old Swiss Confederacy in 1291.

The origins of Switzerland's modern system of *Direct Democracy* with formalized opinion polls and frequent *referendums* lie in the experimental phase of democracy in the 19th century when Switzerland was surrounded by monarchies on the European continent that showed little to none enthusiasm for democracy.
> History of Switzerland's Federal Constitution (1848) and Direct Democracy

Basic Facts & Features of Switzerland's Direct Democracy

- The Swiss constitution defines in some detail all areas subject to federal legislation. Anything not explicitly mentioned is left to the legislation of the cantons (federal states). Therefore it is necessary to update the constitution from time to time to take account of changes in society and technology that demand for standardised solutions throughout the country.
  The Swiss constitution may be changed only if an overall majority of the electorate agrees in a referendum and if the electorate of a majority of the cantons agrees, too. The latter is sometimes just a little more difficult because it means that the rather conservative electorate of smaller rural cantons must be convinced as well.
  Nevertheless, minor changes to the Swiss constitution are quite frequent without affecting the basic ideas nor the stability of Switzerland's Political System. To the contrary: *Direct Democracy* is the key to Switzerland's famous political stability.

- All **federal laws** are subject to a three to **four step process**:
  1) A first draft is prepared by experts in the federal administration.
  2) This draft is presented to a large number of people in a formalized kind of opinion poll: Cantonal governments, political parties as well as many non-governmental organisations and associations of the civil society may comment on the draft and propose changes.
  3) The result is presented to dedicated parliamentary commissions of both chambers of the federal parliament, discussed in detail behind closed doors and finally debated in public sessions of both chambers of parliament. Members of parliament do take into account the results of step 2, because if the fail to do so, step 4 will be inevitable.
  4) The electorate has a veto-right on laws: If anybody is able to find 50,000 citizens signing a form demanding for a referendum within 3 months, a referendum must be held. Laws do only need to find a majority of the national electorate to pass a referendum, not a majority of cantons. Referendums on more than a dozen laws per year are not unusual in Switzerland.

- **Frequent referendums** on minor changes to the federal or cantonal constitutions, new or changed laws, budgets etc,
  - referendums on constitutional changes are mandatory
  - referendums on laws are "facultative" (only if 50,000 citizens, i.e. roughly 1.2% of the electorate, demand for it)
  Learn more about [Referendums in Switzerland](#)

- Corresponding rules apply for **referendums on cantonal and communal level**. While referendums concerning budgets are not possible on federal level they are common on communal level. It depends on the 26 cantonal constitutions whether they are mandatory, facultative or possible at all.
  The number of citizens that may demand for a cantonal or communal referendum depends on the size of the corresponding electorate, as a rule of thumb, about 1% are usual.

- **Popular Initiative**: 100,000 citizens (roughly 2.5% of the electorate) may demand for a change of the constitution by signing a form. The federal parliament is obliged to discuss the initiative, it may decide to recommend or to reject the initiative or it may propose an alternative. Whatever they choose to do, all citizens will finally decide in a referendum whether to accept the initiative, the alternate proposal or stay without change.

http://direct-democracy.geschichte-schweiz.ch/switzerlands-system-referendums.html

Switzerland's Referendums

Frequent referendums concerning **changes to the constitution** as well as **laws** are the key element of Switzerland's unique and well established tradition of **Direct Democracy**. More than 100 years of experience with referendums on national, cantonal and communal level have shown that *Switzerland's system of referendums* guarantees not only a **maximum amount of self-determination** to the citizens but also a **stability of the political system** Switzerland is often envied for.

Referendums and Political Stability

Frequent referendums do have an influence on the way both parliament and government act. Experience shows that a party defeated in parliament will call for a referendum on a new law and that chances are good that even a single one out of five major parties may win a referendum and block the new law, if it is too extreme. The German terms "Referendumsdrohung" [threat of referendum] and "mit Referendum drohen" [threaten to call for a referendum] cannot be found in dictionaries, but they are often used in Swiss newspaper reports on parliamentary debates ...

Both the Swiss government and administration and the parliament do take the "threat of a referendum" into account. There is even a formalised method of opinion polling before a draft is even sent to the parliament. In German, it's called "Vernehmlassungsverfahren" [procedure to hear opinions]. The reason is very simple: even the most sophisticated system of proportional election cannot guarantee that the opinions of the members of parliament are a true representation of people's opinions in any possible political question. So in a parliamentary debate some arguments decisive in a referendum campaing might get lost or not be taken serious enough.

The "Vernehmlassungsverfahren" gives a possibility to a broad spectrum of political parties, professional and cultural organisations etc. to put forward their wishes and views and to state where the limits for a threat of referendum are for them.

In the parliamentary debate these views are taken into account and usually a "typically Swiss compromise" is sought. If nobody is really happy with it, but almost everybody can live with it, chances are good that either nobody will call for a referendum or that the proposed law will at least be accepted by a majority of the electorate. But although all members of parliament know the system, sometimes a majority is still inclined to play the power game - usually they will lose it.

Traditionally, the members of Switzerland's government do present proposed laws both in parliament and (if it comes to a referendum) to the electorate, and they are expected to do so even if they personally disagree with the proposal and everybody knows they do. If the proposal is rejected in a referendum, then the issue is cancelled for some time (but it may and often will return after some years in a modified form). Though it is regarded as an honour, if a government member is "successful" in referendum campaigns, nobody will call for the resignation from office if he or she loses a campaign. Otherwise Switzerland's government would have to be reelected several times a year.

Nevertheless, given a political system with referendums, it is definitely helpful to share executive power in a broad coalition of parties. So four of five major Swiss parties are represented in Switzerland's 7-member government, and at present they have a two-thirds majority in the big chamber of parliament and a 100% majority in the small chamber. If these parties disagree - and the constantly due so in Switzerland - the electorate will decide and the government will execute what has been decided. No need for a vote of confidence, no need for untimely elections. Just political stability.

Origins of Switzerland's Referendums

The origins of Switzerland's referendums are to be found in the difficult political situation of the Swiss Confederation in the 19th century. The country was politically split between conservatives and liberals. Contrary to a common, but superficial analysis and classical labeling, the political division lines ran not really between rural, catholic cantons and protestant cities, but right through any Swiss village and town. There were coalitions among conservatives as well as among liberals in different regions of the country. Hundreds of incidents, a few political murders and many changes of government from conservative to liberal and back again in several cantons (for example Zurich, where the Swiss German word "putsch" got it's second, political meaning in the 1830's) are quite representative of Switzerland's political situation between 1830 and 1846. In 1847 the tensions culminated in a short civil war showing all too clearly that the conservative catholic governments in central Switzerland lacked broad support by their own population: there were more catholic liberals in central Switzerland than they had expected.

After a few leaders of the conservative catholics had gone to exile, the way was free for a federal constitution. After twenty years of ups and downs the liberals knew all too well that their position was not that strong, either. So they proposed a moderate form of federalism that would establish federal authorities, but with limited powers only, leaving as much autonomy as possible to the cantons (federal states). But how should the political change be legitimized? Could a modern, democratic constitution be based on a military victory in a civil war? This choice would evidently not have been a good one.

So the liberal leaders decided to go for a national referendum and they were even wise enough to call for a double majority: Both a majority of the total Swiss electorate as well as a majority of the cantons (federal states) should accept the new federal constitution. Thereby the smaller, rural cantons were given a kind of veto minority: Theoretically 12 small cantons representing only about a quarter of the population could have blocked the project. The constitution was accepted with 145,584 vs. 54,320 votes and won a majority in 15½ vs. 6½ cantons (while 7 cantons had been part of the conservative "Sonderbund" alliance). The first Swiss referendum had shown that the "people" was mature enough to decide better than its leaders had done when pushing the country into a civil war.
See also: History of Switzerland's Federal Constitution (1848)

Quotations on Referendums

"The people has decided, the people is right." It is not clear who was the first Swiss politician to state this basic principle of a referendum democracy (be it from the depths of his heart or with some resignation after a lost referendum campaign). Most Swiss politicians would accept this statement, however, in public because they know all too well that politicians publicly claiming to be smarter than the people cannot survive in Switzerland's political system.

Federalism and Referendums

Federalism does not play a major role in the outcome of Swiss referendums. In more than 150 years with more than 250 proposed changes to the constitution less than 10 times the majority of the electorate did vote yes while a majority of cantons said no - and in these cases the majority was always very small (about 51% vs. 49%).

On the other hand, one may say that the Swiss citizens have decided over and over again to keep up the basic principle of federalism - whenever someone proposed a radical standardisation giving all competences in a certain field to the federal government and leaving no room for cantonal self-determination or at least interpretation of federal laws, the proposal had no chance to be accepted.

Referendum Campaigns and Coalitions

From a legal point of view, one citizen alone may collect the 50,000 signatures of other citizens it takes to call for a referendum on a new law and he may finance the campaign to convince the electorate all by himself. In practice, however, this will not work. Collecting 50,000 signatures within three months is a very big effort, people will not sign just anything and you have to convince them one by one. And just hanging out posters and buying newspaper ads doesn't convince the electorate. The Swiss electorate wants to get informed, they go to public discussions, they are looking for convincing arguments and they are discussing the issue among friends.

A team of 1,000 or more volunteers and 100 orators (members of national or cantonal parliaments, entrepreneurs, labor-union leaders, presidents of all kinds of associations etc.) is about the minimum it takes for a successful referendum campaign. Of course, some money is involved too, but the hours of volunteers still have more weight in Swiss politics than sheer money. There are only few parties or organisations that can mobilize enough volunteers alone, so usually a referendum campaign will see a pro coalition and a con coalition. For people familiar with Switzerland's political party system, coalitions are quite predictable even before someone even starts a referendum campaign.

Natural Coalitions

Normally parties and organisations with similar convictions team up together in *natural coalitions*, for example social democrats and environmentalists together with labour-unions vs. liberals, christian democrats together with entrepreneurs, if the issue is about social security or minimum working standards etc. Of course there are other *natural coalitions* too, depending on the subject. Often liberals, social democrats and environmentalists will defend what could be described as an "open, tolerant society" against conservatives and nationalists.

"Unholy Alliances"

But occasionally parties with completely different views will fight for or against some law. While it is evident that closer relations with the European Union, for example, are supported by both entrepreneurs/liberals and labour-unions/social democrats based on a shared conviction that working together closely with neighbouring countries is a good thing, seen both from a cultural and from an economical point of view, the opposition is what is called an "unholy alliance".

What do right-wing nationalist conservatives and environmentalists have in common and why should they team up to fight against closer relations with the European Union? In fact they do have completely different reasons (pure nationalism is definitely the opposite of the intellectual multiculturalism of the greens, but the greens oppose the massive increase of transports arising from free trade). That's why "unholy alliances" usually do not form a joint committee, but rather different committees and why they argue from different points of view.

Increase in Referendums

While it is evident that there has been an increase in referendums in Switzerland towards the end of the 20th century, the reasons for this are not evident at first sight. Part of the increase in referendums is certainly due to an increase in laws "produced" by the parliament, part of it may also be due to a noticeably rougher political climate and to less willingness of Switzerland's political parties to compromise.

Regional Aspects

For a long time there have been significant differences between Switzerland's regions regarding the outcome of national referendums. During the 1980's French speaking commentators wrote about a domination by the German speaking majority. (French is spoken in southwestern Switzerland, German in central, northern and eastern Switzerland, Italian in southern Switzerland, for details see: Switzerland's languages). Even a name was coined for the dividing line between the French and German speaking regions: "Röstigraben" [Rösti trench], as the French speaking population seems not to like Rösti [Swiss hashed potatoes] as much as the German speaking population.

The phenomenom became a major issue after the German speaking majority (with the help of the smallest, Italian speaking group) voted against joining the European Economic Zone, a multilateral treaty which would have given Switzerland access to the common market of the European Union, but would as well have forced the country to adopt a lot of EU legislation in the future. After this referendum, Switzerland chose the "bilateral path" negotiating more than a dozen treaties with the EU in two packets, who were challenged but accepted with small minorities in national referendums, again with large yes-majorities in French speaking Switzerland and little majorities to large no-majorities in German speaking Switzerland.

Over the last 25 years the phenomenon has been looked at by commentators after every referendum. The following two maps show typical results of referendums today.
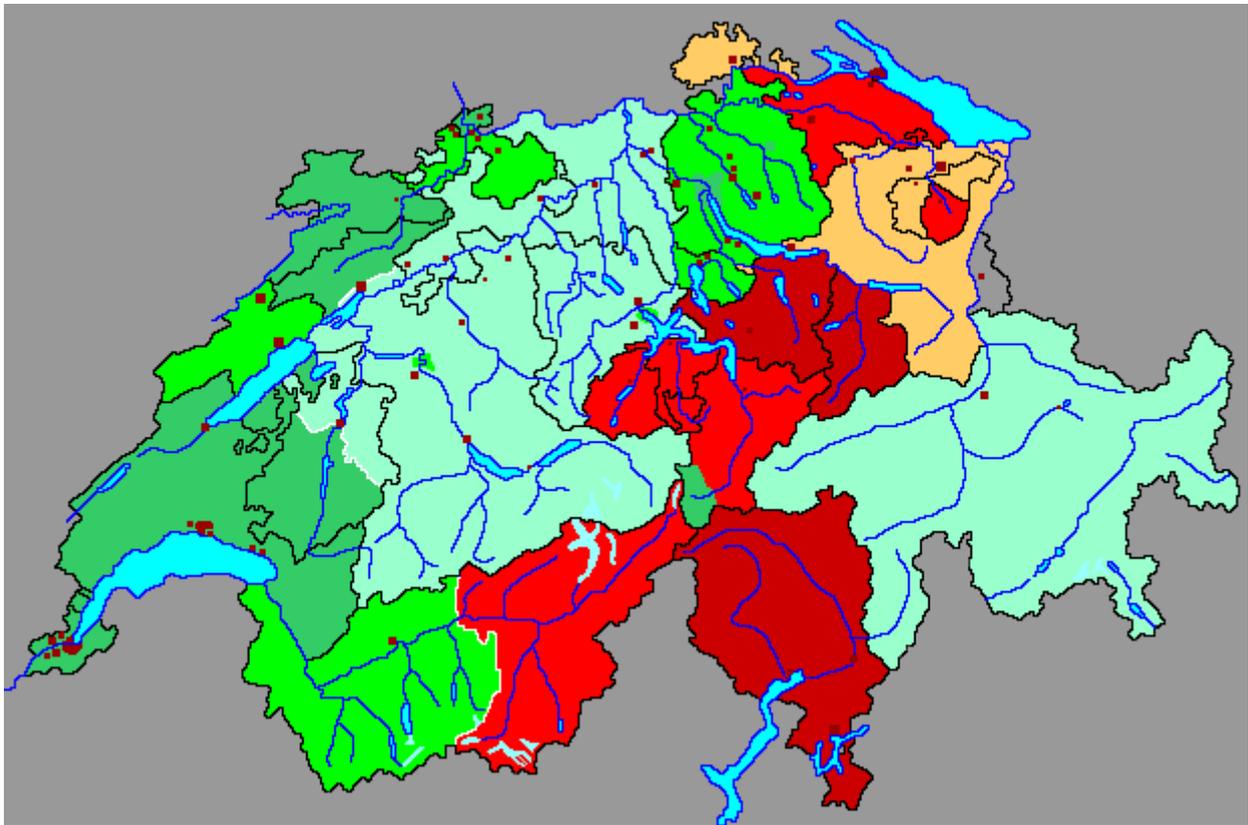
financial aid to new EU members, 2006-11-26, overall result: 53% yes
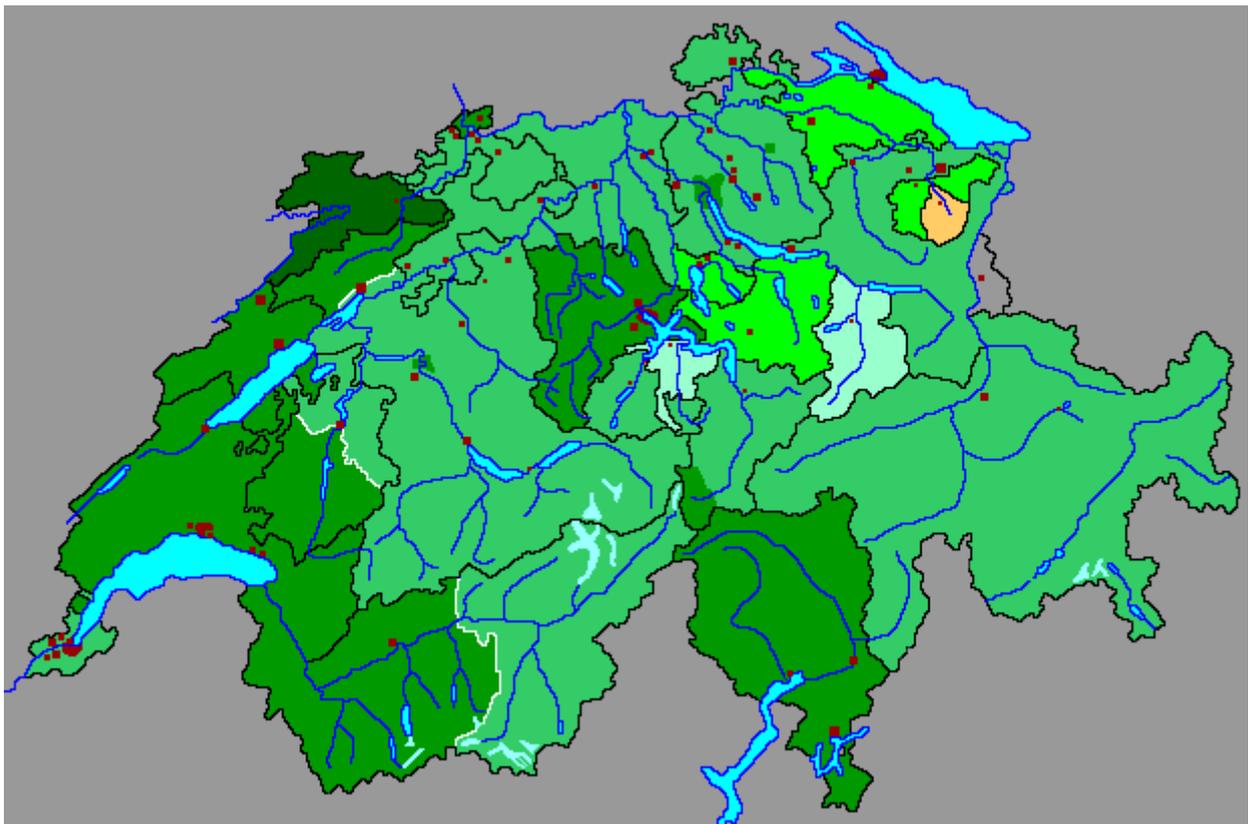
standardized extra pay for families, 2006-11-26, overall result

color code: dark red = massive NO, orange > 50% NO
light green > 50% YES, dark green = massive YES

I wish Freedom to all of you!