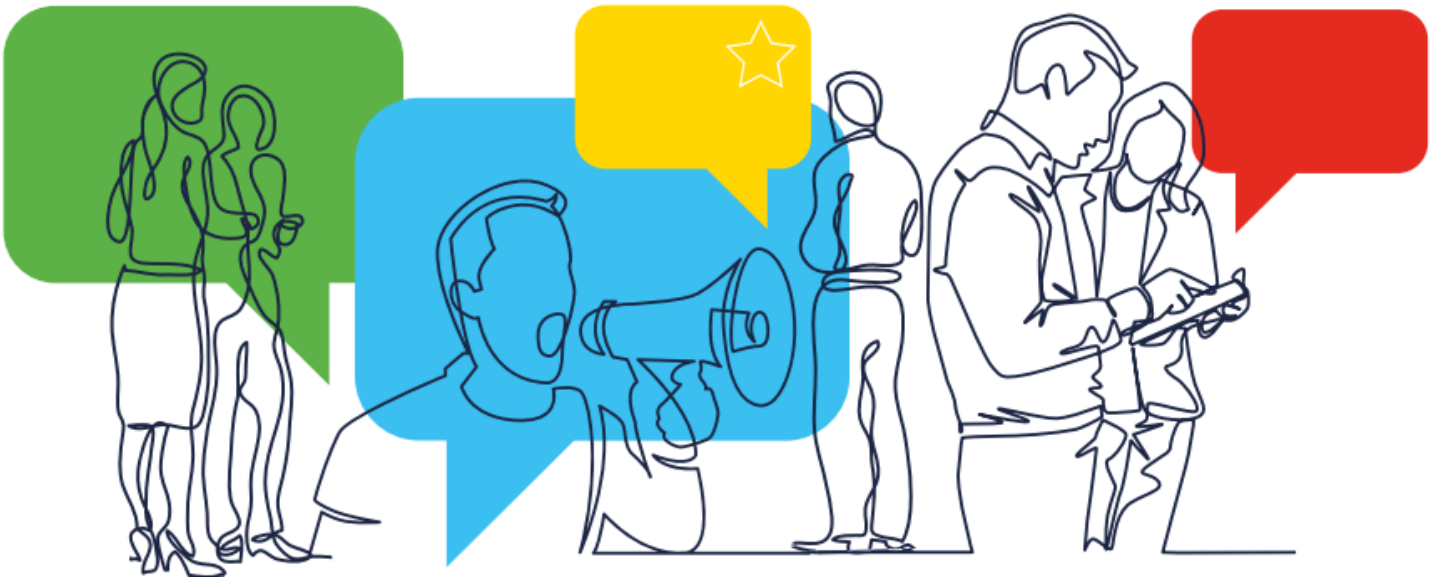
SUCCESS STORY

EUROPEAN CITIZENS´ INITIATIVE FORUM

Stop Glyphosate



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About Stop Glyphosate

The "**Stop Glyphosate" initiative** (full name: **Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides**), was the fourth successful European Citizens' Initiative. It called on the European Commission to take decisive action on pesticide regulation and transparency in the European Union.

Glyphosate-based herbicides, widely used in agriculture, had become the subject of intense public debate across Europe. Exposure to glyphosate had been linked to cancer concerns and ecosystem degradation, and many citizens questioned the transparency and independence of the scientific assessments underpinning its authorisation.

Through this initiative, organisers called on the European Commission to:

- **Ban glyphosate-based herbicides;**
- **Ensure that the scientific evaluations of pesticides for EU regulatory approval** are based only on **published studies commissioned by competent public authorities**, rather than the pesticide industry;
- **Set EU-wide mandatory reduction targets for pesticide use**, with a view to achieving a pesticide-free future.

The initiative was registered on 25 January 2017, and signature collection began the same day. Thanks to an already mobilised coalition and strong public engagement, organisers collected one million signatures within just five months. The collection period was therefore closed early on 2 July 2017 in order to allow for rapid verification of statements of support before the Commission's decision on the renewal of the glyphosate licence.

Despite varying timelines in the verification process across Member States, the initiative was formally submitted on 6 October 2017 accompanied by 1 070 865 verified statements of support. The organisers met the European Commission on 23 October 2017, presented their case at a public hearing in the European Parliament on 20 November 2017, and received the Commission's official response in a Communication on 12 December 2017.

Stop Glyphosate brought the debate on pesticide safety and scientific transparency to the highest level of EU decision-making.

Initiative registered

25/01/2017

Start of signature collection

25/01/2017

Signature collection period closed *

02/07/2017

* Collection closed earlier by organisers

Initiative validated by European Commission

06/10/2017

Initiative answered by the European Commission

12/12/2017

What helped this initiative achieve a successful collection of signatures?

A highly engaged audience from day one

There was strong and sustained public interest in the issue of glyphosate among European citizens, media and NGOs. This attention was reinforced by a rare public disagreement between the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) of the World Health Organization regarding glyphosate's potential health impacts.

Mobilising an existing coalition with a consistent funding base

Rather than building a new coalition from scratch, the organisers mobilised an already established network of NGOs with a consistent funding base. These organisations possessed the willingness, expertise and resources necessary to follow and influence the legislative process.

The strategy behind the initiative

A group of people stands outdoors during a public demonstration, in front of the European Commission build

© DAVID DE MATTEIS - BELGA / Glyphosate: organisations launch a European citizens' initiative to ban glyphosate

Preparation

The initiative did not emerge in isolation. It built on earlier advocacy efforts, including a petition submitted to the European Commission in 2015 that had already generated significant public awareness. Launching a European Citizens' Initiative was seen as a natural next step to transform mobilisation into institutional engagement.

One of the main early challenges was agreeing on the **focus of the initiative**. The coalition behind Stop Glyphosate was large and diverse. Some partners emphasised the link between glyphosate and cancer, others prioritised biodiversity protection, while others were concerned about corporate influence over regulatory processes. Reaching consensus required substantial dialogue and compromise.

To manage this complexity, the organisers established an "**Organising Circle**" composed of ten representatives from key organisations. They met weekly to coordinate decisions on funding allocation, communication strategy, registration, drafting of the initiative and its annex. The initiative coordinator prepared initial drafts, which were circulated for comments and revised collaboratively through multiple rounds.

Note

Because many of the participating organisations had already cooperated in previous campaigns, **alliance-building was less time-consuming than for many other initiatives.** Nevertheless, organisers stressed that **relying exclusively on an existing network would not have been sufficient**. Broadening outreach and identifying gaps in representation remained essential.

Fundraising and resources

The **initiative raised EUR 328,399 from a variety of sources**, including Campact, WeMove.eu and Greenpeace. At the time, it became the most funded European Citizens' Initiative. A stable and consistent funding base allowed organisers to invest in coordination, outreach and campaign infrastructure, ensuring sustained mobilisation throughout the collection period.

Sources of funding (€)

Horizontal bar chart showing sources of funding for an initiative. Compact e.V. is the largest contributor with €

Note: Further information on Stop Glyphosate support and funding is available on the Stop Glyphosate initiative page in the ECI Register*. Only contributions above €500 per sponsor are required to be reported*

Campaign strategy

From the outset, the organisers recognised that public attention was already high. **Email outreach became** the **backbone of the campaign**. As the initiative was coordinated by a multi-issue online campaigning organisation, organisers were experienced in mobilising large supporter bases through regular email communication. Partners adopted similar approaches, reaching out to their own networks and maintaining steady engagement throughout the campaign.

The organisers compiled a list of **national partner organisations** willing to participate and worked closely with them to feature signature collection forms directly on their websites. Maintaining regular contact with partners was crucial to ensure consistent messaging and momentum.

Early stakeholder mapping proved decisive. Organisers identified Member States where reaching the minimum threshold would be challenging and proactively built relationships with organisations and influencers in those countries. This strategic focus helped ensure broad geographical coverage.

The campaign website was **translated into multiple EU languages**, increasing accessibility across Member States. Around 8–9% of signatures were collected directly via the website, supported by search **engine optimisation efforts**. Since 1 January 2023, however, signatures can no longer be collected directly through campaign websites: organisers may only redirect users to the official online collection system.

In addition to online mobilisation, organisers experimented with **offline engagement.** In cooperation with Campact and GLOBAL2000, they organised a Europe-wide "offline collection day," sending 5,000 signature collection packs to supporters. Approximately 100,000 signatures were gathered in a single weekend.

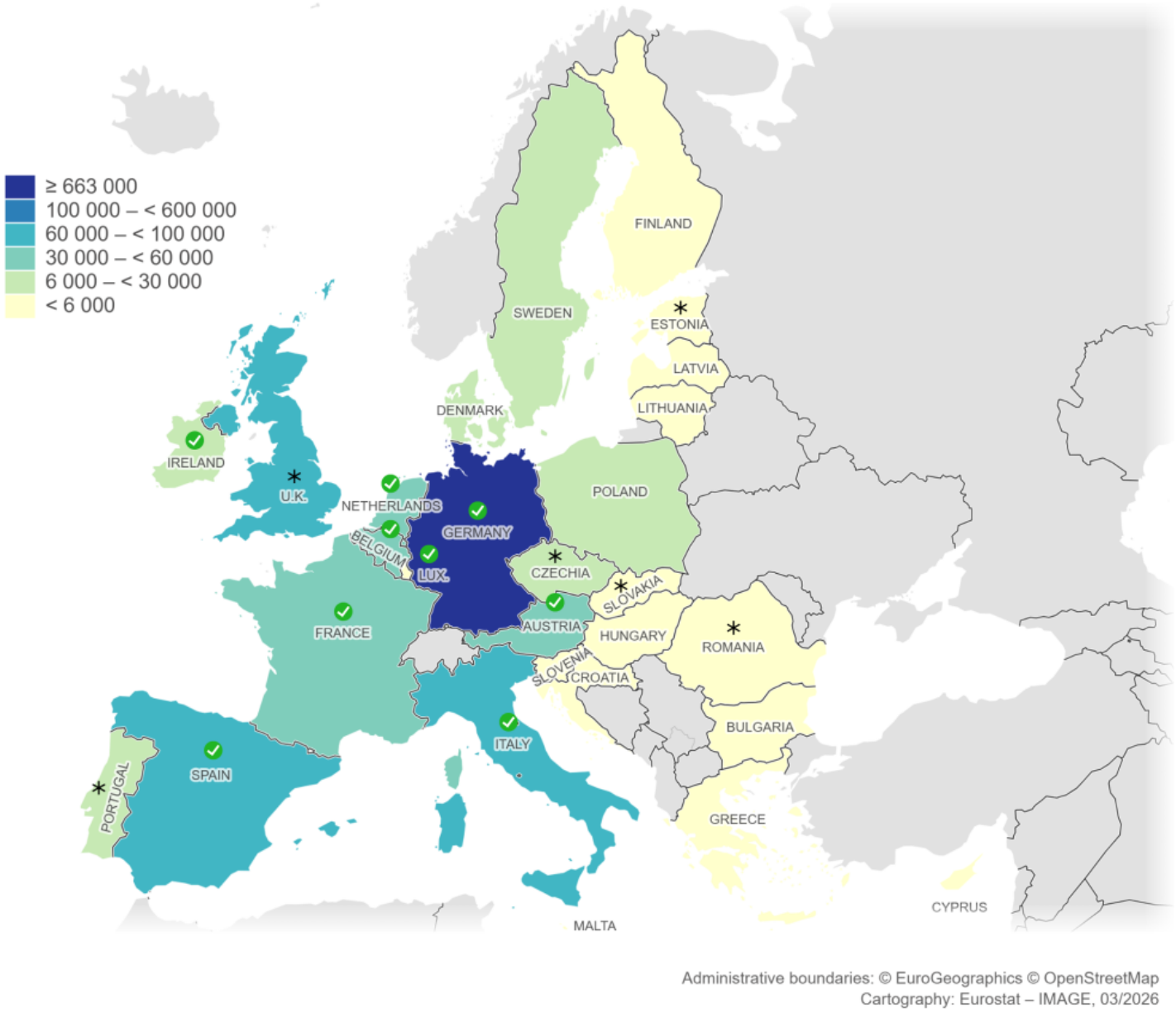
Professional national campaigners were hired in Spain, Italy and France, where the coordinating organisation had strong local capacity. Even in countries without dedicated staff, outreach efforts ensured participation across the Union.

Within five months, the initiative had surpassed one million signatures: a milestone that demonstrated both the strength of the coalition and the intensity of public concern.

Signature collection and verification process

The initiative organisers used an independent online collection system. In addition to enabling online signature collection, it allowed organisers to gather contact details and embed the form on partner websites. While the organisers of Stop Glyphosate used an independent online collection system, as of 1 January 2023, the Central Online Collection System is the only system that organisers can use to collect signatures online.

Number of statements of support collected by Stop Glyphosate per Member State



Ban Glyphosate reached the minimum thresholds in nine Member States. Source: European Citizens' Initiative website, 2026.

The check marks on the map indicate the EU Member States where the minimum threshold of signatures required for supporting the initiative has been successfully met. With a total number of 1 070 865 verified statements, the "Ban Glyphosate" initiative reached the **minimum thresholds in nine Member States**.

The asterisks on the map indicate the EU Member States where the certificates of the statements of support were received after the time of submission. These figures are not included in the total number of signatories. The full table with statements of support is available on the dedicated Commission's webpage.

The impact of this initiative

Formal submission and meetings with the Commission

The **organisers met with the Commission** (First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and senior officials from various services concerned) on **23 October 2017** (see press release). Commissioner Andriukaitis publicly acknowledged the significance of over one million citizens engaging directly in EU decision-making and reaffirmed support for strengthening the European Citizens' Initiative instrument.

Organisers of the "Ban Glyphosate" European Citizens' Initiative hold a large banner reading "#STOP GLYPH

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European Parliament public hearing

On **20 November 2017**, the organisers presented their initiative at a **public hearing at the European Parliament** (see the public hearing). They selected subject-matter experts to represent the initiative and carefully prepared key messages in advance. Many Members of the European Parliament "were extremely supportive" of the initiative.

Three speakers sit behind a long desk in a conference room at the European Parliament, facing an audience

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European Commission's formal response

In its **Communication of 12 December 2017** (see press release), the Commission reached the following conclusions:

- **On the ban on glyphosate-based herbicides,** the Commission concluded that there were neither scientific nor legal grounds to justify a ban and stated that it would not propose legislation to prohibit glyphosate.
- **On transparency and independence of scientific assessments**, the Commission committed to presenting a legislative proposal by May 2018 to strengthen transparency in the EU risk assessment process and improve the governance and reliability of studies submitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

- **On the EU-wide pesticide reduction targets**, rather than introducing mandatory reduction targets, the Commission decided to focus on improving the implementation of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive. It also committed to developing harmonised risk indicators to better monitor pesticide use and inform future policy decisions.

Legislative impact and follow up

Although the primary objective of banning glyphosate was not achieved, **the initiative had a substantial legislative impact.**

In **April 2018**, the Commission presented a **legislative proposal to strengthen transparency in the EU food chain risk assessment process.** The proposal introduced the automatic publication of industry studies submitted for product authorisation and reinforced governance rules for studies used by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Following negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council, the new transparency **rules were adopted and have applied since 27 March 2021**. As a result, food-related products, including pesticides, can no longer be authorized on the basis of undisclosed industry studies. All studies submitted in the context of authorisation procedures must now be made publicly available, allowing independent scientific scrutiny. Throughout this process, the NGO coalition remained actively engaged, following negotiations closely and working to safeguard the ambition of the transparency proposal.

Even after the formal conclusion of the European Citizens' Initiative, the coalition remained in contact and continued engaging its supporter community. Partner organisations and individual supporters were informed of the campaign's outcomes via email and encouraged to stay involved. The coalition maintained coordination among its member organisations and pursued advocacy on issues related to the initiative's objectives.

Although this coordinated activity gradually slowed over time, the networks built during the campaign remained in place. Organisers stayed in touch with supporters and mobilised them when relevant policy discussions emerged. As they explained, "supporters were a crucial power at a later stage", particularly when related issues were discussed in the European Parliament.

The **mobilisation generated by Stop Glyphosate extended beyond the collection period** and contributed to sustained engagement on pesticide regulation and scientific transparency.

Learn more how stop Glyphosate brought a small revolution*(https://citizens-initiative-forum.europa.eu/citizens-experiences/blogs/how-stop-glyphosate-brought-about-small-revolution_en)*

Hints and tips for future organisers

Build a consistent audience

Preparation should begin well before registration. A large and engaged supporter base allows rapid mobilisation once the collection period starts.

Secure adequate funding

Sustained campaigning requires adequate financial resources. Encourage participating organisations to actively raise funds to support outreach, coordination and communication throughout the collection period.

Pay close attention to timing

Strategic timing matters. Aligning the launch with ongoing legislative debates can increase visibility, political relevance and overall impact.

Choose effective communication channels

A clear and focused communication strategy is essential. Identify the channels that best reach your audience and use them consistently to build and maintain momentum.

Ask our experts if you have any doubts about your initiative!*(https://citizens-initiative-forum.europa.eu/seek-advice_en#)*

Additional information

Additional information regarding Stop Glyphosate is available on the organisers' website *(https://stopglyphosate.eu/)* and the dedicated Commission's webpage. For additional information on the follow-up of the initiative, please visit the following Commission's page.