Master Project on the subject:

Successful Campaigning on the European level

A Case Study of the *Free Interrail* Campaign

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Abstract

In the European Union, there are various options for citizens to influence European policy-making, e. g. the European Citizens' Initiative, petitions to the European Parliament, public and online consultations and civil dialogues. One more option is to raise awareness for a certain issue with the aid of campaigning. The question of what a good citizens' campaign needs to fulfill to actually be adopted into EU policy will be answered within this study. The present project belongs to the areas of civil society, European citizenship and citizen engagement and deals in more detail with campaigning within the framework of a campaign's potential influence on policy-making in the European Union. The issue to be discussed is under which conditions a campaign can be successful on European level.

For that, a case study of the campaign *Free Interrail* and the thereupon implemented European program *DiscoverEU* is conducted. The campaign demanded a free Interrail ticket to travel Europe by train for all 18-year-olds in order to see Europe's cultures and diversity first hand and to develop an understanding of what it means to be a European citizen. The campaigners managed to be heard by the European institutions and a large amount of their concept was implemented within the program *DiscoverEU* that currently offers a restricted amount of tickets to European applicants aged 18 years. The case of *Free Interrail* caused a lot of attention in the media and politics which is why the institutional bodies are still working closely together with the campaigners on improving the final *DiscoverEU* program in order to make it part of the Erasmus+ program from 2021 onwards. Thus, this is a case of successful campaigning on EU level.

The research goal of this study is to identify criteria that enhance the likelihood of campaigns. In this specific case, we examine why the *Free Interrail* campaign has successfully been implemented into a European policy. For this purpose, we find out reasons for general success of campaigns with the aid of criteria from case studies and analyzes. Additionally, we analyze the responsiveness of the European institutions to campaigns and define the term *success* in the specific framework. The discussion focuses on the question: What does a campaign need to do in order to make the European bodies active and aware of a certain issue within a specific policy area? In order to analyze this issue, we summarize arguments that were decisive for the success of *Free Interrail*. The results show that using different methods to push a project to EU level importance is the key to a response by the EU.

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1 Introduction

Citizen participation is the base for a democratic political system. Democracy not only means free elections which make the citizens elect their corresponding government, but also the existence of possibilities for citizens to intervene, criticize and bring in their own ideas for the development of current systems and politics. In the European Union (in the following: EU), there are several ways for citizens' participation as the key to democracy. In the past, those possibilities were expanded continuously because of extensive criticism concerning a democratic deficit in the EU. For a long time, the EU was seen as an elite project without the involvement of citizens. That discourse about the lack of legitimation within the political system of the EU has still not eased. Decisions on the EU level are often said to be non-transparent. That is why in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, more participation opportunities were introduced to respond to those critics, e. g. the European Citizens' Initiative and a stronger European Parliament as the representation of the European citizens in the EU. However, European citizens are still prone to mistrust European institutions and politics because of a lack of transparency when it comes to European legitimation processes, political communication and reporting. All of that culminates in increasing Eurosceptic movements within the EU. As the opponent to the European integration process, Euroscepticism criticizes the fundamental European political system and its aims. That countermovement did eminently come into view with the Brexit referendum in 2016 where national sovereignty prevailed over European integration.

To counteract those tendencies, European integration is even more important than in the past decades. That is why the campaigners from *Free Interrail* deal with the issue of horizontal Europeanization and the strengthening of European identity, especially for young people. Their visions were implemented into European policy-making and realized within the European program *DiscoverEU*. The campaign aims at motivating young people to discover previously unknown cultures, languages and citizens. As the most prominent project for Europeanization in current times, that initiative and its progression to a successful EU policy are the foundation for the argumentation in this study. But how did it come that exactly that campaign has reached the EU level as one of few campaigns?

The present study deals with successful campaigning in the supranational federation of states and focuses mainly on bottom-up processes within EU legislation.

The research question which is to be examined with the aid of already existing case studies, academic papers and expert interviews, is: Which criteria does a campaign need to fulfill to actually get adopted into EU policy and how do they interact? The case study is used foremost to find detailed and accurate criteria for the campaign *Free Interrail*, which is then to be generalized with the aid of the induction method. The overarching objective of this study is the development of criteria for the success of future campaigners on EU level which is highly complicated because of a lack of literature in the specific field. There is much literature on public and political attention in general[1], election campaigning[2], success of lobbyism[3] and crowdfunding[4], which is why the follow-up approach within this study is urgently necessary. Many authors focus on specific criteria, but do not show the whole mosaic of components which is highly important for actors in the area of civic engagement and participation. Some focus only on economic issues[5], while others focus only on one specific aspect, such as politicization and, resulting from that, EU responsiveness[6] as well as agenda-setting[7]. That is why the interplay of these components and a resume of all those analyzes in this study builds on the existing approaches.

For the theoretical background, the question of how European citizens can directly shape EU policy making is discussed. In order to answer this, the European Citizens' Initiative as well as petitions, consultations and dialogues are described within the rubric citizen engagement in the EU. After portraying those possibilities,

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[1] In this respect see also: Alexandrova, Petya; Rasmussen, Anne and Toshkov, Dimiter (2015): *Agenda responsiveness in the European Council: public priorities, policy problems and political attention*. In: West European Politics. 39:4, 605-627.

[2] See for election campaigning: de Vreesem, Claes (2009): *Second Rate Election Campaigning? An Analysis of Campaign Styles in European Parliamentary* Elections. In: Journal of Political Marketing. 8:1, 7-10; or: van Aelst, Peter; Maddens, Bart; Noppe, Jo and Fiers, Stefaan (2008): *Politicians in the News: Media or Party Logic? Media Attention and Electoral Success in the Belgian Election Campaign of 2003*. In: European Journal of Communication. 23:2, 193-210.

[3] See in regards to the success of lobbyism: Mahoney, Christine (2007): *Lobbying Success in the United States and the European Union*. In: Journal of Public Policy. 27:1, 35-56.

[4] In respect of crowdfunding see also: Lagazio, Corrado and Querci, Francesca (2018): *Exploring the multi-sided nature of crowdfunding campaign success*. In: Journal of Business Research. 90, 318-324; or see: Ferreira, Francisco and Pereira, Leandro (2018): *Success Factors in a Reward and Equity Based Crowdfunding Campaign*. Stuttgart: IEEE Xplore.

[5] See for the analysis of economic aspects in the framework of successful campaigning: Dostal, Jörg Michael (2004): *Campaigning on expertise: how the OECD framed EU welfare and labour market policies - and why success could trigger failure*. In: Journal of European Public Policy. 11:3, 440-460.

[6] In respect of politicization fostering EU responsiveness, see also: De Bruycker, Iskander (2019): *Democratically deficient, yet responsive? How politicization facilitates responsiveness in the European Union*. In: Journal of European Public Policy. 27:6, 1-19.

[7] See for EU agenda-setting: Reh, Christine, Bressanelli, Edoardo and Koop, Christel (2020): *Responsive withdrawal? The politics of EU agenda-setting*. In: Journal of European Public Policy. 27:3, 419-438.

the focus is being put on the specific option of campaigning in the EU. Then, the legislation process of campaigns within the policy cycle is analyzed as well as the support of European identity in general both, by the European institutions and by campaigns and other organizations. In addition to that, the responsiveness of European institutions towards the issues of campaigns is discussed. Those issues are related to theoretical concepts of responsiveness and identity studies. Following that, the case study concerning the success of the campaign *Free Interrail* is conducted and fundamental facts about the campaign are gleaned. According to the history trajectory of the campaign, the responsiveness of the European institutions in the specific case and the implementation within the EU program *DiscoverEU* is pointed out. The paper presents criteria for the success of *Free Interrail* and investigates their interplay. In the concluding discussion part, successful campaigning in the EU in general is in the focus and general success criteria for campaigns are inducted, focused on those coming from the case study as well as more criteria from the expert interviews. As the last point before the conclusion, campaigning in the EU as a chance for European citizens is discussed and its value estimated. Campaigning in the framework of European integration is therefore also discussed as a countermovement to the increasing Euroscepticism.

2 Theoretical background

This chapter introduces the theoretical approaches used and provides relevant background information on how citizens are integrated in EU policy-making. The various European integration theories are considered by the campaigners of *Free Interrail*. Haas once defined the term *integration* as a process 'whereby political actors in several, distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre (sic!), whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states' (Haas 1958: 16). European integration differs from that, since European institutions do not have the total power over national governments. It involves two components: a social and a political integration process (cf. Wiener et al. 2019: 3). Within this study, both processes are involved. Social integration is focused within the case study itself with the aim of the increase of European integration and citizenship. The campaign's main goal is to extend the knowledge of young people about the EU and to promote European identity. Political integration processes are addressed within the implementation and the legislative process up to the introduction of the program *DiscoverEU*. Key concepts for the analysis are introduced in the following chapters.

2.1 Key concepts of citizen engagement in the European Union

As a result of civic engagement, the campaign *Free Interrail* was heard by the European institutions and got implemented on EU level. In this chapter, the term *citizen engagement* is to be clarified and put into context with the EU processes. The main options for civic engagement within European legislation are to be discussed.

Generally, civic engagement is voluntary. Adler and Goggin, whose work is basically used for the clarification of the term in this study, define the term in their introducing abstract as follows:

> 'Civic engagement refers to the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future.'
>
> (Adler/Goggin 2005: 236)

The fundamental aim of civic engagement is change in specific policy fields. In fact, not only young people get engaged within citizen engagement, but also adults (cf. Adler/Goggin 2005: 237). Generally, citizen engagement concerns each and every individual in a social society. It refers to various activities which is why the term is defined in many different ways. Civic engagement can be defined as a community service, as collective action, as political involvement and social change,

according to Adler and Goggin (2005: 239). Community service means perceiving an individual's responsibilities in political and democratic processes and active participation while collective action means the formation of groups standing up for a specific issue (cf. Adler/Goggin 2005: 238). Political involvement makes civic engagement exclusively relevant in political issues while social change pertains to civic engagement as a process to shape the future of social groups (cf. Adler/Goggin 2005: 239).

Fundamentally, civic engagement implies active participation for or against a specific issue with the aim of changing the current situation. Additionally, it means 'interactions of citizens with their society and their government' (Adler/Goggin 2005: 241) In essence, it can be described as 'individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern […] [which] can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation' (Nunn 2005: 1). This can be obtained by 'directly address[ing] an issue, work[ing] with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact[ing] with the institutions of representative democracy' (Nunn 2005: 1). That range of activities can be shown within 'The Continuum of Civic Engagement' portraying activities from informal and individual actions towards formal and collective ones.

THE CONTINUUM OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Informal/ Private Individual Action					*Formal/ Public Collective Action*
←					→
Community Activities	• Helping a neighbor	• Contributing to a charity	• Membership in a religious, fraternal or community group	• Occasional or episodic volunteering	• Sustained, intensive service
Political Activities	• Engaging in a political discussion	• Voting	• Advocating for a policy	• Active participation in a party or interest group	• Running for public office

Figure 1: The Continuum of Civic Engagement
(own compilation based on data from Adler/Goggin 2005: 240)

Various dimensions of civic engagement are illustrated in figure 1 with the aid of practical examples. The visualization portrays two dimensions: on the one hand the characteristics of the exercising subject, on the other hand the characteristics of the undertaken voluntary activities. Some community and political activities are more informal, such as helping a neighbor or engaging in a political discussion, while

others are formal, such as sustained, intensive service and running for public office. This is how civic engagement may also develop, starting with an informal action and growing up to formal ones.

In the EU, civic engagement also consists of various dimensions and options. Participation possibilities were continually expanded within past decades because of many critics about a democratic deficit of the EU. The options of participation ought to strengthen democratic legitimation and the efficiency of the EU (cf. Große Hüttmann/Wehling 2013: 3ff). The Lisbon Treaty from 2009 even extended those options and established the European Citizens' Initiative which, after one million signatures of EU citizens, makes the European Commission active in a specific policy area. Additionally, the Governance White Paper[8] puts the focus of the European Commission even stronger on the involvement of EU citizens and experts who can bring in their expertise in specific phases of the legislation processes (cf. Große Hüttmann/Wehling 2013: 3ff).

Having defined the range of options for citizen engagement, we now turn to the specific options EU citizens have. Besides the European Citizens' Initiative, the first and most important possibility to shape policy-making in the EU is the election of the members of the European Parliament with which European citizens have direct influence on EU legislation. Since 1979, citizens elect the European Parliament for five years. Additionally, European citizens have the option for direct contact with members of the European Parliament because of their offices in their constituency and their offers for regular citizen's consultation hours (cf. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2010: 2). European citizens have the possibility to make enquiries of citizens, ask for information and pose suggestions in their mother tongue, even via an electronic letterbox (cf. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2010: 3). Certainly, citizens, organizations and associations might also lodge complaints in cases of discrimination, maladministration or abuse to the European Ombudsman who is elected by the European Parliament and looking for compromises and solutions consequently (cf. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2010: 3). Via petitions, they can directly contact the European Parliament in cases of infringements of rights by member states or local authorities, as manifested in article 227 TFEU, e. g. in the areas of freedom of movement and environmental protection. Citizens may also urge

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[8] Commission of the European Communities (2001): *European Governance – A White Paper*, DOC/01/10. Brussels.

the European Parliament to take position on a specific issue, and even submit individual actions to the European Court of Justice (cf. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2010: 3). Another possibility to have an influence on EU policy-making is lobbyism, but also the German Bundestag has a Committee on the Affairs of the European Union with public consultations for reasons of transparency (cf. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2010: 4). It is also possible to attend plenary sessions of the European Parliament. Besides that, the European Parliament regularly publishes opinion surveys on their website whose results are summarized in the Eurobarometer studies.
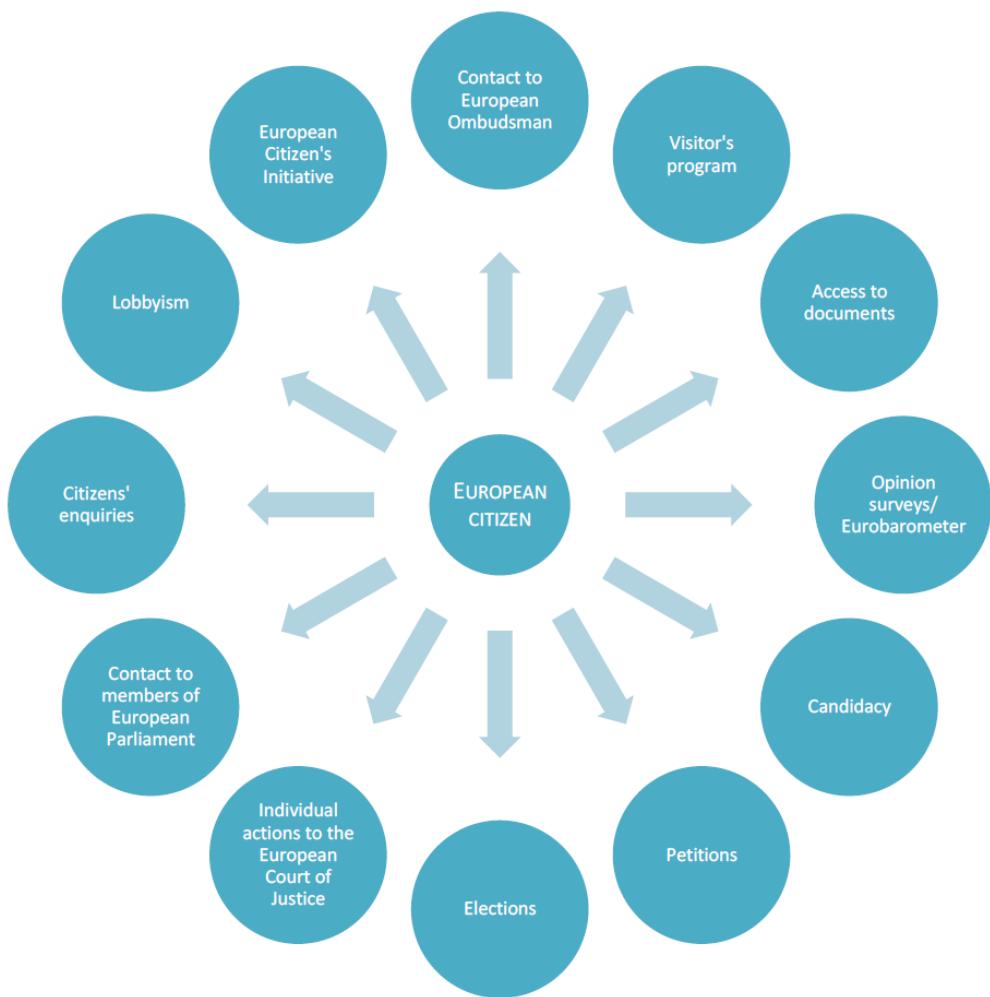
Figure 2: Opportunities for civic participation in the EU
(own compilation based on data from Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2010: 1)

All in all, the fundamental options for participation for European citizens are summarized in figure 2. The overview is not absolutely complete, but shows the mosaic of general possibilities for the European society to have an influence on EU policy-making. It is visible that European citizens do have various options to take part in European legislation processes and policy-making fostering transparency.

2.2 Campaigns and Organized Civil Society in the European Union

The above in figure 2 illustrated channels of civic engagement are used both by individuals and collective actors that aim to raise awareness for a specific issue on EU level. Those political activities belong to the area of active citizenship which is a specific policy objective since 2005 (cf. Bee/Guerrina 2014: 30). That is in direct correlation with the European Public Sphere, which 'entails discussion, interaction, and the development of discourses on questions of public concern' (Bee/Guerrina 2014: 32) and in steady discourse. European Public Sphere discussions evolved with the growing criticism in terms of democratization within the EU.

In combination with the discussion about a European Public Sphere, '[t]he interplay between institutional and non-institutional actors at the European level […] is of particular interest' (Bee/Guerrina 2014: 34). The group of non-institutional actors with a direct relationship with institutions of the EU is called *Organized Civil Society* (cf. Bee/Guerrina 2014: 35). Organized Civil Society groups have become more and more important in the last decades where governance structures are no longer associated with state actions alone (cf. Bee/Guerrina 2014: 35). The actors being part of the Organized Civil Society are not only consolidated and formal civil society organizations, but also informal groups and movements. In network governance theory, the European Public Sphere is thought to be top-down but public political communication made the governance structures more democratic and public (cf. Bee/Guerrina 2014: 35). In this process, campaigns evolved from activities to public policies and are, thus, a modern way for democratization and participation within the EU. All of that builds on the 'symmetrical model of public relations' which is 'based on the enhancement of mutual, interactive, and dialogic relationships between institutional and non-institutional actors in constructing the public discourse on issues of public interest' (Bee/Guerrina 2014: 35). In the foreground is especially the exchange between institutional bodies and citizens. Thus, the process is not only top-down, but also bottom-up – a two-way symmetrical model.

The role of the European Public Sphere, and thus the relevance of interest groups, social movements and organizations are increasing proportionally to growing Europeanization, increasing public discourse of politics and political mediation (cf. Kriesi et al. 2007: 48f). In times of multilevel governance, the governance of institutional bodies hitherto is supplemented by interested groups and individuals from the society – both at supranational, national and subnational levels. A European

Public Sphere is relevant; one gets involved through individuals and organized groups, both groups with a formalized structure and informal groups and movements.

At that level, campaigning can be found to mobilize the public audience for a specific goal. Campaigns use all three public-related strategies to reach the European Public Sphere: media-related ones, information politics as well as mobilizing the public (cf. Kriesi et al. 2007: 58). Media-related strategies concern everything which has to do with raising awareness in public media for a specific topic, e. g. by writing articles in newspapers or giving interviews. Information politics refers to informing the public audience regarding a specific topic and to be active in public to inform about the issue. Thirdly, mobilizing the mass public means petitions, demonstrations and public presentations as the key factor for campaigning generally. Mainly, the generation of public pressure with a specific policy aim on official political actors in certain positions is the main objective of campaigning, and is also to be discussed as one of the criteria within this study. Campaigning can be seen as a support instrument for political actors in policy-making (cf. Schmitt-Beck/Farrell 2006: 1). Hereby, they gain influence on political processes.

> 'Campaigning is a core feature of the political process in contemporary democracies. […] Issue-based campaigns see government agencies or interest groups attempting to have an issue or policy placed high on the political agenda, and to have it favourably [sic!] framed in public debate.'
> (Schmitt-Beck/Farrell 2006: 2)

That 'interest mediation' (Schmitt-Beck/Farrell 2006: 3) is in the focus of issue-based campaigns that are the focal point in this study. That is why agenda-setting is also one of the issues to be discussed. Besides, there are election campaigns, referendum campaigns and image campaigns, but because of the case study's focus on the issue-based campaign *Free Interrail*, this paper is focusing on issue-based ones. The mediation is necessary to achieve the campaigners' objective which is 'to influence the process and outcome of governance […] by shaping public opinion' (Schmitt-Beck/Farrell 2006: 3). The function of campaigns is directly connected to producing legitimacy and to elevating certain issues to the decision-making agenda (cf. Schmitt-Beck/Farrell 2006: 3). With the aid of this process, campaigns have the possibility to be involved in European decision-making and the legislation process.

2.3 Campaigns in the European legislation process

With the aid of developing public discourse and political awareness about a specific issue, EU policy-makers become aware about a campaign's topic. The

political pressure from society – the 'outside' – onto these is ideally increasing steadily which is why they need to discuss the topic internally – the 'inside'. This is the most important step for campaigners – to get attention and to shift the focus of the policy-makers onto the relevant issue, from the 'outside' to the 'inside'. That is why the criterion about methods and procedures is taken up within this study's analysis.

In the ordinary legislation process of the EU institutional bodies, only the European Commission has the right of initiative and can, thus, draft legislative proposals and introduce them into the EU legislation process (cf. Zandonella 2006: 63). The European Parliament and the Council of the EU have then the right of decision about the specific issue (cf. Zandonella 2006: 63). Both have, furthermore, the indirect right of initiative and the chance to invite the European Commission to propose legislation, but this is not an obligation (cf. Russack 2019: 3). As a consequence of that, policy-making creates policies that are generally classified into four policy types, according to their specific contents: regulatory, distributive, redistributive and constitutional ones. And just as Theodore Lowi discussed already in 1972, 'policies determine politics' (Lowi 1972: 299) which is why the policy type is part of the criteria mosaic within our study. In the following figure, the four policy types are listed and defined alongside the axis labels:
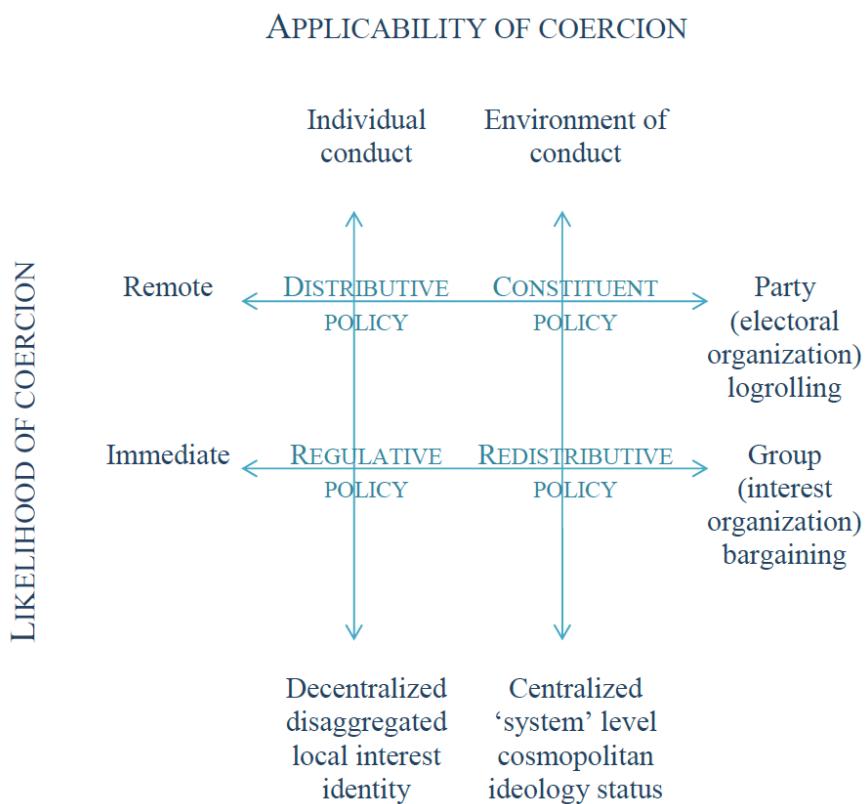

Figure 3: Types of coercion, types of policy, and types of politics
(own compilation based on data from Lowi 1972: 300)

Distributive policies are mostly welcomed by the median voter because of their distributive nature for certain societal groups, e. g. 18-year-olds as in our case study. Such policies, as in the case of *Free Interrail* and *DiscoverEU*, give out benefits without conveying directly whom the resources have been taken from while redistributive takes from some and gives to others. Plus, distributive policies are consensual and do not polarize or provoke the creation of an opposition which is discussed in the analysis part for the specific case study within this study (cf. Heinelt 2007: 110). Conflict-free processes are, commonly, better suited for realization because of the lack of resistance and ideological framing (cf. Heinelt 2007: 110). The design of the policy which is to be implemented is, however, up to the European decision-makers and the relevant issue.

In the policy-making process, voters do have the possibility of the European Citizens' Initiative. With the European Citizens' Initiative, a directly democratic instrument for European campaigners and other organized civil society groups was created to get the chance for the adoption in EU legislation. One million signatures therefore need to be collected from ¼ of the member states within 12 months to 'invite the European Commission to present a piece of legislation on a specific issue for further consideration of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers' (Szeligowska/Mincheva 2011: 4). By that, European citizens have an informal and indirect right of initiative because of its needed consolation of only a small group who just have to sign a proposal (Mehr Demokratie 2010; Szeligowska/Mincheva 2011: 5). That brings EU policy-making closer to ordinary European citizens who have hitherto not taken actively part in European decision-making (cf. Bouza Garcia/Del Río Villar 2012: 314). However, the campaigners of *Free Interrail* managed to create public discourse without the usage of the European Citizens' Initiative (Vincent-Immanuel Herr, phone interview, 7th May 2020, see attachment 2). That is possible whenever members of the European Parliament advocate for a campaign and submit applications for pilot projects on the idea for the future budget. When enough people on the political level lobby for a specific idea, an examination by the European Commission is consequently following. After that, a pilot project might be developed, as was the case for *Free Interrail*, and still might face slight changes in its realization.

On the one hand, campaigners, consequently, have the possibility to build a European Citizens' Initiative and, with the aid of that, raise the awareness of policy-

makers on that specific issue and proposal. On the other hand, a campaign with a prominent problematic issue might be successful in raising the discourse to EU level without such an initiative. Relevant is therefore, to focus on a topic which is not only currently relevant in the European society – to collect signatures – but also in the European agenda itself – to achieve politicians even without an initiative to stand up for it. In correlation to that, the amount of budget needed for the project implementation is highly relevant for European policy-makers and can be made practically visible in a typical cost-benefit analysis. This compares the relationship between costs and benefits and is therefore a profitability calculation which examines and evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of an investment.

2.4 The value of European identity in the European Union

Thus, budget and the specific issue form essential variables when it comes to the success of campaigns on EU level. Ideally, the campaign's topic is wide-ranging and affects many European citizens. Identity issues do so, especially in the framework of European identity which is high in political public discourse in the last decade.

European collective identity has evolved with the ongoing European integration process and Europeanization, but since the early 1990s, the silent consensus on elite-led integration is decreasing (cf. Kaina/ Karolewski 2013: 7). Because of the EU being too 'far' from the citizens – referring back to the lack of legitimation and transparency as well as to more member states and thus, more discrepancies –, the EU's aim was to bring 'the Union closer to its citizens' (Kaina/Karolewski 2013: 6). The EU's mission from thereon was to 'bridg[e] the gap to the publics' (Kaina/Karolewski 2013: 7) which is why the topic of a European identity is often the subject of academic researches hypothesizing 'that a shared sense of European community is crucial for further steps in European integration' (Kaina/Karolewski 2013: 7). That is why the issue is highly ranked on the European Commission's agenda ever since, also for overcoming the lack of legitimation. The campaigners of *Free Interrail* tackled the specific subject whose influence on the success of the campaign is later on described more in detail.

President Juncker emphasizes in his State of the Union Address from 2018 his vision of 'a more united, stronger and more democratic Union' (European Commission 2017a: 1). In the years before, the will and intention to take the identity

issue into the European agenda became stronger than ever which is why the topic was also involved in the White Paper from 2017:

> 'There is still strong support for the European project, but it is no longer unconditional. Over two thirds of Europeans see the EU as a place of stability in a troubled word [sic!]. More than 80% support the EU's four founding freedoms. 70% of euro area citizens support the common currency. However, citizens' trust in the EU has decreased in line with that for national authorities. […] Restoring trust, building consensus and creating a sense of belonging is harder in an era where information has never been so plentiful, so accessible, yet so difficult to grasp. […] Europe and its Member States must move quicker to interact with citizens, be more accountable and deliver better and faster on what has been collectively agreed.'
>
> (European Commission 2017b: 12f)

The social dimension, according to the citation from the White Paper, is becoming more important in EU legislation and guidance. Especially in times of nationalism, populism and fake news, a common feeling of belonging, active citizenship and the 'experience [of] European identity in all its diversity' (European Commission 2017a: 2) carries more weight than in low-conflict times. In correlation to that, the timing of a campaign might be of particular interest, which means to come up with a solution when the problem is at the highest tip. Whether this is applicable in the case of *Free Interrail* is to be discussed in chapter 3.3.

The Commission has actively promoted the development of a European identity and has linked this issue to the question of civil society engagement. The following summarizes key contributions. The strengthening of European identity and the creation of a collective society has received more attention on the Commission's agenda since the financial and migrant crisis which is why EU decision-makers were and still are explicitly looking for undertakings to enhance that social situation. It is an issue of high political salience and not party- or group-bound and, thus, a problem of public concern which is why European identity does not polarize but is a public demand, particularly in times of Euroscepticism.

2.5 Political Responsiveness in the European Union

The realization of public demands is important for a representative democracy which is directly correlated with institutional responsiveness and politicization. The literature focuses on two lines when it comes to EU responsiveness: *congruence* and *dynamic representation*. Congruence means 'whether electoral systems produce governments and parliaments whose composition reflects public preferences along salient dimensions' (Zhelyazkova et al. 2019: 1715). In contrast, dynamic

representation puts policy responsiveness in the focal point and whether public policy is changed in order to keep up with changing public opinions (cf. Zhelyazkova et al. 2019: 1716). Political responsiveness is deeply connected with democracy and, especially in EU studies, with the democratic deficit (cf. Zhelyazkova et al. 2019: 1716). When political responsiveness is low and the European institutions do not react to changing public opinion on certain issues, democracy and legitimation is doubted by the European citizens. It is, therefore, also linked to active citizens' participation and its relation to implemented demands within the EU. However, it is difficult to analyze 'how the EU system reacts to public opinion [because] there is limited understanding of the relevant causal mechanisms that drive policy responsiveness in the EU' (Zhelyazkova et al. 2019: 1717). Some EU member states may, additionally, be more reactive than others, plus national and local legislation have the chance to adapt European policies which is why 'national context mediates the relation between EU policies and public opinion' (Zhelyazkova et al. 2019: 1717).

The agenda-setting shows responsiveness and the EU institutions definitely respond to supranationally increasing Euroscepticism and the declining European feeling of belonging by taking it into account in the White Paper, as mentioned beforehand, and several other documents shaping their agenda. Additionally, the introduction of the European Citizens' Initiative may be listed as evidence for appropriate and high European responsiveness when it comes to citizens' participation and the fostering of democratic legitimation. Both portray key elements for an increase in European identity, together with transparency, and for the elimination of the prejudice of being an elite system (cf. Bouza Garcia/Del Río Villar 2012: 314). However, the implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative 'may have a stronger political than legal relevance, since the strong concerns about the democratic legitimacy of the EU political system may make it costly to simply ignore the demands of one million citizens' (Bouza Garcia/Del Río Villar 2012: 315). Still, the legal decision about a European Citizens' Initiative is incumbent on the European Commission who demands the campaigners to explain their issue in very detail[9]. Thus, the EU responds to public demands, but contains the liability and decision itself. However, it is a chance for European campaigns and initiatives to rise above the critical points of bringing an issue directly to the policy-makers. Responsiveness –

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[9] See Article 10 Regulation (EU) No. 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 on the citizens' initiative (11 March 2011). In: *Official Journal of the European Union* L 65/1.

whether the mere confrontation with an issue, the inclusion of a topic or the decision to omit the demand is left open – is therefore guaranteed for the European Public Sphere.

European policy-making is decisive for the extent and speed of Europeanization and European integration (cf. Alexandrova et al. 2015: 5). However, responsiveness is dependent on national and local variables (cf. Alexandrova et al. 2015: 5). Again, EU responsiveness depends on the specific issue and the timing of the demand, as e. g. in our specific case. European identity was taken into account in the agenda-setting which proves that the topic itself is responsible for the extent of European responsiveness.

In the following chapter we will go into detail presenting the campaign of *Free Interrail* and with which factors exactly the activists managed to be successful.

3 The success of *Free Interrail*

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical linkages of campaigning to the theoretical takes on EU identity and the European public sphere. Having summarized the main channels through which citizens can engage in the EU and the EU promotes such engagement, this chapter will give an insight into how exactly the initiators of *Free Interrail* got their idea to be implemented on EU level and what distinguishes the initiative from already existing EU programs like Erasmus+ that have similar goals already since several decades.

The initiators of *Free Interrail*, Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer, are the best textbook example of how to grow from a European citizen in theory to a European from experience. As young European citizens, they had the idea of bringing the experience of Europe closer to young people. Since 2014 they have worked on their idea of a free Interrail ticket.

To answer the research question why the *Free Interrail* campaign was successful in being adopted into a European policy, it is important to analyze the initiative and its main aims, as well as the efforts of the initiators and their way towards being heard by the EU. Therefore, this chapter will also describe how the initiative *Free Interrail* got implemented into the EU program *DiscoverEU* and at which degree the ideas of the initiators were considered to measure the success of the campaign.

3.1 The *Free Interrail* campaign

'The Interrail tickets will allow the holders to enjoy unlimited travel across Europe's rail network for a defined period of time.'

(Fahey 2017)

'The Interrail pass allows to travel on almost all trains in Europe. It covers 37 railway and ferry companies in 33 countries and its cost varies depending on the number of countries visited and the number of days travelled.'

(Delpero 2018)

The company Interrail has existed since 1972 and was founded to give young people the opportunity to travel Europe with their backpacks for an affordable price. More than 8 million sold tickets and about 250,000 young people traveling every year with an Interrail ticket show how successful it is (cf. Becker 2017).

Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer were two young men among many other individuals who travelled through different countries with and Interrail ticket and met other young people on their journey. They were inter alia sponsored by the

private and independent foundation 'Stiftung Mercator' and had the opportunity to experience Europe. This experience gave them a different perspective of Europe – they understood why European diversity and integration is so important in a time where Euroscepticism and nationalism are on the increase. They 'also noticed how disconnected [their] generation felt from those in Brussels. Many of [their] friends across Europe shared with [them] how disillusioned they were with the EU and all their focus on banks and currencies' (Herr and Speer 2016).

To understand the aims and the purpose of *Free Interrail*, the following definitions of European integration and European society should be considered. According to John Peterson, 'European integration is the product of the selective pooling of national sovereignty, or ultimate jurisdiction over a body politic, by postwar European nation-states' (Peterson 2001: 4923). Since the EU law affects national societies, 'European integration is seen as one trend among others, which facilitates the circulation of debates, ideas and practices across borders, thus fostering societal change' (Leconte 2010: 64).

According to the initiators of *Free Interrail,* they had the opportunity to explore the European Union as well as the European feeling while meeting people from different cultures. At this point, a simple question occurred: Why can not all young people make the same experiences as they did? Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer are convinced that European diversity becomes clear when it is experienced. The exchange of experiences with other people and other cultures is an essential part of European identity. In their self-description of their motives, Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer outlined that since not all young people have the opportunity – financially or otherwise – to travel to other European countries, and only a certain group can access this kind of experience, it is not only unfair but can also threaten a common European future. To foster the establishment of a European society, the initiative aimed at enabling every 18-year-old individual, not depending on any financial and social circumstances, to explore the European feeling and therefore to develop a European identity.

'European identity [...] is linked to awareness of one's feeling of belonging to an imagined category of 'Europeans'' (Rother and Nebe 2009: 121). According to the studies of Rother and Nebe, movers have more positive attitudes towards the EU and a higher attachment to the EU than stayers (cf. Rother and Nebe 2009: 121f). This is the reason why the EU creates various programs to create pro-European attitudes.

Erasmus+ is a program to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. The difference between the initiative *Free Interrail* to other exchange programs like those within Erasmus+ is that all young European citizens would have access to a free Interrail ticket and not only a limited amount of people or certain groups – e. g. students and apprentices in Erasmus+.

It is often criticized that European society is only a group of educated and mobile people from middle or even upper-middle class. Despite many efforts of the European Union to create opportunities for European citizens to work, travel or study abroad, often only people from certain social groups can profit from working or studying abroad. *Free Interrail* wants to change that and puts the focus on equality. Since the Erasmus+ program has limitations and cannot cover all interested individuals, *Free Interrail* has become an additional opportunity for all all-year-olds to travel Europe flexibly.

> 'Erasmus is a […] programme that benefited EU youth in giving them a perspective on Europe. However, Erasmus only reaches a small percentage of all youth. A little bit more than three million students have participated since 1987, yet there are 190 million people under the age of 30 in the EU. #FreeInterrail would make mobility a right for all EU citizens, independent of financial or national backgrounds.'
>
> (Herr/Speer 2016)

The initial idea was a one-month-Interrail pass for all European citizens who become 18 years old. They would not need to apply for the program, but the program would approach them. Saving the European idea through travelling, exploring and experiencing Europe and connecting people from neighbor countries was the main goal of the initiators. By doing so, nationalism, xenophobia and stereotypes may decline (cf. Herr 2017).

3.2 Responsiveness of the European institutions and the implementation within *DiscoverEU*

> 'Sending youth travelling is the best protection against nationalism and divisive ideologies. By travelling, youth would explore Europe with their own eyes, make friends in other countries, and learn about the beauty of diversity. This would increase awareness of what the EU is all about: its people.'
>
> (Herr/Speer 2016)

This idea was also in the interest of the European Union and timing played a big role in the case of *Free Interrail*, but the initiators had to use several methods to gain attention and to push their project up to EU level importance to get a response and being heard by the EU bodies.

The initiators of *Free Interrail* started in September 2016 the petition 'Saving Europe? Send EU youth traveling! #FreeInterrail'[10] to make people aware of their idea. Already in January 2017 they got 10,000 signatures within a petition from European citizens who were supporting their idea. Of course, only the petition itself was not enough to get all the attention of the EU policy-makers. The initiators met many German politicians and Members of the European Parliament, like Istvan Ujhelyi (S&D), Rebecca Harms and Michael Cramer (Greens), and Gesine Meissner (Liberals).[11] The MEPs had an opportunity to form an initiative in the European Parliament that was seeking to get an approval for a pilot project on the initiative *Free Interrail*. Also, members of the EPP Group and individual politicians were convinced of the idea Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer, because many of them were also traveling with an Interrail ticket when they were young and could gain positive experiences this way.

More and more people became aware of the initiative *Free Interrail* and also the mass media got interested in the initiative and its supporters. The initiators were interviewed by German newspapers like *Die Zeit* or *Der Spiegel*. Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer also took part in the contest 'Z2X – Das Festival der neuen Visionäre' with their idea. Out of 600 participants at the age of 20 to 29, the initiative *Free Interrail* was one of three selected projects to be supported by the German newspaper *Zeit Online* (cf. Schwarze 2016).

> 'FreeInterrail would (re)connect EU youth with the EU itself. Already the experience of receiving a personalized letter from the European Commission would be life-changing for young adults. "We are part of your life and we care about you," it would say.'
>
> (Herr/Speer 2016)

Finally, the EU policy-makers became aware of the idea of the initiative *Free Interrail* and took it into consideration. Young European citizens should get easier access to free Interrail tickets and that is why a limited part of the Erasmus+ budget should finance a project that promotes youth mobility. In approximately two years, Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer could reach the EU from bottom-up with their initiative of a free travel opportunity for young people. That is exactly why we consider the initiative *Free Interrail* to be successful and a best-practice example.

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[10] See for the petition: change.org: *Saving Europe? Send EU youth traveling! #FreeInterrail*, [online] https://www.change.org/p/for-europe-s-future-freeinterrail-for-all-eu-youth-eu-commission-eucouncil-europarl-en (last access: 2nd September 2020).
[11] See for the supporting politicians: Free Interrail: *What's the story behind #FreeInterrail?*. In: Free Interrail Website, [online] http://freeinterrail.eu/about/ (last access: 2nd September 2020).

On 17th November 2016, the European Parliament and the Council decided that the Interrail project should be financed, but already at this point it was clear that the initial idea of *Free Interrail* was difficult to implement because of several reasons. One of these reasons was that there is no register for all 18-year-olds in Europe. Also, a missing connection of many European parts to Interrail was one of the major reasons against the entire implementation of the idea of *Free Interrail* initiators. It was discussed if 10,000 vouchers could be given to 16-year-old students who participated on the project through the school program eTwinning[12] (cf. ZeitOnline 2017). Supporters of the initiative *Free Interrail*, and especially the initiators, feared that the initial idea would get lost and it would be just one of the typical EU-projects (cf. Schwarze 2016). In March 2017 the initiative DiscoverEU, based on the proposal from the European Parliament, was presented by the Commission. It differed from the initial idea of Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer in many ways. The major difference was the limitation of *Free Interrail* tickets because of a limited budget provided by the European Commission. In contrast, the EU budget got €700 million for the proposal. According to the initiators of *Free Interrail*, 'every year roughly 5.5 million EU citizens turn 18. An Interrail Global Pass costs €479. If every young person would use them, this would cost around €2.6 billion a year. The Erasmus budget ranks similar per year, and that would be less than two percent of the EU's current budget. The effects would easily outweigh the costs, as it tackles several deep problems at once: the rise of nationalism, lack of trust in the EU, a divided and disconnected young generation' (Herr/Speer 2016).

The different methods that were used by the initiators of *Free Interrail* pushed their project up to EU level importance, but there are of course factors that the initiators could not influence which limited the implementation of their idea on EU level and thereby the amount of young people profiting of it. Because of the limited budget of €2.5 million in the year 2017, far not all young European citizens had the opportunity to travel with a free Interrail ticket through Europe. 15,000 young people had the opportunity to travel and explore Europe in the year 2017 in the frame of a testing period. The project was and still is highly demanded and that is the reason why young people do not just get a voucher at their 18th birthday but have to apply

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[12] The program eTwinning was launched in 2005 and is a community network for schools in Europe which is part of the Erasmus+ project. School staff, like teachers or librarians, has the possibility to communicate and develop projects with the help of this platform. For this issue, information are available here: eTwinning: *About*. In: eTwinning Website, [online] https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/about.htm (last access: 2nd September 2020).

for it. These limitations were highly criticized and ironically described as 'the great freedom in Brussels style' (Gassmann 2017).

> 'However, the European Parliament has now voted in favour of funding a €12 million pilot project for next year, which will see 20,000 tickets offered.'
>
> (Newstalk 2017)

In March 2018, the Commission announced that 30,000 young people have the opportunity of getting a *Free Interrail* ticket in the frame of the initiative *DiscoverEU*. Since 2018, every year two application rounds took place and 15,000 young travelers were determined per round. The budget also increased to €12 million. In 2018, more than 100,000 applied for the program. To summarize, 'almost 180,000 young people from all over Europe have applied during the two rounds in 2018; and thanks to this initiative, we will have so far given around 30,000 young people the chance to explore Europe's cultures and traditions and connect with other travelers, as well as the communities they are visiting. [...] DiscoverEU allows them to plan their own trips, share their stories on social media and make new friends' (European Commission 2019). Altogether, nearly 350,000 young people applied for the travel passes over the four application rounds in 2018 to 2019.[13]

'The success of the European project depends on whether we enable young generations to experience and explore Europe for themselves, and make Europe their own. A young person cannot be a true European just by reading pamphlets and attending lectures. Such identity-building comes through personal experience, cultural exchange, friendships, and, most of all, traveling.'[14] was written in an open letter 'as part of a public appeal to pressure the European Commission and Council to prioritize it in the next multi-annual budget framework' (Nicholls 2018). One hundred people from different social groups signed the letter to foster a reaction by the EU. According to the Commission, a budget of €700 million is planned for 1.5 million Europeans traveling in the period of 2021 to 2027.

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[13] See for numbers of applicants for *DiscoverEU* program: European Youth Portal: *Communication and Promotional materials*, [online] https://europa.eu/youth/discovereu/factsheets_de, 24th March 2020 (last access: 2nd September 2020).
[14] See for open letter to European Commission and Council*: #FreeInterrail Europe's Next Erasmus Moment!*, [online] https://g8fip1kplyr33r3krz5b97d1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ENGL-Freeinterrail-Open-Letter-E.C.-and-Council-final.pdf, 16th April 2018 (last access: 2nd September 2020).

Since in 2020 the COVID-19 crisis affects the social life in Europe and all over the world, the new application[15] round was postponed.

According Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer, there are many ways to implement their idea on EU level, e. g. to 'be connected to other programs, such as the European Voluntary Services, Erasmus, and many others [or] schools across the continent could prepare their students for their Interrail trips' (Herr/Speer 2016). From 2021 on, *DiscoverEU* will be part of Erasmus+ which means a higher budget to allow more tickets to be distributed, but also the implementation of more inclusion (Marc Küster, personal interview, Brussels, 4th March 2020, see attachment 1).

3.3 Criteria for the success of *Free Interrail* and their interplay

According to the European Commission, the initiative of the *Discover EU* project was a direct response to the campaign *Free Interrail*. The research shows that cooperation between the European Commission and an independent initiative works very well and leads to efficient and yielding results. It portrays a best-practice example which illustrates democracy and transparency within the EU. Democracy is shown by the bottom-up mechanism behind the implementation of the initiative *Free Interrail*. The citizens themselves supported the initiative and made it to a relevant topic on EU level. Transparency is guaranteed by the possibility for every European citizen to follow legislation process, changes and regulations within the program. In addition, improvement suggestions can be expressed directly to the concerning Directorate General and the European Commission. Both actors are in steady exchange looking for improvement suggestions with the aid of different tools of evaluation, such as e. g. surveys to the travelers, travel reports, on social media and much more. In the following, aspects of success of the campaign *Free Interrail* will be shown.

In an expert interview with the head of sector Youth Communities Management and Support, Marc Küster, the main responsible for the *DiscoverEU*

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[15] The basic requirement for an application is that the applicants are 18 years old and have the nationality of one of the EU member states. They have to fill in the online application form and participate in a quiz to be considered as participants of the *DiscoverEU* program. The winners of a free Interrail ticket have to start their journey from their home country that is one of the EU member states and to travel to, at least, one other EU member state. During their journey they should report their experiences as *DiscoverEU* Ambassadors. To be fair to other applicants, it is not allowed having travelled with *DiscoverEU* already. Selected young European citizens have the opportunity to travel for a period of minimum one day and up to 30 days in a given period (cf. European Youth Portal: *DiscoverEU*, [online] https://europa.eu/youth/discovereu (last access: 2nd September 2020).

project confirmed that the European Commission initiated the pilot project because of the campaign by Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer. This proves how commitment and innovative ideas of civil society can actually be heard by the policy makers and be implemented on EU level. It also shows the success of the initiative itself and that their methods and timing succeeded as well as the importance of the option for citizens to have influence on EU policy-making. In the case of *Free Interrail*, the European Citizens' Initiative was not an essential part to be successful and get the campaigns' idea implemented on EU level. The petition 'Saving Europe? Send EU youth traveling! #FreeInterrail' got quickly attention and was signed by European citizens who supported the idea of the initiators.

Timing was in the case of *Free Interrail* an important factor of success. The past years were characterized by different crises, like the euro crisis, Ukrainian crisis and refugee crisis and especially in times like this, the EU needed a program that would unite people and not polarize in times of crisis. The timing of the initiators was beneficial for their idea since the Commission was focusing already on the campaign's topic, so the adoption and implementation could happen much more quickly because of its high priority. Despite some limitations, the initiators of *Free Interrail* and the EU policy-makers have the same goals according to young Europeans. Young European citizens should take advantage of the freedom of movement in the EU, discover the diversity of Europe while travelling, learn about European cultural heritage and history, connect with people from all over the continent and discover themselves.

> 'By having practical experience in foreign countries and by meeting people of different backgrounds from their own, young travelers would understand the inherent similarities. S/he who travels does not set fire to refugee homes or vote for (semi-) fascist parties.'
>
> (Herr/Speer 2016)

The sector Youth Communities Management and Support of the European Commission is working closely together with the team of *Free Interrail*, which indicates a strong connection or similarity between the initiative and the final outcome. Still, the head of the sector, Marc Küster, stressed that there is a difference between the activists' and the EU officials' role. In stakeholder meetings, the EU actors exchanged views with various youth organizations in order to include various points of view and achieve the best outcome. Most of the aspects are differing from the initiative's proposal due to financial constraints (Marc Küster, personal interview, Brussels, 4th March 2020, see attachment 1).

The simplicity of the idea impressed European citizens and also many politicians which is why the approval of the idea was high. Personal positive experience of traveling with an Interrail ticket in the past and also the idea of having this opportunity when getting 18 years old was attractive to many young people, and also to parents who cared about their children. According to a survey by the *ZDF Politbarometer* from 20th September to 22nd September 2016, 56 per cent of the respondents liked the idea of giving a free Interrail ticket to European citizens on their 18th birthday (cf. Statista 2016). The networking with different German politicians and Members of the European Parliament, but also the media presence of the initiators and support from European citizens caused pressure from the 'outside' onto the EU institutions. This pressure from European citizens and contacts to the 'inside' of the European institutions speeded up the process of being noted on EU level and led the initiators to success.

The initiators were not a civil society organization but individuals, compared to other organizations operating on EU level, so that their campaign structure was advantageous: the initiators profited from flexibility and spontaneity. There were not many opponents in the case of *Free Interrail*, but the major weak point was the limited budget of the EU for the *DiscoverEU* program which is based on *Free Interrail* demands. Even though the number of tickets that are given out as part of the program is limited, the main idea of the initiators could be implemented on EU level and the number of participants is steadily rising. Again, that is proof for the success of the initiative.

The case of *Free Interrail* can be described as successful based on the developed criteria: policy type, simplicity, political salience, flexibility, pressure from the 'outside', networking with the 'inside', timing and budget. The initiators combined different methods on their way to get their idea implemented on EU level. A mixture of pressure from the 'outside' and from the 'inside' speeded up the success process of the initiative. The 'outside' – which means the European citizens and other organizations – was attained with the petition and the open public letter, but also with using mass media to spread the initiative's aim and general relevance. But also, the 'inside' – meaning the European institutions themselves – were decisive for the process, especially regarding the agenda-setting of the European Commission. The issue of European citizenship, identity and cultural exchange was already high ranked on their agenda, pointed out also in the White Paper from 2017. That shows political

salience and political discourse. The initiative had the perfect timing for bringing their proposal upon EU level because of the political focus aimed at achieving exactly this. Proof for the perfect timing is also the uptake of the topic in the mass media because mass media do always discuss issues which are currently highly ranked in the public discourse.

Based on our analysis, criteria for success for campaigns on EU level were derived. It becomes clear that there is no clear hierarchy of criteria, but it is the combination of all factors that led *Free Interrail* to success. One can assume that low polarization and simplicity are the key criteria for being successful on EU level. They portray the foundational characteristics of a campaign. Also in the case of *Free Interrail*, these criteria led the campaign to success and to the quick implementation of the initiators' idea on EU level. The other criteria which are considered are the consequences from a not polarizing issue with low complexity. They are considered as additional criteria for a successful campaign. By analyzing the time frame of the campaign, we determine timing as an important factor of the campaigns' success. Timing had a huge impact on speeding up the implementation process because there are always aspects that campaigners have no influence on, for example the agenda or budget of the Commission. The initiators of *Free Interrail* came up with their idea when there was the need for a solution in terms of European identity and the Commission was already focusing on the campaigns' topic within different documents, e. g. the White Paper. The use of different methods and their combination is therefore important to gain attention in a faster way and to bring the idea on a higher political level. Public debate, good media presence and networking with the 'inside' of the system to cause pressure from the 'outside' are essential to push the idea up on EU level. After getting attention, it is very important to keep up the work and be flexible as campaigners for a great achievement. While *Free Interrail* is providing benefits to a specific group of European citizens and is on this account a distributive policy, the choice of policy type did not influence the success of the campaigners negatively, because it did not introduce restrictions for other groups of people like other policy types do. In a nutshell, we see that there are several criteria for success which interplay with each other and correlation is case specific. To what extent these results can be applied to other cases, will be discussed in the following chapter.

4 Successful campaigning on the European level

The study links up with various research areas like agenda setting, politicization, salience and others as shown in our introduction. We were able to fill the research gap and for the first time present a comprehensive list of criteria for what makes a civil society campaign successful on EU level. Since this is the first study of its kind and we cannot refer to previous research and literature about the interplay of the different criteria which were found out, it is difficult to determine to what extent the results can be applied to other cases.

Still, we assume that the variety of criteria and their flexibility in terms of combination with each other makes it more applicable to other individual cases, too. The problem when generalizing our findings is that there are little to no similar cases when we define successful campaigning as having an exact idea implemented on EU level. First of all, as our research has shown, there are not many prominent campaigns on EU level. Secondly, the campaigns that are there, are more complex than the *Free Interrail* idea, and do not have one simple demand, but rather a variety of claims concerning a certain topic. For example, the climate movement has formulated various demands with the same goal. Yet for saving the planet, there is not only one simple action to be performed in comparison to *Free Interrail* where this is the case. Movements like *Pulse of Europe* are campaigning for pro-European attitudes, but do not have one clear demand for politicians to implement.

A similar example is the campaign 'The European Moment'. One of their goals is to implement a Europe Day on 9th of May as a holiday in Berlin. However, this has not worked out yet – maybe because the campaign does not focus on this demand only, but has more than one issue to be considered – unlike the *Free Interrail* campaign. The idea behind the holiday and the surroundings of that campaign might be too complex to produce political salience in the citizens' minds, because introducing a holiday might have many consequences. Additionally, the implementation of the Europe Day as a holiday might be too costly for the European budget which is why the campaign has not achieved the implementation stage on the EU level yet. Employees would have an additional paid holiday which might be conflictual for the employers. Plus in this specific case, there is no direct target group which is why citizens might ask themselves: Why do we need exactly that campaign to be implemented on EU level? However, the timing for a Europe Day is perfect since European citizenship, European identity and Europeanization are coming into

public as well as academic discourse. It is, therefore, linked with the Commission's Agenda which is, as already discussed in chapter 2.4, inter alia focusing on fostering European identity and a European society. That is why the campaign is already known in political circles and why their network of members and corporations is that dense (cf. The European Moment). Nevertheless, the concept was not implemented yet because the interplay of the criteria does not work out completely in this case - unlike in the case of *Free Interrail.*

4.1 General success criteria for campaigning on the European level
Measuring success

In more complex campaign topics, the success can, thus, not be measured in the same way. Many activists campaign for years for a broader variety of issues and they often also are successful to another extent. Vincent-Immanuel Herr confirmed this situation (Vincent-Immanuel Herr, phone interview, 7th May 2020, see attachment 2), by giving the example of Katja Sinko, an activist from Berlin targeting issues like European democracy and identity. Her activism is a case in which campaigning does bring progress in society by organizing events and protests for certain topics to develop political salience and discourse. Public debate is essential for a campaign to bring their idea on a higher level. However, the success is not as easily measurable as the success of *Free Interrail* where one can see numbers of people traveling. These numbers of participants are illustrated in Figure 4. One can see that the campaign is a success because their goal is to have young people traveling Europe by train and the number of participants of *DiscoverEU* is rising. There would have been even more since the applicant number was way higher – alone 100,480 for the first round (cf. Europäisches Jugendportal 2020a) –, but the Commission did not have the budget to make it possible for all applicants. Even though this is an aspect which still has to be improved, the goal of *Free Interrail* for youth to get to know other cultures has worked out, too. According to the evaluation survey of *DiscoverEU,* 63.5 percent of the participants say they learned more about European culture and 69.4 percent say they have learned more about other habits and traditions (cf. Europäisches Jugendportal 2020b).

Figure 4: Number of participants in the first four rounds of DiscoverEU
(own compilation based on data from Europäisches Jugendportal 2020a)

Since the implementation of simple ideas can be measured more easily, it is also easier to say whether an initiative was successful or not. In the case of *Free Interrail*, the campaign itself but also the European institutions publish the exact numbers of the specific action which is to be measured. With the aid of interviews and reports after the travels, policy-makers and campaigners get an impression of how effective their implemented idea actually is. This is something we should keep in mind when trying to apply the *Free Interrail* case on other cases.

Complexity and polarization

The empirical analysis highlights that the complexity of the topic and a low level of polarization are most relevant when it comes to a quick implementation. Good media presence and networking will not help if the topic is too polarizing and has too many (ideological) opponents. For example, ecological and environmental issues include many more demands, options and actions than simply gifting travel tickets. The topic of *Free Interrail* requires not a lot of change of society or the way of living, so people will approve of it easily, while for fighting climate change, people have to be more open to changing their lifestyle too. The policy type, again, is here highly relevant. In addition, the program does not need much media effort but is a

'self-runner' – individuals who were travelling with an Interrail ticket from the program *DiscoverEU* are going to tell their friends and family about it, and applicants for the new round of application are immediately found.

The issue here is that while this is what we observe, it does not make complex topics less relevant – quite the contrary. The criteria like method and timing are still relevant. Complex topics might take longer to reach an audience and the European Public Sphere, but with a good method and a good timing they might also get attention and achieve success. Here, the combination of pressure from the 'outside' and contacts to the 'inside' of the system can always speed up the process. Timing is ideal when the Commission is focusing on the campaign's topics already anyways, so the adoption and implementation will take place much more quickly because of its high priority.

That also has to do with the policy type. The issue of *Free Interrail* is a distributive policy which provides benefits to specific citizens. Relatively few people benefit from it because the policy proposal is mainly used to encourage certain activities – in this case, the promotion of European identity among young people. We can guess that with the distributive policy type of *Free Interrail* it was easier to convince the public as well as the EU policy-makers than it would have been with a regulatory policy, because in the latter case, people would care much more when their own freedom is restricted or they have to change their lifestyle in any way.

An additional criterion for success that we found in our case study is the urge to keep up the work. Especially for campaigns with more complex topics it can take longer to reach a bigger audience because the process of informing people about the relevance might take longer or the focus might shift over time. This is why campaign work in these areas (e. g. environmentalism) can take up to decades. This, again, has to do with the agenda-setting of the European institutions. As noted above, the right timing is important for a topic to become salient at a certain point in time. That means that a topic can be less salient when it is not on the Commission's agenda and not in political public discourse, and gain in relevance and attention once the political agenda, both of the European institutions and the society, changes. This might happen for instance after the introduction of a new Commission after European elections, but also in times of crises and problematic global events.

Other research in similar, but not the same, circumstances and cases has also shown that more successful campaigns are the ones where the activists are perceived

as more effective in voicing their concerns and generating social cohesion and identification amongst the people they fight for (cf. Badigannavar/Kelly 2005: 2). This has been achieved by *Free Interrail,* too, in a way that the proposal was directed at a certain group of people (namely young Europeans) regardless of origin or social status.

When generalizing the criteria, one should still keep in mind that there are always aspects that campaigners cannot influence directly – like the Commission's agenda or budget. If there is an important topic in a campaign, but it is just not a priority for the Commission at the moment, it will be harder to reach the implementation process. This is why timing is important. Also, spontaneity and flexibility are a bonus, if campaigners aim at orienting their campaign idea towards the current agenda and budget. They can quickly adapt to changes in political public discourse, too.

After all, it is a combination of all factors which were determined in this study that will lead to success. A campaign that meets requirements like simplicity of the topic, but has absolutely no networking skills or is against the Commission's agenda, is less likely to be successful, of course. Campaigners with great networking skills but with a topic that does not catch a huge amount of people because of a lack of political salience because of wrong timing will be less likely to succeed as fast as *Free Interrail*.
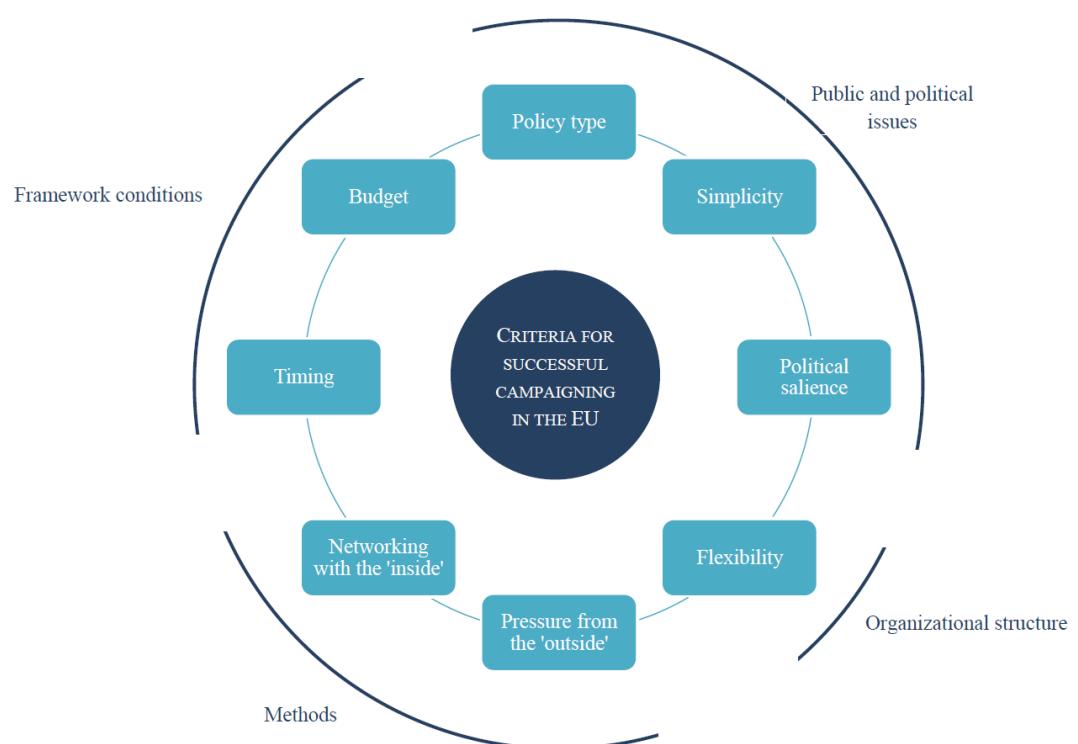

Figure 5: Criteria for successful campaigning in the EU

The overall criteria framework we established in order to generalize the findings from the case study is shown in figure 5. One can divide the criteria into four categories, while all of the criteria are interrelated and connected with each other. This is because some are similar; others can only be useful in combination with another criterion.

The category of *public political issues* concerns the topic of a campaign and includes the policy type – which also includes low polarization –, simplicity and political salience. The meaning of these single criteria has been described above already, but it can be added that these three are strongly connected since the policy type has to be chosen after deriving the complexity of a policy proposal and the salience for the European Public Sphere.

The rubric *organizational structure* mainly indicates that not having a big organization or association in the background of a campaign, can have advantages like flexibility and, therefore also, spontaneity. This is connected to all other criteria, because campaigners need to be flexible when it comes to the framing of the proposal as well as when it comes to choosing the right methods for making their claims towards the government in public. This does not mean that working with established organizations necessarily has a negative impact – but the fact that achieving attention and finding one's voice for European issues as a single person or group of few people in the beginning, is one that has not been that present in the academic researches before.

The category *methods* is a combination of networking with the 'inside' of a political system (e. g. lobbying) and pressure from the 'outside' (e. g. petitions, open letters, media), as described beforehand. This strategy of combining both has led to a very quick success of *Free Interrail*. To what extent the success would have happened if they only would have used one of the methods, cannot be said. It might be assumed that without lobby work, but with a lot of pressure from media and citizens, the idea could also have been implemented, but maybe not that fast and probably with a higher polarization of the issue. We derive from that that a mixture of both, pressure from the 'outside' but also communication with the 'inside', portrays perfect conditions for successful campaigning in connection with the other criteria from this study.

What is definite is the fact that the methods also depend on the organizational structure. If the resources are only few, it might take longer to convince single

politicians and to reach a bigger public audience through media coverage. But it is still possible, as the case study has shown. Of course, bigger organizations often have more connections to people working in politics, organizations and media, which is an advantage, but also restricts the amount of flexibility and response times.

The methods do also depend on the category *framework conditions*. While the budget and agenda of the European Commission are hard to influence, it still depends on the right method once the timing is good. For example, the Free Interrail campaign would not have been that successful, if the activists chose the right point in time for the campaign[16], but did not pull enough citizens on their side or lobby badly.

The circle of our four categories closes with the connection of framework conditions and political issues being interrelated. As described above, the policy type is – among others – defined by budget. If it is a distributive policy and not a regulatory one, the budget might be higher, but it also makes the topic less polarizing, because it does not restrict anybody. At the same time, the political salience rises if the timing is good.

To summarize, we must clarify that all of these criteria interact with each other and are not ought to be applied as single items, but as a whole mosaic of criteria for successful campaigning. As already shown above, there are many interrelations between single items which is why they cannot stand alone. The mosaic for successful campaigning is, additionally, not complete and absolute, but can be seen as a guideline for future campaigners of what has to be thought about while trying to make it up to EU level.

4.2 Campaigning on the European level – a chance for European citizens?

Besides the enormous relevance of campaigning for citizen participation in the democratic policy process, it is generally a good additional option to the official instruments when it comes to political agenda-setting and extending. With a good issue-based campaign in the right period of time, a salient topic can possibly reach way more attention in a short period of time than it could by a European Citizens' Initiative with a million of signatures. As shown in the case study, the combination of pressure from the 'outside' onto the political system and networking 'inside' the system has huge effects on politicians and their decision-making.

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[16] A right point in time was when the EU needed a program that would unite people and not polarize them in times of crises, such as e. g. in times of the migrant crisis and the financial crisis.

However, there is also a downside to campaigning. Fighting for one's ideas and beliefs is not completely free of financial issues. According to Vincent-Immanuel Herr (Vincent-Immanuel Herr, phone interview, 7th May 2020, see attachment 2), this sometimes results in conflicts between non-governmental organizations with similar interests. The limited amount of resources and attention for the topic often is a problem that influences all campaigners negatively. They should rather focus on supporting each other for more attention from the European Public Sphere, which of course is easier said than done in a world where everything is fast-moving and important issues are forgotten quickly over more important news. However, the aim and the topic should be in the center of all considerations and not the actors behind it. That is exactly why, again, participation in the EU legislation process is necessary – not only organizations should support other organizations with their ideas, but also individuals might bring themselves in and fight for a campaign's aim to make it public and salient.

Regarding the structure of the campaigners' organization, working without a big organization in the background can hold opportunities. While bigger entities often help with resources, they also take longer to make decisions due to fixed structures and hierarchies within. Campaigning 'on your own' – as the *Free Interrail* initiators did, with a loose network of partners – makes campaigning more flexible and offers faster progress. According to Vincent-Immanuel Herr (Vincent-Immanuel Herr, phone interview, 7th May 2020, see attachment 2), this also means that young people should start working for their ideas immediately and not rely on the support of big organizations from the beginning. The methods used by *Free Interrail* already show a wide array of chances regarding how to campaign efficiently even with a low budget. Hence, Vincent-Immanuel Herr demands more simple ideas but says that many people do not dare to make a start because they do not trust themselves to do it (Vincent-Immanuel Herr, phone interview, 7th May 2020, see attachment 2). All in all, it is not only the interplay of the criteria mentioned above, but also the motivation and the endurance of the actors from campaigns which make a campaign successful, sooner or later.

Regarding the criteria for successful campaigning, one could criticize the factor complexity. Could not this also be dangerous, regarding the fact that simple issues are commonly vulnerable to being used by populists? The question builds on

the statement from Dahrendorf (2019: 16) who phrased 'Populism is easy, democracy is complex.'

The use of simple solutions has been observed in the last years especially against European integration – not necessarily by big campaigns, but rather by populist parties (cf. Greven 2016). An example is the *Front National* in France, a right-wing populist party, which for instance states that unemployment is caused by immigration (cf. Rydgren 2008: 147) – a simple explanation for a complex topic. Simplicity is a consequence from generalization of complex topics, for example when we think about the complexity of immigration and unemployment issues. When it comes to European integration and Europeanisation, simplicity has, however, many advantages, especially when it concerns younger people. An argument which also holds against the comparison of the simple *Free Interrail* idea and the statement of the *Front National* is that the campaigners do not simplify a complex topic – the topic is simple as well as their idea, without any dangers behind it or any hidden political discourses – while the *Front National* simplifies facts that are interlinked with many other political occurrences which cannot be generalized into one statement.

In the case of campaigning on EU level, simplicity is not necessarily dangerous because campaigns that fulfil one success factor – like low level of complexity – still have to fulfil others, too, to be successful, according to our examined interplay of criteria as described above in chapter 4.1 and Figure 5. It is a combination of various criteria that leads to success. That does not mean that every criterion has to be perfectly fulfilled, but it should be considered while planning a campaign. In the case of populist demands, the factor of political salience and timing would have high importance, considering that the European Commission currently has a very pro-European agenda, which would probably not implement proposals of campaigns with anti-European values and aims.

5 Conclusion

After conducting the case study of *Free Interrail*, we see that various factors enhanced the success of the campaign. Arguing that the campaign can be actually seen as a best-practice example for successful campaigning, we can answer the question of what a good citizen campaign needs to fulfil to actually get adopted into EU policy with a list of criteria.

Our main findings are that what matters is especially low levels of complexity and low polarization of the relevant issue. These factors are important for more attention in public and a quick implementation into EU policy. Simplicity is actually a factor which is new to the research even though it appears very plausible that the easier a policy idea is to explain, the more people will understand and approve it. The *Free Interrail* campaigners had no party affiliation and the topic was not explicitly left- or right-wing, but rather generally pro-European. The required low level of polarization is also mirroring the theory of policy types. The distributive nature of the *Free Interrail* proposal did not polarize the public, but had a rather positive conception because it was all about giving away money and not restricting anybody. It also targeted the EU's responsiveness since strengthening European identity has been a topic on the EU agenda since Euroscepticism has been on the rise.

Regarding the methods, we found that a combination of 'internal' communication of the campaigners with political actors on EU level (e. g. lobbyism) and political pressure from the 'outside' (e. g. petitions and media) is the best way to do networking as well as doing the final touch of a policy proposal. That way, the campaigners are able to use the advantage of information and influence from both sides accordingly – from the European citizens and interested individuals as well as the European policy-makers and other organizations.

We found that the organizational background of the campaigners might play less of a role than one would expect. It is not necessary to have a big organization behind which would pay for campaign expenses and help with networking. Of course, this has advantages, but the example of *Free Interrail* shows that networking also works without an established association in the background and might even have the advantage of more spontaneous and flexible decision making. By finding strong like-minded partners, the issue of financing the campaign and getting attention for it can be solved all the same.

Factors that could not be influenced as easily by campaigners as the method of campaigning are above all the EU budget and the Commission's agenda. However, even here, campaigners can try to act accordingly if they are flexible enough and can start a campaign with a topic that is currently salient – the right timing is essential when they can, at the same time, convince the citizens and politicians. Even if it is only a test phase with a lower budget, like in the case of *Free Interrail*, it is an important first step to bring the proposal on EU level and to be able to advance it from there on.

It should be kept in mind that we defined success rather narrowly and that, of course, other campaigns, which do not achieve the implementation of all their demands within a short time, can still be successful to the same extent. Most of the civil society organizations do not fight as solely as *Free Interrail* for only one single demand, which is why the process is more complex and it is, thus, also more difficult to achieve success. Nevertheless, we assume that the criteria we listed can be applied to these more complex cases, too, since they universally help to get more attention for an issue and impregnate the European political sphere.

Our research subject shows that cooperation between the European Commission and an independent initiative can work well and lead to efficient and yielding results. It also portrays a best-practice example which illustrates democracy and transparency within the EU. Democracy is shown by the bottom-up mechanism behind the implementation of the initiative *Free Interrail*. The citizens themselves supported the initiative and made it to a relevant topic on EU level. Transparency is guaranteed by the possibility for every European citizen to follow the legislation process, changes and regulations within the program. In addition, improvement suggestions can be expressed directly to the concerning Directorate-General and the European Commission; complaints can be given to the European institutions. European citizens have, additionally, more options to take part in European policy-making, as shown in figure 2.

Thus, campaigning by independent citizens is also a means to fight Euroscepticism. The often-claimed democratic deficit generally strengthens anti-European opinions (cf. Hooghe/Marks 2007: 119). If more citizens started campaigns about salient topics to influence policy-making, and if the European institutions would actually take the citizens' ideas actively into consideration, then campaigning might make critics active and eventually change their minds about the European lack

of legitimation. Generally, more information about civic participation on EU level might have a positive influence on fostering the establishment of a European identity as well as a European society and might counteract Euroscepticism.

After all, we see that there are still not many campaigns on EU level, even though they bear a relevant chance for citizens of all ages and backgrounds to affect the political agenda of the EU. The *Free Interrail* campaign has shown that even without many financial resources, one can achieve the goal of influencing policy-making and taking part in shaping the EU into what one wants it to be like in the future. Even though the EU is a complex mosaic of political issues, one thing may not be missed: the 'courage for simple ideas'.

6 Literature

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7 Appendix

Attachment 1:

Transcript of the personal interview with Dr Marc Küster (4th March 2020, Brussels)

Interview partner: Dr Marc Wilhelm Küster
Head of Sector B.3.003 Youth Communities Management & Support
Time: 4th March 2020 14.00
Place: Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
B.3 Youth, Volunteer Solidarity and Traineeships Office
J70 cafeteria

Warum wurde die Kampagne *FreeInterrail* auf EU-Ebene übernommen?

Ich weiß nicht, wissen Sie, wie das Parlament arbeitet mit – nennen wir es mal in Englisch – Preparatory Actionants. Und tatsächlich geht das direkt zurück auf die Initiative von Herr und Speer, die das entwickelt haben, eben tatsächlich diese Initiative FreeInterrail, die unter anderem mit verschiedenen Parlamentariern gesprochen haben, auch auf europäischer Ebene oder gerade auf europäischer Ebene. Und das Parlament hat eben das Recht, bestimmte Aktivitäten der Kommission vorzuschlagen. Und das ist genau das, was das Parlament gemacht hat. Sie haben uns vorgeschlagen oder uns gebeten – also uns als Kommission gebeten, das Projekt FreeInterrail umzusetzen, als Pilotprojekt zu testen, inwiefern das funktioniert auf europäischer Ebene. Und das ist dann am Ende des Tages unserer DG zugewiesen worden, also speziell unserer Abteilung – das ist die Jugendabteilung, und noch spezieller dann ein bisschen später in meine Sektion, die Teil der Jugendabteilung ist, nennt sich auf Englisch Youth Communities Management and Support – also Jugendgemeinschaften und deren Unterstützung. Und so hat es im Prinzip angefangen. Wir hatten dann tatsächlich sage und schreibe 3 Monate, um diese Initiative umzusetzen, aber natürlich im Rahmen dessen, was uns die Finanzgesetzgebung erlaubt. Und Interrail ist das Produkt einer Firma namens EuRail, was meines Wissens nach das Pendant ist zu den verschiedenen nationalen Bahnorganisationen. Und diesen Markennamen können wir natürlich hier – können und wollen wir auch nicht verwenden. Und insofern wird das Ganze neu formiert unter dem eher beschreibenden Namen DiscoverEU, was ehrlich gesagt, nach meinem Befinden, auch sehr viel besser ist, denn es geht nicht darum, irgendein spezielles Produkt zu verkaufen – im Prinzip, wenn es andere Produkte dieser Art gäbe, wäre das genauso möglich –, sondern es geht um tatsächlich jungen Leuten quer durch die Europäische Union zu erlauben, eben die Union zu erforschen, zu erleben, und dabei selber zu lernen. Und genau das sind die zentralen Gedanken von DiscoverEU – das, und auch die Idee, umweltfreundliches Reisen auch jungen Leuten – nicht nur jungen Leuten – nahezubringen. Denn die Bahn ist in bestimmten Ländern sehr verbreitet und dazu gehört Deutschland glücklicherweise dazu, auch Belgien, Niederlande, aber es gibt auch genug Staaten, da ist die Bahn ein weitaus weniger offensichtliches Verkehrsmittel. Und im Prinzip gilt dasselbe für andere umweltfreundliche Verkehrsmittel. Tatsächlich ist Interrail auch das Produkt… – also erstmal kriegen nicht alle Teilnehmer notwendig einen Interrail-Pass, so wie es umgesetzt ist, sondern sie kriegen entweder einen Interrail-Pass oder, wenn es angemessener ist, direkte Verbindungen, weil einige gar nicht so lange reisen wollen aus verschiedensten Gründen. Das auf der einen Seite. Auf der anderen Seite gibt es

aber natürlich auch Mitgliedstaaten, die gar nicht per Bahn erreichbar sind. Man kann nicht per Bahn nach Malta fahren; man kann nicht per Bahn nach Irland fahren. Das heißt, es gibt notwendigerweise einen Mix aus Verkehrsmitteln, wenn auch die Bahn das Kernstück ist als umweltfreundliches Reisemittel. Es gibt auch, was man auf Englisch Automist Regions nennt, die Teil von zum Beispiel Frankreich sind, aber nicht geografisch in Europa liegen, aber deren Einwohner ganz genauso EU-Bürger sind. Auch die müssen natürlich die Möglichkeit haben und haben die Möglichkeit teilzunehmen.

Wie ist die Zusammenarbeit mit den Initiatoren Herr und Speer?
Sehr gut, wir sind in gutem Kontakt mit beiden. Beide haben Ideen, die auch darüber hinausgehen, aber das ist auch normal. Die haben eine ganz andere Rolle und sind als Aktivisten diejenigen, die diese Idee ja aufgebracht haben. Aber nichtsdestotrotz glaube ich sagen zu können, dass wir sehr gute Beziehungen haben zu beiden.
Es gibt verschiedene Anlässe. Wir haben 5 verschiedene Stakeholder-Meetings gemacht, wo dann zumindest bei einem auch – nein, bei 2 sogar – Herr und Speer auch anwesend waren und ihre ursprüngliche Idee vorgeschlagen haben und erklärt haben, wo das Ganze her kommt, nämlich aus ihren eigenen Erfahrungen, und ihren Wunsch, das allgemeiner zugänglich zu machen. Und nach dem Austausch haben wir jetzt immernoch… – wir setzen nicht alles um und wir können auch gar nicht alles umsetzen, aber der Austausch ist gut. Also es ist nach meinem Befinden auch ein exzellentes Beispiel, um zu zeigen, dass tatsächlich es möglich ist, mit entsprechendem Engagement und entsprechendem Geschick sich einzubringen und uns zur Realisierung zu führen.

Es gibt also Vorschläge, die von Anfang an existieren, aber auch solche, die sich während der Zusammenarbeit entwickeln?
Zum Beispiel zu den Ideen, die Herr und Speer hatten, dass das Ganze physisch mit einem Brief verschickt werden soll, das ist rein logistisch vom Rahmen her schlicht schlecht möglich, zumindest nach aktuellem Stand. Aber die Idee an sich ist deswegen nicht schlecht und vielleicht gibt es andere Möglichkeiten, etwas Ähnliches wie diese Idee zu realisieren.

Wie wird das Projekt evaluiert? Und wie erfolgreich werten Sie das Projekt?
Es wurden jetzt 4 Runden umgesetzt. In jedem Jahr, also 2018 und 2019 jeweils 2 Runden. Jetzt im März startet die fünfte Runde dementsprechend, vom 12. bis 26. März. Da werden wir, wenn ich die Zahlen richtig im Kopf habe, 30.000 Tickets dieses Mal finanzieren können. Wir haben auch das Ganze kombiniert mit Umfragen, weil wir natürlich interessiert sind, wie das Ganze angenommen wird. Erst einmal kann man sagen, dass zu jedem Zeitpunkt wir weitaus mehr Anfragen hatten als wir tatsächlich Tickets vergeben konnten. Das ist einerseits schade, weil wir natürlich gerne allen, die interessiert sind, ein Ticket geben würden. Andererseits aber auch gut, weil es zeigt, dass die Idee ja wirklich entsprechend Resonanz findet. Wir haben zwischen 80.000 und 100.000 Bewerbungen pro Runde aktuell. Das heißt pro Jahr zwischen 160.000 und 200.000. Das ist viel, also für eine Pilotaktion ist das viel. Aber es ist trotzdem nur ein Bruchteil von allen, die gerade 18 sind in der EU. Jetzt ist natürlich nicht zu erwarten, dass jeder, der 18 ist, das tatsächlich machen möchte.

Das wäre vielleicht auch überoptimistisch, das anzunehmen. Aber es ist sicherlich noch Potential nach oben und wir sind immer interessiert an Ideen, wie wir dieses Potential ausreizen können, also wie wir das Maximum an jungen Leuten in der Altersgruppe erreichen können. Und zwar auch gerade junge Leute, die es sonst nicht sowieso machen würden.

Wir arbeiten erstmal zusammen mit zum Beispiel dem European Disability Forum, aber auch anderen Organisationen, um in dem Fall Leute mit Behinderung speziell zu erreichen, was uns auch – muss ich zu meiner Freude sagen – gelingt und wir haben auch spezielle Unterstützungsmöglichkeiten, wenn jemand zum Beispiel eine Begleitperson braucht, weil es körperlich nicht anders geht. Und das wird auch angenommen – oder andere Begleitmittel. Insofern ja, wir arbeiten sehr viel mit sozialen Medien zusammen, auch mit Influencern, um tatsächlich auch die Botschaft rauszukriegen über die klassischen Zyklen hinaus. Wir arbeiten jetzt auch dran, verstärkt mit Kulturorganisationen zusammenzuarbeiten, auch deren Outreach zu nehmen. Natürlich sowieso auch mit Jugendorganisationen, sind aber gleichzeitig immer auf der Suche nach neuen Ideen, wie wir das Ganze noch effizienter, noch besser machen können.

Der Plan von jeher war, dass es Teil von Erasmus+ wird in 2021. Und die Zeit bis 2021 müssen wir eben abdecken. Dies würde tatsächlich Veränderungen bringen in dem Sinne, dass wir die Inklusion verstärken können, in dem Sinne, wie ich es vorhin bereits angerissen habe. Dass wir andere Inklusionsmechanismen einbauen können, die über das hinaus gehen. Aus Sicht des Reisenden wird es sich wenig bis nahezu gar nicht ändern, außer dass das Budget hoffentlich größer ist und damit die Wahrscheinlichkeit, Tickets zu kriegen, höher. Das heißt, andererseits hoffen wir aber auch, dass die Anzahl der Interessierten hoch geht. Es wird mehr Tickets und eben eventuell besser unterstützte Tickets geben.

Ist das Budget eine der Hauptherausforderungen, oder gibt es weitere Herausforderungen bei diesem Projekt?

Das Budget ist – aber das ist fast eine generelle Regel – eine Beschränkung, weil wir natürlich kein unbegrenztes Budget haben und auch nicht haben werden. Die andere Herausforderung ist tatsächlich: Wie können wir DiscoverEU noch bekannter, noch populärer machen, und zwar wirklich quer durch die Altersklassen.

Es ist für 18-Jährige, aber innerhalb der 18-Jährigen gibt es ungefähr 5 Millionen, die in dem Jahr 18 sind. Und davon erreichen wir pro Jahr eben so an die 200.000, wie ich schon gesagt habe. Das ist nicht schlecht, das ist sogar sehr gut für ein Pilotprojekt, aber es ist natürlich das, wo wir am Ende des Tages hin wollen.

Attachment 2:

Transcript of the phone interview with Vincent-Immanuel Herr (7th May 2020)

Interview partner: Vincent-Immanuel Herr
                            One of the two initiators of the campaign *FreeInterrail*
Time: 7th May 2020, 11.00

Erfolg und Relevanz der Kampagne
Ich würde schon sagen, dass unsere Kampagne auf jeden Fall erfolgreich war. Es wurde nicht eins zu eins umgesetzt und das ist auch so ein Punkt, an dem wir nach wie vor ein bisschen arbeiten. Aber insgesamt sehen wir es schon als Erfolg. Uns hat DiscoverEU schon sehr gefreut als EU-Programm. Es ist natürlich kleiner und hat auch einige Einschränkungen gegenüber unserer Originalidee, aber im Großen und Ganzen schon den Geist oder den Kern dieser Idee rüberbringt. In der Kernidee geht es ja darum, dass wir glauben, europäische Integration braucht persönlichen Austausch zwischen Menschen verschiedener Länder. Und wenn wir das nicht gewährleisten, dann hat Europa echt ein Problem. Und wenn wir uns Zahlen angucken, dann sehen wir, dass 40% aller EU-Bürgerinnen und Bürger ihr Heimatland nie verlassen haben. Wir müssen also als EU Programme entwickeln, die es Leuten sehr niedrigschwellig ermöglichen, ins Ausland zu gehen und Menschen kennenzulernen, die nicht aus ihrem eigenen Land kommen. Und tatsächlich fällt uns keine bessere Alternative zu DiscoverEU oder FreeInterrail bisher ein. Natürlich kostet das viel Geld für die rund 5 Mio. jungen Leute, die jedes Jahr 18 werden- aber gleichzeitig gibt es keinen alternativen Vorschlag, der es sozusagen theoretisch ermöglicht, alle jungen Leute ins Ausland zu schicken und gleichzeitig günstiger ist. Von daher ist es aus unserer Sicht – und bisher hat noch keiner einen anderen Vorschlag vorgebracht, der das gleiche Ziel erfüllt und noch effizienter oder günstiger ist.
Ich erwähne Kosten auch, weil natürlich in den ??? (Gesprächen?), die wir geführt haben, Geld immer eine riesige Rolle spielt und einige andere Kampagnen uns vorwerfen, das ist so teuer und das Geld sollte lieber woanders hin gehen. Aber wir glauben, das Geld ist sehr gut investiert. Wenn man sich die Berichte von den Leuten anschaut, die von ihrer Interrail-Reise zurückgekommen sind, sieht man, dass die da Großteils sehr begeistert zurückkommen, haben neue Freundschaften geschlossen und Europa noch einmal neu kennengelernt haben. Wenn wir das irgendwie ausweiten können, dass das nicht nur 20-30.000 pro Jahr machen, sondern alle 18-Jährigen, dann wäre der EU schon ein riesiger Gefallen getan.

Warum haben Sie zur Umsetzung keine European Citizens' Initiative gewählt?
Über die European Citizens Initiative haben wir am Anfang nachgedacht, haben uns aber dagegen entschieden, weil wir das Gefühl hatten, die Idee ist eh schon im politischen Raum angekommen. Was die ECi ja tatsächlich macht, ist, dass dein Vorschlag bei 1 Mio. Unterschriften bei der Kommission landet. Aber da unser Vorschlag eh schon bei der KOM war, hatten wir das Gefühl, das muss nicht sein.

Warum war die Kampagne Ihrer Meinung nach so erfolgreich?
   1. **Zeit**
      Ich glaube, die Idee kam genau zum richtigen Zeitpunkt. Das ist ein sehr entscheidender Faktor für die Umsetzung von Ideen, dass die nicht zu früh oder zu spät kommen. Als wir damit nach Brüssel gegangen sind, das war 2015, 2016 – ist ja nicht ganz anders als jetzt, aber da war die EU in einer

tiefen Krise, da war mit Griechenland gerade einiges im Argen, die Finanzkrise war noch relativ stark, die sogenannte Flüchtlingskrise ist gerade losgegangen – Da war viel in der EU gerade am Brodeln und ich glaube, dass viele Politikerinnen und Politiker in Brüssel auch gerade in der KOM und im Parlament fast händeringend nach einer neuen Idee gesucht haben, nach einem neuen Projekt, das der EU wieder frischen Wind einhauchen kann. Deshalb haben wir da sehr viele offene Türen gefunden.

Wir waren damals beide Mitte 20 und auch noch im Studium. Wir sind einfach als Studenten mit einer Idee nach Brüssel gegangen, aber hatten im EP und in der Kommission viele Leute, die sich die Zeit genommen haben, sich das anzuhören. Von daher glaube ich das ist ein entscheidender Faktor, dass man mit seiner Idee den Zeitgeist trifft. Die EU hat in der Zeit so eine Art von Idee gesucht, weil natürlich Programme wie Erasmus nur einen ganz kleinen Prozentsatz der Leute erreichen und gleichzeitig die EU auch merkt, dass es gerade unter jungen Leuten riesige Spaltungstendenzen gibt. Ein Teil der Generation war schon öfter im Ausland und kennt sich gut aus mit europäischen Fragen – und andere junge Leute waren noch nie im Ausland und sehen die EU allerhöchstens auf dem Instagram-Kanal anderer Leute. Daher war die Zeit einfach reif für so eine Idee.

Wir sind nach wie vor überzeugt, dass es keine Spaßidee ist, sondern eine absolute Notwendigkeit für die EU. Wären wir aber 10 Jahre früher gekommen, glaube ich, hätte das nicht geklappt, weil da die Situation anders war und es der EU vielleicht in dem Moment auch „zu gut" ging. Manchmal muss es auch ein bisschen knistern und es muss Herausforderungen geben, damit neue Ideen eine Chance haben. Und FreeInterrail war so eine neue Idee, auch eine sehr ungewöhnliche, weil sie so einfach ist. Da gab es auch viel Widerstand, weil es hieß, die Idee sei zu einfach und das könne so nicht funktionieren. Aber wie gesagt, wenn es etwas schwierig gerade ist, dann sind die Leute auch offen für solche Vorschläge.`

2. Mittel und Methoden

Man muss dazu sagen, wir waren damals keine Profis, also haben wir viel ausprobiert und einige Sachen haben auch nicht geklappt. Aber ich glaube es war ein Mix aus dem, was man als politische Lobbyarbeit beschreiben würde. Wir sehen das als zwei Sachen: Einerseits arbeiten wir mit dem System, indem wir mit Leuten reden und gleichzeitig erzeugen wir von außen Druck auf das System. Unsere Erfahrung ist, dass Politiker/innen sehr stark darauf reagieren, wenn sie eine Petition mit sehr vielen Unterschriften sehen oder in den Medien viel über die Idee lesen. Das hat einen großen Eindruck auf die und dann erhöht es auch die Chancen, dass sie sich um die Idee kümmern.

<u>Gespräche mit PolitikerInnen</u>
Wir haben Politikerinnen und Politiker in Brüssel, insbesondere im Parlament, per Mail oder Twitter angeschrieben, sind teilweise auch selber hingefahren und haben uns mit Leuten getroffen und haben einfach versucht, ihnen zu erklären, warum diese Idee super wichtig ist. Das hat ganz einfach angefangen, wir waren auf (pro-europäischen/Europa-)Konferenzen auch in Berlin oder in Österreich und da waren dann z. B. Mitglieder der europäischen Kommission. Die haben wir einfach angesprochen und gefragt, ob wir ihnen Informationen zukommen lassen können und so, und das hat erstaunlich häufig geklappt. Meine Erfahrung damit ist, dass Politikerinnen

und Politiker es sehr cool finden und es ihnen sehr gefällt, wenn junge Leute mit eigenen Ideen auf Brüssel zukommen, weil das eigentlich nicht so häufig vorkommt.

<u>Netzwerk von MEPs</u>
Also haben wir viele Gespräche geführt mit Politikern, wir haben ein kleines Netzwerk aufgebaut von MEPs, mit denen wir zusammengearbeitet haben. Da war es uns auch wichtig, dass die aus verschiedenen Fraktionen sind. Wir sind beide selber parteifrei und haben uns von Anfang an vorgenommen, dass wir versuchen wollen, Leute aus verschiedenen Fraktionen dabei zu haben, weil es besser für das Projekt wäre. Der erste Unterstützer war MEP István Ujhelyi, ein ungarischer S&D-Abgeordneter, der von unserer Idee in der Zeitung gelesen und sie aufgegriffen hat. Als wir das mitbekommen haben, haben wir ihn kontaktiert und seitdem waren wir mit ihm bis heute in Kontakt. Dann haben wir noch andere Leute kontaktiert. Die Fraktionen, mit denen wir zuerst unterwegs waren, waren die S&D, die ALDE und die Grünen. Die damalige Fraktionsvorsitzende der Grünen Rebecca Harms fand die Idee sehr cool, sodass sich da schon ein kleines Netzwerk gebildet hat. Manfred Weber und die EVP kam erst ein Jahr später an Bord. Das war also so die Arbeit mit Politiker/innen.

<u>Öffentlichkeitsarbeit und Medien</u>
Gleichzeitig haben wir auch Öffentlichkeitsarbeit bzw. Druck von außen betrieben über verschiedene Methoden. Wir haben eine Petition gestartet auf change.org. Das ist aber nur einer der Punkte. Wir haben auch viel über Gastbeiträge und Medienarbeit gemacht. Wir haben relativ früh schon der ZEIT in Hamburg geschrieben mit unserer Idee, damals kannte die noch kein Mensch, und haben gefragt, ob sie Lust hätten auf einen Gastbeitrag von uns, wo wir mal erklären warum das eine gute Idee ist. Die haben auch zugesagt, was uns überrascht hat. Wir haben diesen Gastbeitrag geschrieben, der seitdem viel gelesen wurde, und ich glaube auch viele andere Ideen angestoßen hat.

<u>Offener Brief und „Promi-Power"</u>
Wir haben teilweise auch andere Medien, auch in Brüssel (z. B. politico usw.) angeschrieben und von der Idee erzählt und ich habe in der Süddeutschen Zeitung einen Gastbeitrag geschrieben und so. Also wir haben viel über Medien und Gastbeiträge gearbeitet.
Später haben wir noch die Methode des offenen Briefes genutzt, was auch sehr effektiv war. Wir haben einen offenen Brief geschrieben an die Kommission mit vielen prominenten Unterstützern, die wir gewinnen konnten, also Schauspieler, Autorinnen, bekannte Persönlichkeiten. Ich glaube am Ende waren das über 100, die gesagt haben, FreeInterrail ist cool und das sollten wir machen. Und weil da so viel prominente Unterstützung kam, hat ZEIT online diesen Brief samt Unterstützerliste abgedruckt. Das hat auch noch einmal eine große Welle ausgelöst, weil plötzlich auch anderen Länder und andere Medien gesehen haben, dass das eine Idee ist, die nicht nur von zwei merkwürdigen Studenten in Deutschland gefordert wird, sondern da sind viele Promis dahinter. Das ist uns öfter aufgefallen: Promi-Power kann man sehr gut nutzen, weil alle Medien über etwas berichten, sobald Promis dich dabei unterstützen. Das ist so ein Trick, den ich zum ersten Mal genutzt habe

und sehr effektiv, weil dieser Brief dann auch in Brüssel viel zitiert wurde und da rumgegangen ist.

TedEx-Talk

Eine andere Sache war ein TedEx-Talk, den ich über FreeInterrail gehalten habe. Dieser hat in der KOM relativ viel bewegt und er wurde dort häufig geschaut, was ich auch erst später erfahren habe aber ganz interessant fand. Es war also ein Mix, wir haben viel mit verschiedenen Arten von Medien gearbeitet, mit Gastbeiträgen, dem offenen Brief, der Petition, Videos wie dem TedEx-Talk.

Andere Partner

Wir haben viel versucht, im zivilgesellschaftlichen Bereich, gerade in Deutschland, Leute an Bord zu bekommen, besonders andere pro-europäische Organisationen oder Jugendverbände und andere spannende NGOs. Wir haben das „Pro-FreeInterrail-Allianz" genannt. Das hat teilweise ganz gut geklappt, teilweise gab es aber auch gerade von Jugendverbänden Vorbehalte gegenüber der Idee, also da waren nicht alle ganz so begeistert wie bei den anderen Teilen der Gesellschaft, deshalb hat das da nicht immer geklappt. Teilweise mussten wir lange Gespräche führen, weil gerade auch sehr professionelle Jugendverbände sich Sorgen gemacht haben, dass die Idee zu einfach ist und der positive Impact für die jungen Leute nicht richtig ankommt. Es gibt nach wie vor auhc Organisationen, die die Idee nicht cool finden, aber das ist auch okay.
Aber man muss schon sagen, die Idee war an sich sehr beliebt von Anfang an. Ich glaube, am Anfang hätte niemand gedacht, dass aus der Idee was wird, aber richtig schlecht fand die Idee von Anfang an nur ein kleiner Prozentsatz. Also – nur eine Einschätzung von mir – ich würde sagen so 80-90% der Leute, mit denen wir geredet haben, fand die Idee erstmal gut, selbst wenn sie vielleicht gesagt haben, es wird nicht klappen.

3. **Themenfeld und politisches Spektrum**
   Es war glaube ich auch sehr positiv, dass die Idee nicht zwangsweise einem politischen Spektrum zuzuordnen ist. Das ist vielleicht auch, muss man ganz ehrlich sagen, ein Sonderfall von FreeInterrail? Bei vielen politischen Kampagnen oder Ideen ist ja relativ klar, ob es eine progressive eher linke Idee ist oder eine konservative oder liberale etc. Bei FreeInterrail war das nicht so richtig zuordbar. Deshalb konnten auch viele Promis uns unterstützen, weil unsere Initiative ja keine Parteizugehörigkeit hatte, sondern nur die Idee Europa zu verbinden – und das war ungefährlicher als Themenfeld. Wir haben das bei anderen Fragen gemerkt und auch von anderen gehört, dass es bei politisch brisanteren Ideen viel schwieriger ist, so eine breite politische Allianz zu finden. Beispiele: Abtreibung, Integration, Finanzfragen, weil diese mehr polarisieren. Bei FreeInterrail gab es im Vergleich viel weniger Gründe, die Idee nicht zu mögen.

4. **Ressourcen**
   Der große Nachteil war, dass wir zwei Individuen waren ohne Organisation im Hintergrund, haben keinen Verband/keine NGO vertreten. Gleichzeitig war der Vorteil dabei, dass wir viel agiler handeln konnten. Ich sehe das bei großen (Jugend-)Organisationen, die auch tolle Ideen haben, aber da dauert

es in der Regel Jahre solche Ideen zu entwickeln, weil sie ganz viele Gremien haben und mit allen abstimmen müssen. Wir waren nur zu zweit und verstehen uns gut, weshalb wir unsere Idee sehr schnell weiterentwickeln und schnelle Entscheidungen treffen konnten. Das war schon ein großer Vorteil und ist in der politischen Szene eher ungewöhnlich, weil normalerweise die Leute die Lobby-Arbeit für eine größere Organisation und nur sehr selten für eine reine Idee machen. Wir wurden auch öfter gefragt für wen wir denn arbeiten, für die Bahn oder sowas, aber das haben wir ja nicht. Man hat gemerkt in Brüssel waren die Leute teilweise ein bisschen irritiert von uns, weil die nicht genau wussten, für wen wir das machen, und es schwer verständlich für sie war, dass wir diese Idee selber einfach nur geil finden und umsetzen wollen.

5. **Stiftungen**

   Zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt haben wir Unterstützung bekommen durch die Stiftung Mercator, die die Idee von Anfang an toll fand. Die haben uns Ressourcen gegeben, um z. B. nach Brüssel zu reisen. Ein Tipp von mir an euch: Zivilgesellschaft kann deutlich verstärkt werden durch die Zusammenarbeit mit Stiftungen. Das kann auch seine Grenzen haben, wenn eine Idee sehr politisch brisant ist, dann gehen Stiftungen in der Regel nicht dran, aber wir haben oft und sehr gute Erfahrungen damit gemacht, da Stiftungen den Auftrag haben, zivilgesellschaftliche gemeinnützige Projekte zu unterstützen, und das ist FreeInterrail, da es ja Europa als Ganzem dienen und nicht nur Individuen bereichern soll. Stiftungen als Unterstützungsnetzwerk sind also ein Tipp, den wir anderen Kampagnen immer wieder geben, man muss natürlich gucken, dass es vom Thema her auch zusammenpasst.

   Es gab viele, die gesagt haben, sie finden die Idee sehr cool, und dann gab es ein paar mit denen wir enger zusammengearbeitet haben:
   - *Stiftung Mercator*
   - *Schwarzkopf-Stiftung*
   - *Europäisches Jugendparlament*
   - *Teile der Jungen Europäischen Föderalisten*
   - *Z2X-Festival von ZEIT online*
   - *verschiedene kleine NGOs in verschiedenen Ländern, z. B. Think Young in Brüssel*

   Wir hatten einen sehr guten Draht zu change.org, kennen die meisten der Leute im Büro ganz gut und konnten so zusammen mit ihnen dafür sorgen, dass die Petition eine große Reichweite bekommt

6. **Zusammenarbeit mit Brüssel und weitere Ziele**

   Wir merken, dass unser Einfluss weniger wird. Die Idee ist mittlerweile so angekommen in der Mitte von Brüssel. Wir beraten die Kommission ab und zu und sprechen mit denen, was auch total Spaß macht, und geben Ideen, was man noch verbessern könnte. Aber mittlerweile gibt es so viele Fans der Idee in Brüssel, dass wir sozusagen – ich will nicht sagen nicht mehr gebraucht werden. Am Anfang waren wir sehr wichtig, um diese Idee zu verteidigen und dafür zu sorgen, dass die nicht zu doll abgeändert oder vergessen wird. Mittlerweile ist die Gefahr, dass die Idee vergessen wird, super gering. Ich glaube wir werden es die nächsten Jahre schon noch begleiten, aber es wird jetzt schrittweise weniger, was wir noch machen können.

Unser Ziel ist nach wie vor, dass wir zu dem Punkt unserer großen Vision kommen, dass alle Leute dieses Ticket kriegen, wenn sie 18 werden und sich nicht bewerben müssen.

Ähnliche Kampagnen

Mir fallen eigentlich gar keine Kampagnen ein, die unserer sehr ähnlich sind. Das Charmante an FreeInterrail, und da muss man dazu sagen, das war wirklich ein Geistesblitz, an dem auch Robert Menasse beteiligt war, ist, dass wir bei der sehr einfachen Idee geblieben sind und es nicht verkompliziert haben. Das hat auch den Leuten so gefallen, mit denen wir darüber geredet haben, dass man die Idee in 20 Sekunden erklären kann und sie ohne viel Vorwissen versteht. Das gab natürlich auch Kritik, aber insgesamt war es auch ein erfrischendes Erlebnis für Brüssel, dass man mal eine super einfache Idee hat, die nebenbei noch junge Leute sehr begeistert. Als die Webseite von DiscoverEU zum ersten Mal gelauncht wurde, ist die Seite zusammengebrochen, und die KOM hat uns gesagt, dass kein anderes EU-Programm so viele Klicks innerhalb so kurzer Zeit bekommen hat. Das zeigt, was für ein Potenzial darin steckt, wenn die Kommission sich traut mit einer unglaublich einfachen, aber sehr effektiven Idee, zu starten und meine Hoffnung ist, dass es die EU in die Richtung schiebt, sich mehr traut, einfacherer Sachen auszuprobieren. Unserer Erfahrung mit der Kommission ist auch, dass es die Tendenz gibt in der Kommission Sachen zu verkomplizieren. DiscoverEU war ja nicht die erste Umsetzung unserer Idee – 2017 gab es schon mal ein Projekt, das angeblich auch auf unserer Idee basierte. Das war aber ein richtig schlechtes Projekt, das auch von den Medien total zerrissen wurde. Also gut gemeint, aber sehr schlecht umgesetzt.

Das war so das Besondere an unserer Kampagne, dass wir mit einer Idee gearbeitet haben, die unglaublich simpel ist und schon an sich eine starke Zugkraft hat und nicht darauf basiert, dass man Leute lange davon überzeugen muss. Es gibt Kampagnen, die in eine ähnliche Richtung gehen, gerade im europäischen Kontext. Wer mir da einfällt ist Katja Sinko, eine Berliner Europaaktivistin. Sie hat viel gemacht zu Steigerung europäischen Bewusstseins. Der Unterschied ist, dass ihre Ideen viel breiter sind und es nicht um eine ganz spezielle Idee wie FreeInterrail geht. Damit ist es auch viel schwieriger zu bemessen im Sinne von Erfolg. Bei FreeInterrail war der Erfolg, dass die Idee eingeführt wurde, das lässt sich messen in Zahlen. Aber wenn du Demos veranstaltest und viele Events abhältst, ist es am Ende des Tages trotzdem schwieriger zu messen, was es bewirkt hat. Sie benutzt auch ähnliche Methoden wie wir, also da geht viel über öffentliche Meinungen, Druck auf politische Institutionen, Medienarbeit, Allianzbildung.

Was konkrete Gesetzesänderungen angeht, fallen mir keine anderen Kampagnen ein. Wir fragen uns selber woran das liegt, weil wir gerne Menschen motivieren würden, selber so etwas in der Art zu machen. Es fällt uns auch nicht einfach zu sagen, wie man unsere Erfahrung auf andere Kampagnen übertragen kann.

Ich glaube nicht, dass es ungewöhnlich war, dass wir eine einfache Idee hatten, sondern das Ungewöhnliche war, dass wir bei der einfachen Idee geblieben sind. Ich habe die Befürchtung, dass es sehr viele coole Ideen da draußen gibt, aber Leute sich nicht trauen diese umzusetzen, weil sie denken, die Idee sei zu simpel oder zu utopisch oder auch bei sich selber das Gefühl haben, sie sind nicht erfahren genug oder haben nicht genug politisches Standing, und dass sie deshalb nie was mit den Ideen anfangen. In dem Sinne denke ich nicht, dass FreeInterrail völlig außergewöhnlich ist, höchstens die Tatsache, dass wir drangeblieben sind. Anfangs wurden wir auch ausgelacht für die Idee, auch von Leuten aus unserem Freundeskreis. Die haben gesagt ,Lustige Idee, aber die EU wird niemals Urlaub für

18-Jährige bezahlen'. Trotzdem sind wir drangeblieben und haben eben nicht unsere verrückte Idee an den politischen Alltag angepasst. Meiner Erfahrung nach sehnt sich unser politisches System eigentlich nach ungewöhnlichen Ideen und in Brüssel wollen sie unbedingt von jungen Leuten hören, aber diese trauen sich nicht.

Ich glaube der Mut zur einfachen Idee und der Mut dranzubleiben, auch wenn andere sagen, dass es nicht klappt, das halte ich für die Punkte, die wir mehr brauchen als Gesellschaft.

Warum sind andere Kampagnen nicht so schnell so erfolgreich?

Ich glaube, dass viele Kampagnen, die wir sehen, auf Dauer schon etwas umsetzen werden. Wenn man sich anschaut, was sich bspw. bei feministischen Kampagnen in den letzten Jahren verändert hat im Sinne von öffentlicher Debatte rund um Gleichberechtigung oder Abtreibung – da hat sich mega was getan. Natürlich kann man sagen, es müsste schneller gehen, aber es geht schon voran. Das gleiche gilt für Umweltschutz. Ich bin sicher, dass das da noch kommt, denn Politik reagiert auf öffentlichen Druck, sofern der auch aufrechterhalten wird.

Was wirklich ungewöhnlich bei FreeInterrail war, ist wie schnell das gegangen ist. Vielleicht war das einfach aufgrund von glücklichen Faktoren wie dem richtigen Zeitpunkt und wenig Polarisierung so ein bisschen im Zeitraffer-Modus, aber ich glaube, dass ähnliche Prozesse auch bei anderen Kampagnen oder Bewegungen am Laufen sind. Dazu gehört auch das Beispiel der Ehe für alle – das hat auch viel länger gedauert und hat viel mehr polarisiert, aber am Ende hat der jahrelange Druck aus der Zivilgesellschaft etwas verändert. Man muss einfach dranbleiben. Wir waren auch überrascht wie schnell das gegangen ist, wir haben gedacht wir müssten da 10-20 Jahre dran sitzen. Dass DiscoverEU schon nach weniger als 3 Jahren gekommen ist, fanden wir sehr ungewöhnlich.

Konkurrenz als hinderlicher Faktor

Es gibt eine Tendenz, dass sich Bewegungen mit sehr ähnlichen Zielen gegenseitig als Konkurrenz begreifen und teilweise sogar gegeneinander arbeiten. Das ist manchmal merkwürdig, weil manchmal der größte Widerstand von den Leuten kommt, die einem am ähnlichsten sind. Das war bei uns auch so, dass wir viel Widerstand von Organisationen bekommen haben, wo wir dachten, dass die eigentlich so typische Verbündete wären, also sehr pro-europäisch, sehr pro-Jugend usw. In den sozialen Medien gab es dann teilweise sehr kritische fast schon bissige Kommentare, die stark dagegen waren und es als Blödsinnsprojekt deklariert haben. Und auch im Hintergrund haben wir mitbekommen, dass es da Kritik an der Idee und an den Leuten, die damit zu tun hatten, gab. So wie auch Vorwürfe, dass wir für die Bahn arbeiten und so. Die Idee hat das jetzt nicht wirklich aufgehalten, weil die große Mehrheit die Idee ja sehr gut fand. Aber das war glaube ich nicht nur bei uns so, das sehe ich auch in anderen Feldern. Da spielt glaube ich auch Neid eine große Rolle, also wer kriegt Ressourcen und Aufmerksamkeit.

Mich bewegt die Frage schon sehr, weil ich glaube, viele gute Sachen gehen kaputt, weil Leute sich nicht gegenseitig unterstützen. Was wir bei FreeInterrail versucht haben, - und da waren wir bestimmt auch nicht immer super erfolgreich und da müssten wir wahrscheinlich auch weiterhin lernen – war wirklich nicht gegen andere zu arbeiten, sondern mit anderen. Teilweise haben wir trotzdem viel Gegenwind bekommen von Leuten, die wir sehr gut kannten und wo wir ein bisschen überrascht waren, dass das so passiert ist. Von daher ist glaube ich einer der Faktoren, der echt wichtig ist für eine gute Kampagne, dass man sehr bereit ist, die Idee über sich selber zu stellen. Gerade im politischen Aktivismus geht es einerseits um Ideen, andererseits

geht es auch um einen selber, um den eigenen Jobs usw. und die aktivistische Szene hat viel zu wenig Geld, die meisten Leute machen das im Ehrenamt oder mit wenig Funding, also gibt es da einen großen Wettbewerb um die wenigen Geldmittel. Deshalb legen sich auch Kampagnen oder Leute gerne mal miteinander an, was aber mega schade ist, weil dadurch die Ideen an sich ja leiden, weil eigentlich Zivilgesellschaft viel schlagkräftiger wäre, wenn wir alle zusammenarbeiten an den Themen, die uns interessieren.

Uns hat das gut getan, dass wir akzeptiert haben, die Idee gehört nicht uns und der Erfolg der Idee ist wichtiger als dass wir dafür bekannt werden oder damit Geld verdienen – das haben wir zumindest so probiert. Das hat uns geholfen, eine breite Allianz aufzubauen und viele Politikerinnen und Politiker an Bord zu holen – die dann natürlich auch gesagt haben, das ist irgendwie meine Idee oder ich hab mit der Idee zu tun und dann wurden einige der Leute dafür sehr viel interviewt. Das war am Anfang auch ein bisschen merkwürdig und das fanden auch einige Leute aus unserem direkten Umkreis nicht ganz so cool, aber gleichzeitig war es eben für die Idee mega wichtig, dass andere Leute sich auch mit der Idee identifizieren können und man sich nicht gegenseitig dafür anmacht oder so. Also diese Zusammenarbeit finde ich super wichtig, und man muss sich entscheiden, geht es mehr um mich oder mehr um die Idee, man kann nicht beides gleichzeitig machen und da muss man auch ehrlich mit sich sein, was manchmal auch echt eine Herausforderung ist. Aber ich sehe bei den Kampagnen mit der tollsten Arbeit und dem besten Einfluss, dass das wirklich Leute sind, die an die Idee glauben und sich dahinter hängen, auch wenn es für sie selber mal ein bisschen schwierig ist.

Declaration of Independence   (Chiara Aron)

I hereby affirm that I have independently written the present seminar paper on the subject 'Successful campaigning in the European Union – A case study of the *Free Interrail* campaign' and have not used any aids other than those indicated. The passages that have been taken from other works, either in their wording or in their sense, have been marked as borrowed in each case by stating the source, including the secondary literature used.

Magdeburg, 10th September 2020

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Place and date   Signature

Declaration of Independence   (Daria Belysheva)

I hereby affirm that I have independently written the present seminar paper on the subject 'Successful campaigning in the European Union – A case study of the *Free Interrail* campaign' and have not used any aids other than those indicated. The passages that have been taken from other works, either in their wording or in their sense, have been marked as borrowed in each case by stating the source, including the secondary literature used.

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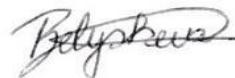
Place and date   Signature

Declaration of Independence   (Viviane Schulze)

I hereby affirm that I have independently written the present seminar paper on the subject 'Successful campaigning in the European Union – A case study of the *Free Interrail* campaign' and have not used any aids other than those indicated. The passages that have been taken from other works, either in their wording or in their sense, have been marked as borrowed in each case by stating the source, including the secondary literature used.

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