

Self-efficacy as a factor in the evaluation of e-petitions

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Overview

- EuroPetition and overview of (e-)petitioning
- The role of evaluation
- Self-efficacy
- Integrating self-efficacy and evaluation



EuroPetition

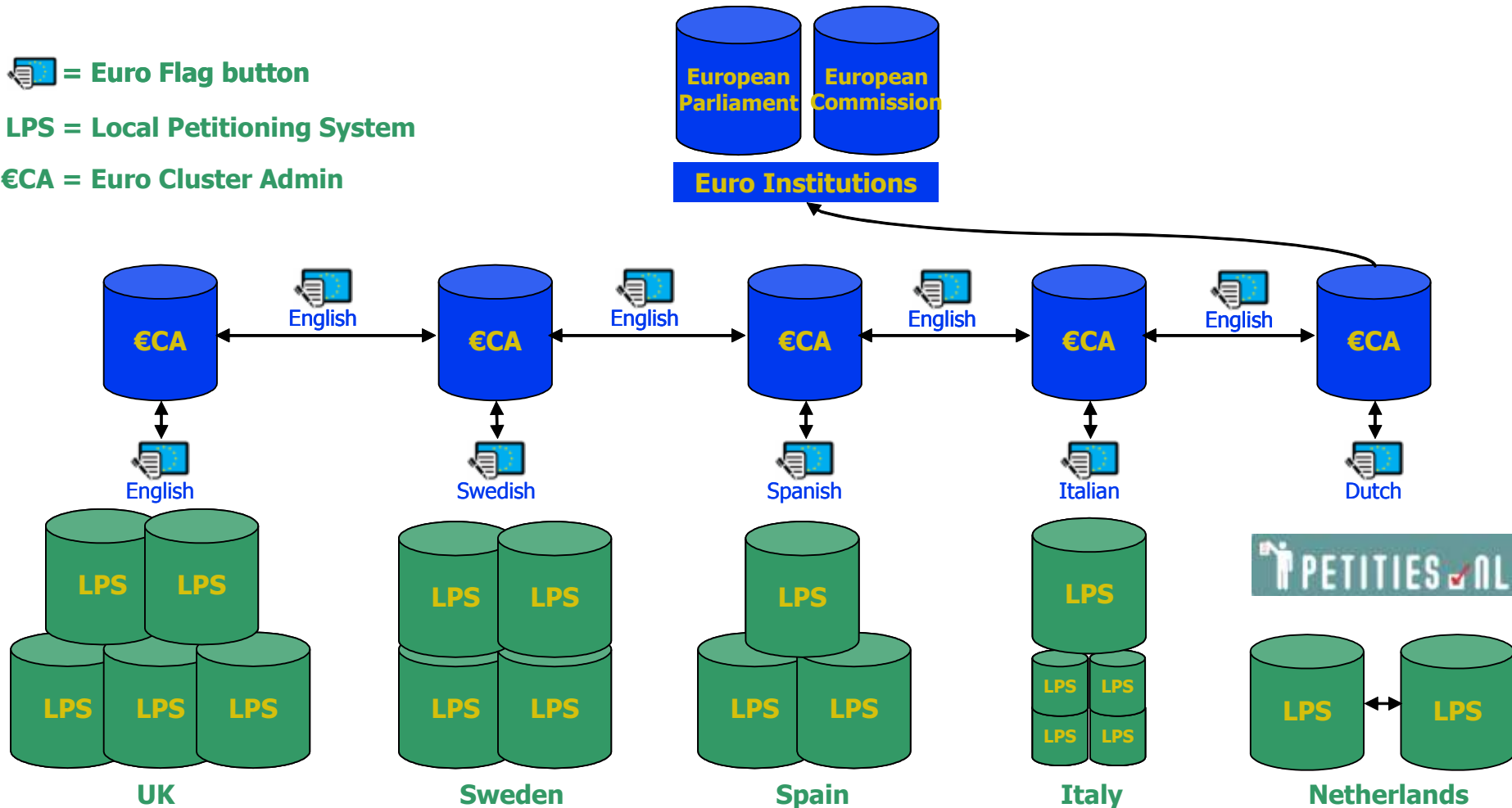
- Aim & objectives of project
- Add EU/regional networking element to existing e-petitioning system, with feed to:
 - European Parliament's PETI Petitions Committee
 - Commission's Citizens Initiative
- Potential for involving 5m+ in campaigns
- Based on system already successfully operational in England and Sweden
- Localised integration with other modules (dialogues, videos etc)
- Social networking technologies as route into main system

From local e-petitions to EuroPetitions

= Euro Flag button

LPS = Local Petitioning System

€CA = Euro Cluster Admin





E-Petitions overview

“
...e-petitioning by a number of public institutions and is in many ways
– compared to most other forms of e-participation – relatively mature.”

Lindner & Rhiem – EDEM 2008

E-Petitions overview

- Petitioning exists between pure representative democracy and direct democracy (bypassing representatives altogether) in a third category 'Advocacy democracy'

– Carmen 2006

- Since the policy impact is indirect (mediated by representatives), perceived fairness and openness in the process can be as important as the actual outcome:

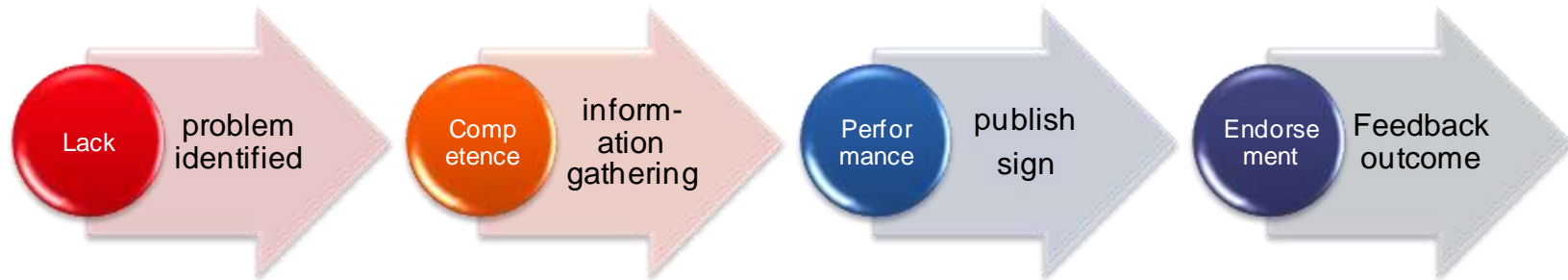
“ Can anyone name an e-petition to the Prime Minister that has achieved its aims? Each time I have signed one, I have later received an email telling me why the PM cannot agree.”

– *Letter to Telegraph, 27 May 2009*

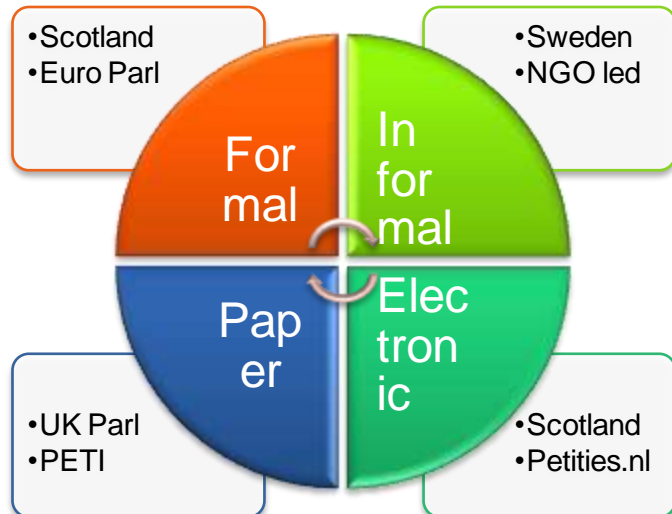
- » Raised and subsequently disappointed expectations can lead to *increased* disaffection with the political process.

E-Petitions overview

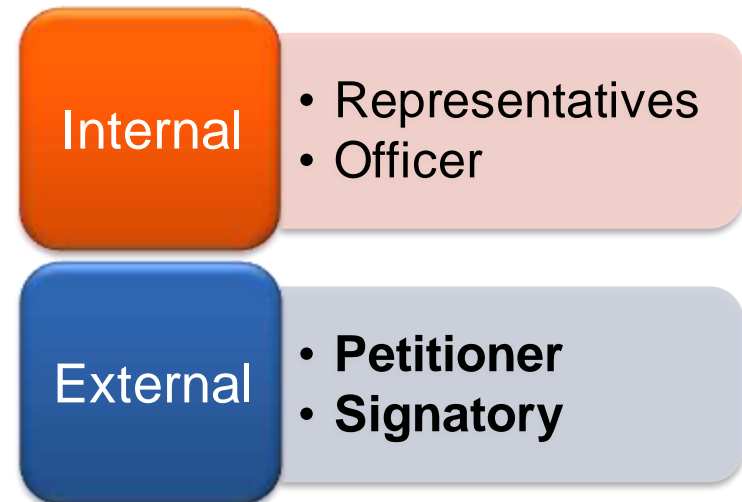
Process



Some categorisations



Actors



E-Petitions overview

Core critique
remains

This is the
provision of another
access point for
the 'usual suspects'



Evaluation within EuroPetition

- Help identify issues and resolve them
- Measure progress against project objectives
 - Acceptability & uptake: Do stakeholders like it?
 - Impact on democratic processes
 - Viability: Models for sustainability
- The focus of this paper
 - Uptake by external actors (petitioners & non-petitioners)
 - Facing the challenge of getting beyond the usual suspects
 - Has implications for all three strands of the project's objectives

Evaluating ICT Uptake

- Qualitative approach
 - Qualitative here because we're in a development environment
 - Moving target
 - Uncertain number of users
 - This is a general issue with eParticipation evaluation (Rose & Stanford 2007)
 - Quantitative evaluation could be added post-acceptance
- Approaches to evaluation of uptake
 - Dominated by Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)
 - Starts from perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use
 - Problem: TAM does not take account of personal factors and environment when seeking to understand behaviour
 - Responses: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Venkatesh et al 2003)
 - referred by MOMENTUM
 - Adds some social factors etc
 - This approach looks at the user from the outside

Self efficacy

Unlike efficacy, which is the power to produce an effect (in essence, competence), **self-efficacy** is the belief (whether or not accurate) that one has the power to produce that effect

If efficacy beliefs always reflected only what people can do routinely they would rarely fail but they would not set aspirations beyond their immediate reach nor mount the extra effort needed to surpass their ordinary performances

Albert Bandura in *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, 1994

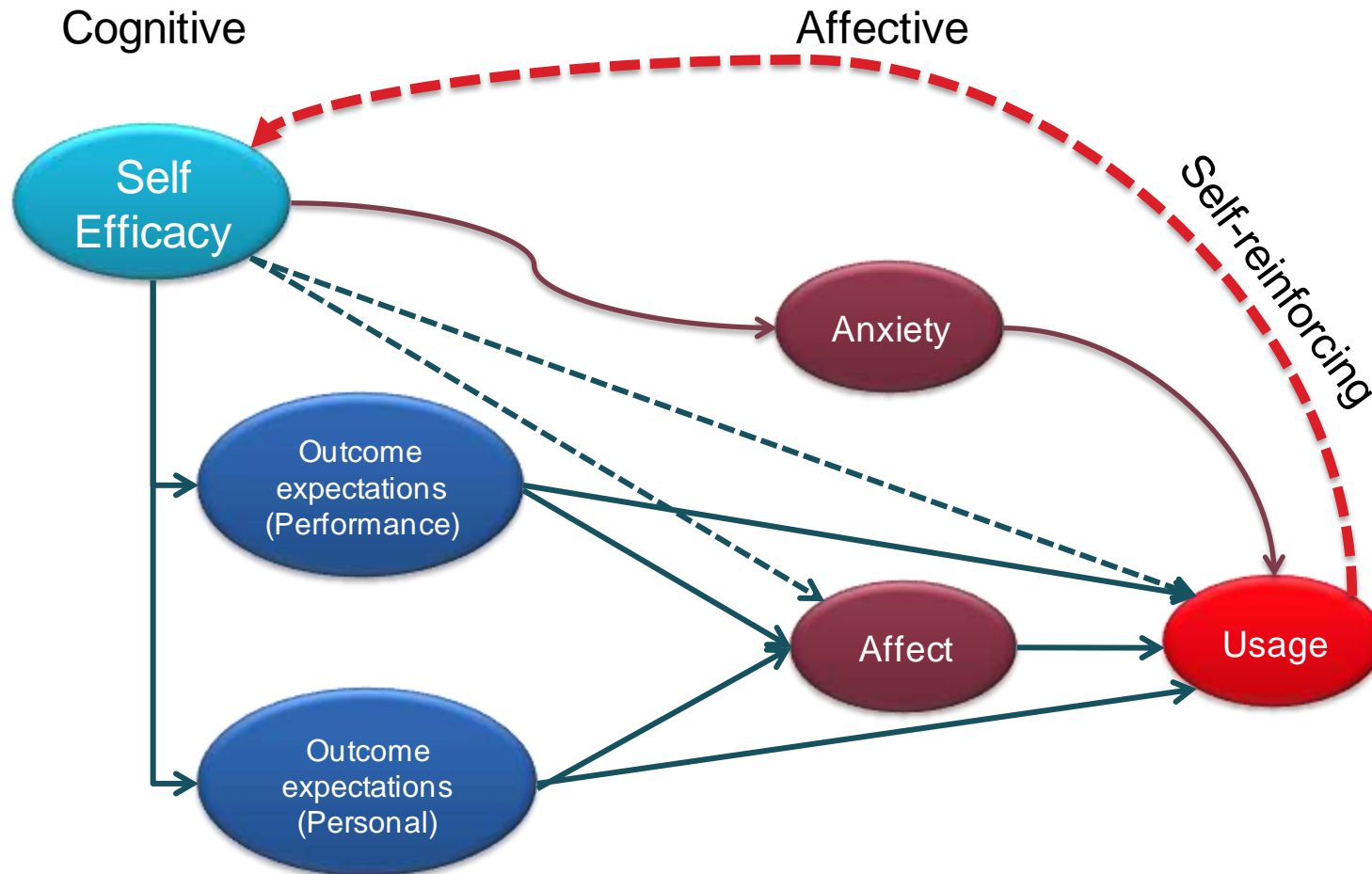
Self-belief does not necessarily ensure success, but self-disbelief assuredly spawns failure

Albert Bandura *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*, 1997

People who regard themselves as highly efficacious act, think, and feel differently from those who perceive themselves as inefficacious. They produce their own future, rather than simply foretell it

Albert Bandura *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A social Cognitive Theory*, 1986

Simple model of Self Efficacy



Adapted from Compeau & Higgins 1999

Using the concept of self efficacy

- We see two aspects to this in the context of e-petitions
 - Computer Self Efficacy (CSE): Perceptions of:
 - Own ability to use technology
 - Confident using internet, confident following a widget, confident in completing an online form
 - Political Self Efficacy (PSE): Perceptions of:
 - Own ability to bring about results in dealing with public authorities
 - Confident a positive outcome will result
 - Confident nothing negative will happen as a result of engagement
- Self efficacy gives a new set of questions to ask:
 - self-efficacy (what am I capable of; what's holding me back)
 - expectations of performance outcomes (what will I achieve)
 - personal outcomes (how will I feel – what rewards will I get)
 - affect (why I like it)
 - anxiety (what I am worried about)

These apply particularly to the **petitioner** and the **signatory**
...the challenge: we're looking for negative engagement:
the citizens who could but don't engage

Using the concept of self efficacy

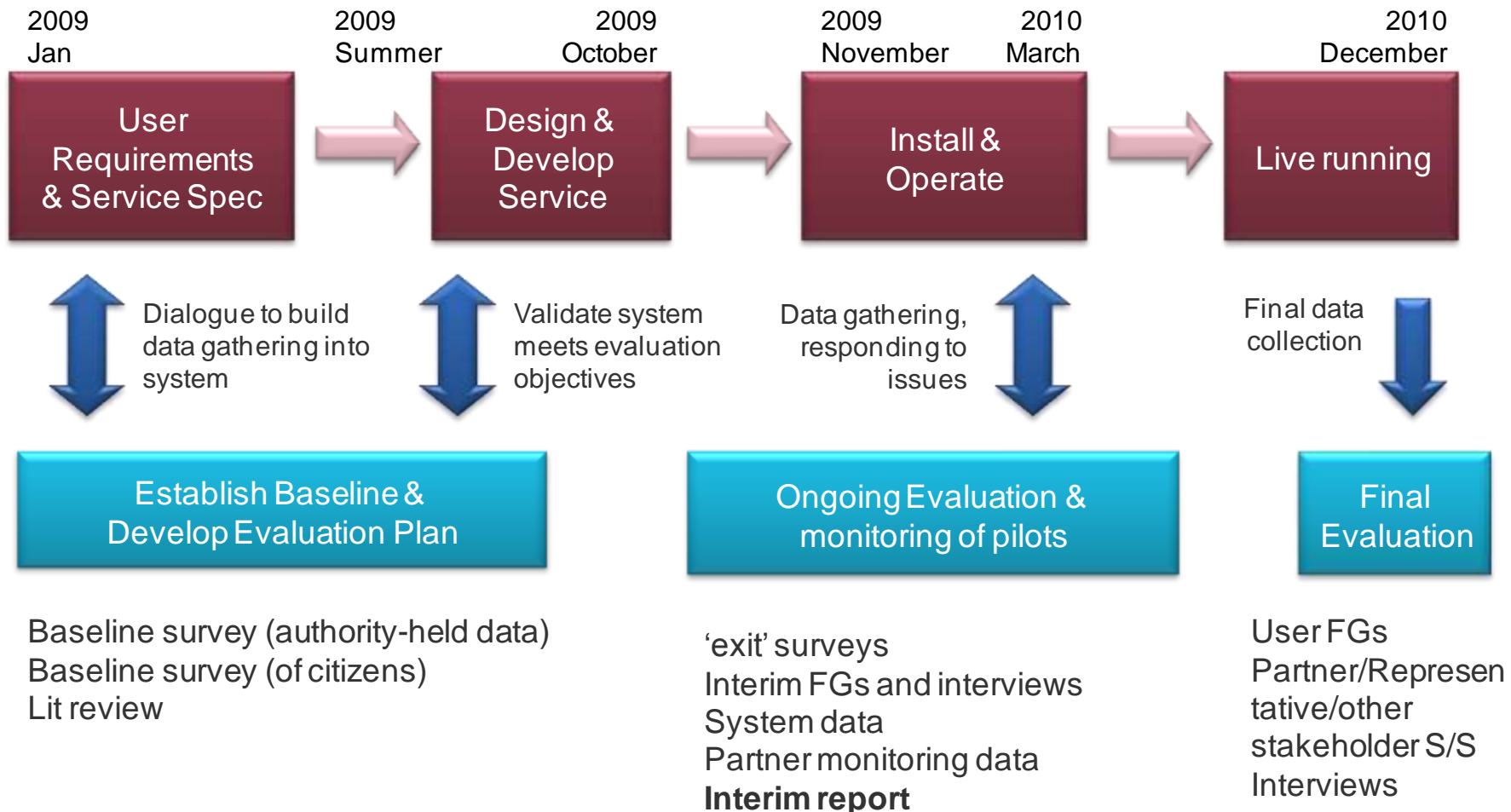
In summary, our hypothesis is:
CSE & PSE are related to task performance

- Brings focus on:
 - Users' perception of their ability to produce an outcome (confidence)
 - As well as context, allowing exploration of environmental (social / cultural / institutional / educational) and personal factors (experience)
 - Similar to UTUAT, but with emphasis on subjective perspective
- Results could therefore help address the 'core critique'
 - Or at least start collecting useful information on factors affecting takeup
 - Leading to development of appropriate 'advocacy' to assist equality of opportunity
 - » Which happens to tie up with pragmatic experience of the Scottish Parliament

Integrating evaluation into the process

- Project timeline
- Petition lifecycle
- Performing a petition

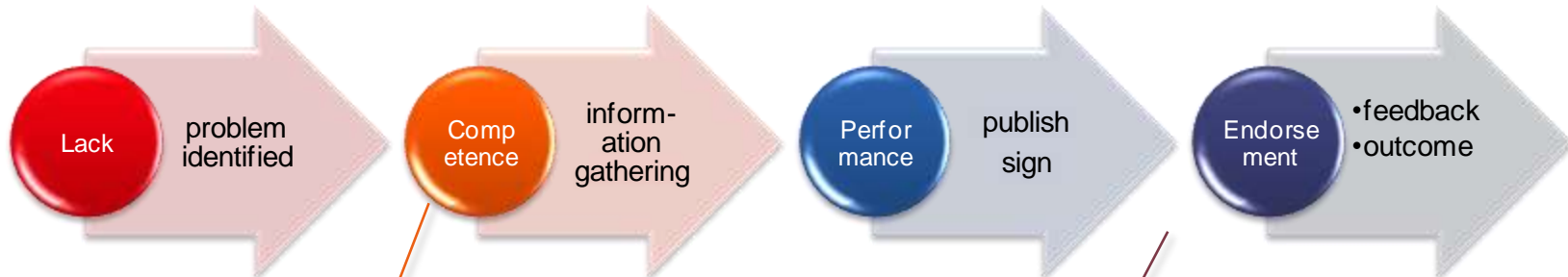
Evaluation through the project



Key points in a petition's lifecycle

Hypothesis:

Citizens with high CSE & PSE are more likely to progress through the system



Adapted from Sentucci 2007

Key questions

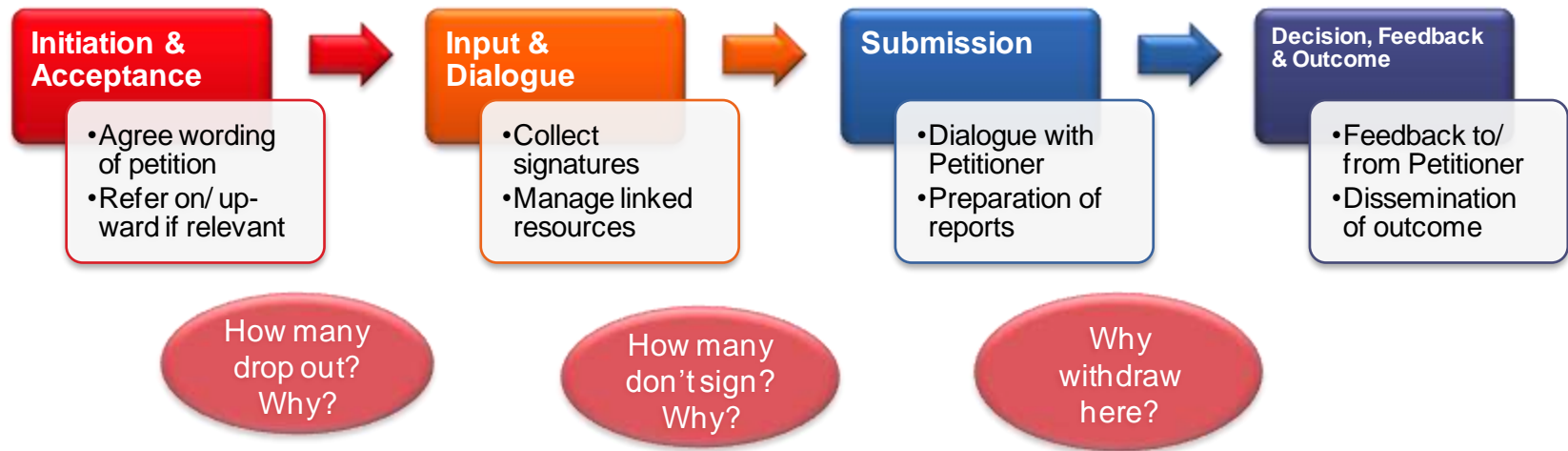
Why do concerned citizens 'drop out'?

Why don't concerned citizens sign?

Concerned citizen = someone who has contacted the council in a different context
... Should 100% citizen participation even be a goal?

An e-petition in action

Performance



Conclusion

- Issue: how to move beyond the 'usual suspects' in e-participation
- Want to understand reasons why concerned citizens don't engage
 - or why they drop out
- Self-efficacy (computer or political) may provide new insights
- Qualitative approach is more useful in development project
 - Data collection can be built into the EuroPetition system
 - But: challenge to catch the people who only briefly engage
 - » Objectively efficacious but not self-efficacious

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THANK YOU!