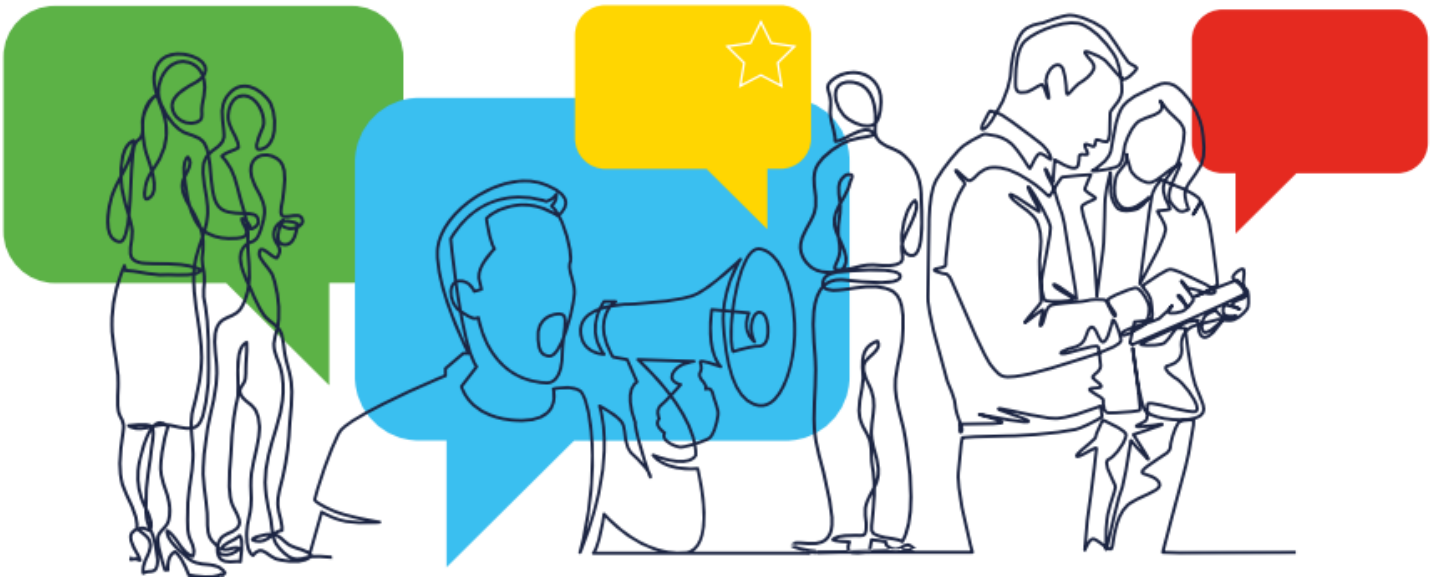
SUCCESS STORY

EUROPEAN CITIZENS´ INITIATIVE FORUM

Fur Free Europe



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About Fur Free Europe

"Fur Free Europe" is the 10th successful European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), calling for an **EU-wide ban on fur farming and the sale of fur products within the Single Market**.

Registered on 16 March 2022, "Fur Free Europe" quickly gained momentum. The campaign officially began collecting signatures on 18 May 2022 and achieved an extraordinary milestone by gathering **1,502,319 verified statements of support**. Minimum thresholds were reached in **18 Member States** , setting a record for ECIs and underscoring the cause's resonance across the EU. Remarkably, the signature collection phase was concluded by the organisers on 1 March 2023, over two months ahead of the 18 May 2023 deadline. The collected signatures were promptly submitted for validation by the respective national authorities.

Following the validation process, the initiative was formally submitted to the European Commission on 14 June 2023 (Press Announcement). The Commission responded by publishing a Communication outlining its intended actions in response to the initiative on 7 December 2023. This marked a significant step forward in addressing citizens' demands for stricter animal welfare standards and ethical considerations in the EU market.

Initiative registered

16/03/2022

Start of signature collection

18/05/2022

Signature collection period closed

01/03/2023

Initiative validated by European Commission

14/06/2023

Initiative answered by the European Commission

07/12/2023

What made Fur Free Europe a success?

"Fur Free Europe" not only met but exceeded all targets, gathering over 1.5 million signatures and reaching the minimum thresholds in 18 Member States—far surpassing the requirements of 1 million signatures and thresholds in at least 7 countries. According to its organisers, **three key factors** contributed to this success:

Thorough preparation

Organising an ECI is not a sprint but a marathon. It requires careful planning, sustained effort, and long-term commitment to achieve its goals.

Building a strong network

Establishing connections with a diverse range of partner organisations and continuously expanding this network throughout the campaign is crucial to gaining widespread support.

Budgeting and fundraising

A clear budget and a solid strategy for collecting support and securing funding are essential for sustaining the campaign and reaching its targets.

The strategy behind Fur Free Europe



Preparation

The organisers of "Fur Free Europe" leveraged their experience from previous ECIs, such as "End the Cage Age" and "Save Cruelty Free Cosmetics", which collected around 1.4 million and 1.2 million

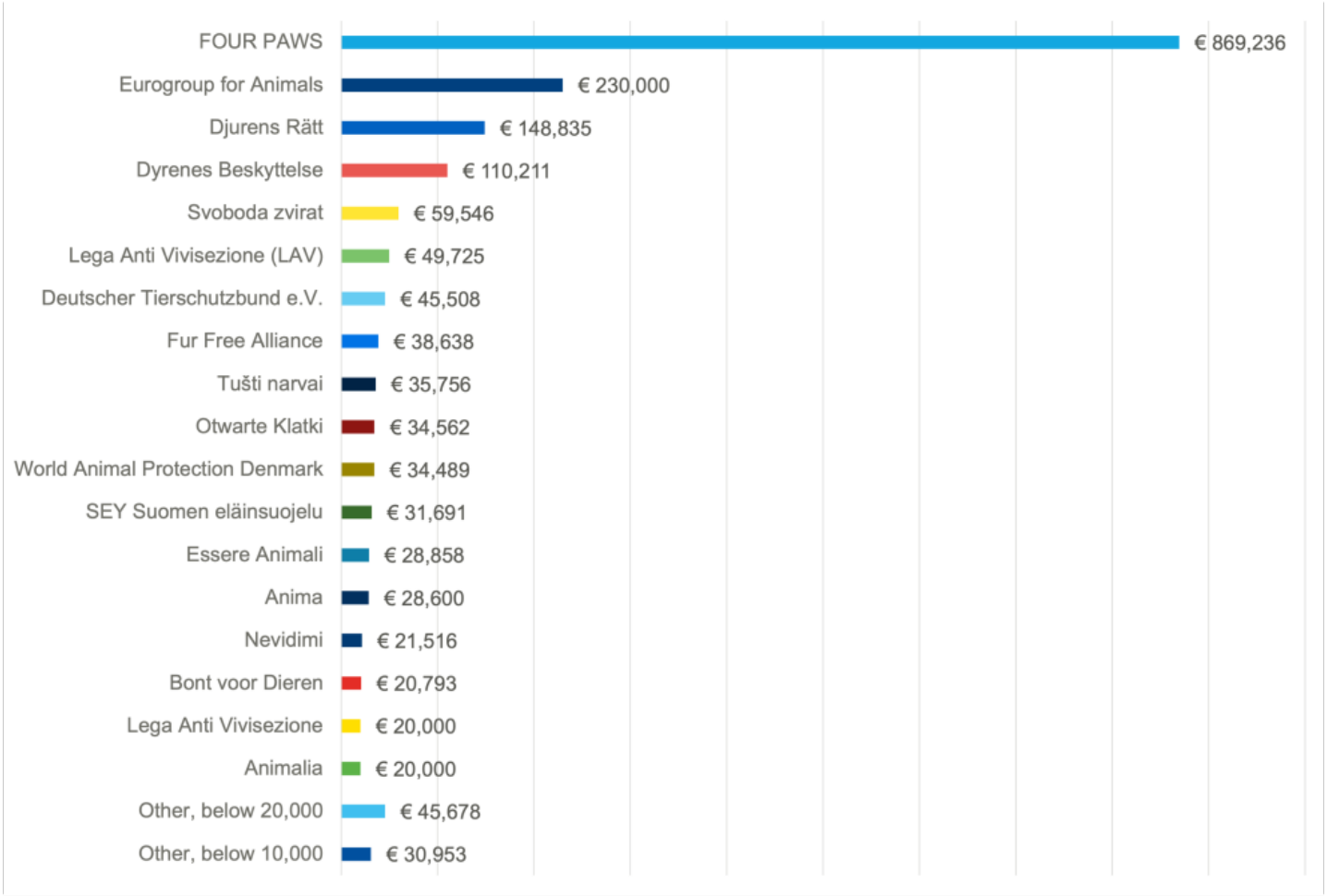
signatures, respectively. This prior experience proved valuable, as they understood that careful preparation is essential for successfully organising and launching an ECI.

Before launching the campaign, organisers focused on **building a strong network of 82 partners** to secure a strong support base for the signature collection. Eurogroup for Animals, the lead NGO backing the initiative, is an umbrella organisation with over 90 member groups. A third of these organisations have long been active in the movement to ban fur and were invited to join the campaign. Additionally, the organisers collaborated with groups outside their immediate network by identifying relevant organisations in EU Member States.

Fundraising and resources

The organisers of "Fur Free Europe" raised EUR 1,904,595.00 of support and funds from 30 sponsors, with significant contributions from organisations such as FOUR PAWS, Eurogroup for Animals and Djurens Rätt.

Sources of funding (€)



Note: Further information on Fur Free Europe's support and funding is available on the dedicated Commission's webpage. Only contributions above €500 per sponsor are required to be reported.

The organisers created a **"campaign asset bank"** to support their volunteers and partners and ensure that these networks of partners actively supported the initiative. This "bank" provided volunteers and partners with communication materials, social media templates, and strategic guides. The organisers also held regular meetings with the partners to keep them updated on the progress of the initiative, maintain coordination, and discuss any challenges that occurred during the campaign.

Campaign strategy and signature collection plan

The organisers' primary campaign strategy focused on **building a strong online presence**, recognising that this is the **most effective way to reach and engage a wide range of citizens**. They developed a **multilingual website** featuring background information on the initiative, its goals, a signature collection page, and a newsletter. In addition, the organisers expanded their presence across **social media platforms,** including Instagram (5.3k followers and 295 posts). They also leveraged their existing social media channels to promote the initiative: X (formerly Twitter) with 16.1k followers, YouTube with 844 subscribers, Instagram with 6.2k followers, and Facebook with

20k followers.

The organisers carefully planned the signature collection phase, **setting targets for each Member State** based on several factors, including whether the fur industry is still active in that country, the number of signatures previously collected in that country on similar campaigns, and the number of supporting organisations active there. The organisers decided to focus on a maximum number of Member States to show that support for the initiative came from all over the European Union.

"Reaching more than 1 million signatures is not easy, so you should not limit yourself to focusing on the minimum seven Member States." – Organiser of "Fur Free Europe"

Signature collection and verification process

The initiative organisers used an independent online collection system.

[While the organisers of Fur Free Europe 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.]

Their campaign strategy focused mainly on **social media**, relying on their network to promote the Fur Free Europe campaign to the various audiences of the different partner organisations. The organisers overcame the challenge of losing momentum during the year-long campaign by **actively analysing their campaign strategy** and communicating with partners on what worked well and what did not.

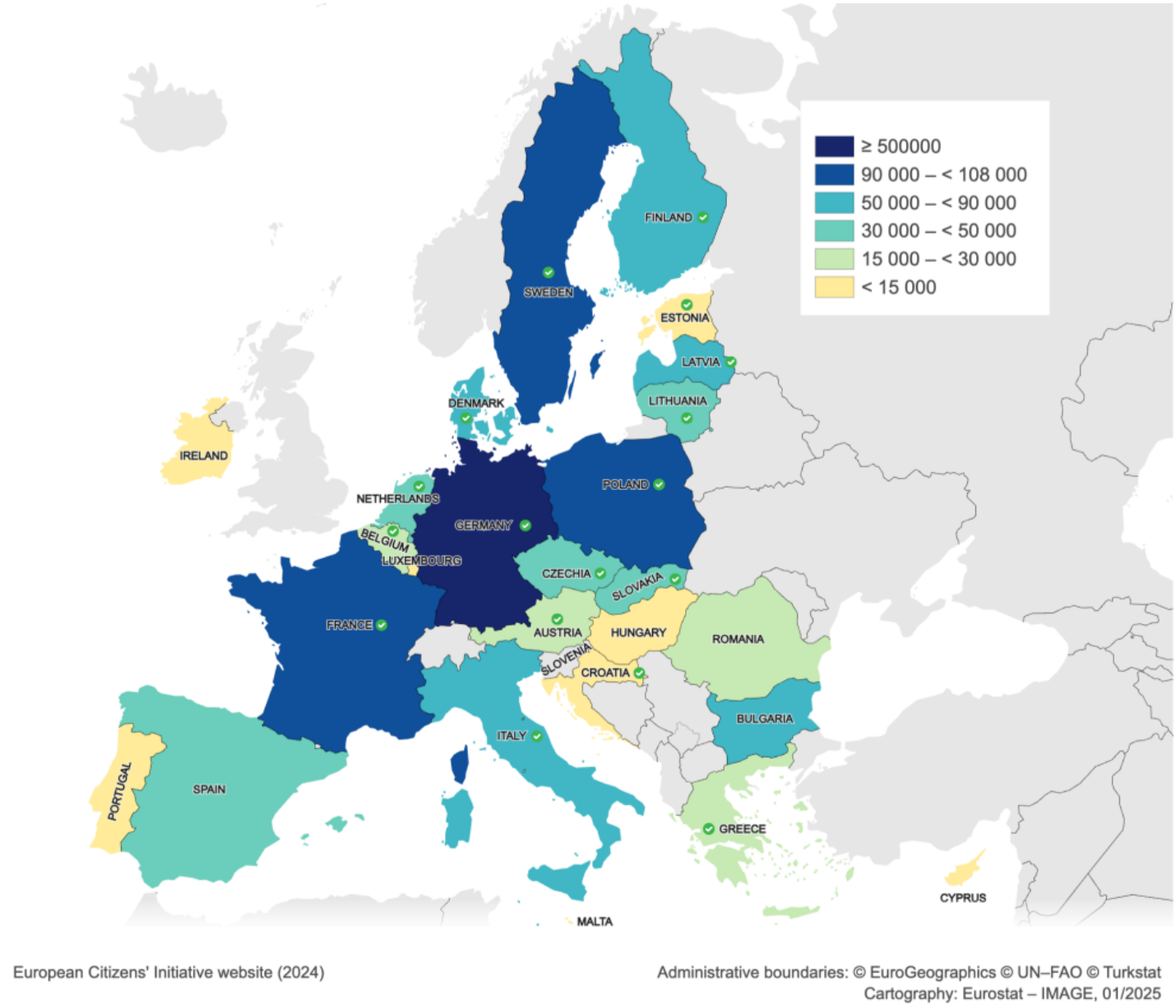
"You always need to analyse, test, redo your plan, see what works and where, and keep-up the spirit!" – Organiser of "Fur Free Europe"

The organisers of "Fur Free Europe" decided to close the collection of signatures on 1 March 2023, two and a half months ahead of the deadline. In total, the initiative gathered 1,701,892 signatures across 27 EU Member States, with **88% deemed valid** by national authorities. The required thresholds were met in **18 Member States**—a record for any ECI.

On 14 June 2023, the organisers **submitted** the **1,502,319 validated statements of support** to the European Commission. Germany led the way in supporting the Fur Free Europe initiative with 518,534 statements, followed by France (107,672) and Sweden (101,645). The submission of

signatures opened the 6-month examination period.

Number of statements of support collected by Fur Free Europe per Member State



Fur Free Europe reached the minimum thresholds in 18 Member States. Source: European Citizens' Initiative website, 2024.

The check marks on the chart indicate the EU Member States where the **minimum threshold of signatures** required for supporting the initiative has been successfully met. Fur Free Europe reached

the minimum thresholds in **18 Member States**. The full table with statements of support for Fur Free Europe is available on the dedicated Commission's webpage.

The impact of Fur Free Europe

Formal submission and meetings with the Commission

Following the formal submission of the "Fur Free Europe" initiative, the organisers met with **Věra Jourová, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Values and Transparency,** and **Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety** on 20 July 2023 (Press Announcement).



Visit of representatives of the successful European Citizens' Initiative 'Fur Free Europe' to the European Commission

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European Parliament public hearing

On 10 October 2023, the European Parliament held a **public hearing** on the "Fur Free Europe" initiative. During this public hearing, the organisers outlined their objectives and engaged directly with **Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)** in a constructive dialogue. Watch the recording of the public hearing



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Plenary debate in the European Parliament

On 19 October 2023, the “Fur Free Europe” initiative was debated in a plenary session at the European Parliament. Watch the plenary debate: Part 1 | Part 2.

European Commission's formal response

On 7 December 2023, the European Commission adopted a Communication outlining its response to the "Fur Free Europe" initiative. The Commission welcomed the initiative and announced the following actions (Press Release):

1. **Scientific review by EFSA:** The Commission asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to provide **a scientific opinion** on the welfare of fur animals **by March 2025**. EFSA's opinion should focus on the animals kept exclusively for fur production, namely mink, foxes, racoon dogs and chinchilla and analyse the welfare of these animals, common husbandry systems and how any welfare problems can be prevented or mitigated under current farming conditions.
2. **Evaluation of proposed bans:** The Commission will then **evaluate the bans requested** by the "Fur Free Europe" initiative, including an assessment of the economic and social impacts of these bans in the EU.
3. **Decision on fur farming and fur marketing:** By March 2026, taking into account the EFSA opinion and the outcomes of the evaluation, the Commission will **communicate** if it considers it appropriate to propose a ban on fur farming and the marketing of fur in the EU after a transition period.

In the meantime, the Commission will also continue its **preparatory work** on other animal welfare proposals, as announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy. It is also taking several measures in relation to the welfare, public health and environmental impacts of fur farming. These include on-site visits to fur farms in Member States exploring "One Health" mechanisms in place, as well as an impact assessment in view of a possible revision of the Textile Labelling Regulation. The Commission will follow a One Health approach–acknowledging that human, animal and environmental health are inextricably linked–to prevent, detect and respond to disease outbreaks on fur farms.

On 9 February 2024, the organisers met with **Commissioner Kyriakides** to discuss the reply to their initiative.



Visit of Representatives of the European Citizens' Initiative 'Fur Free Europe' to the European Commission

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Hints and tips for future organisers

Here are some key tips from the organisers of Fur Free Europe to ensure your campaign is successful:

Do your homework before you begin!

Thorough preparation is vital. Make sure you fully understand the ECI process and legal requirements to avoid any obstacles down the line.

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

Partner with established civil society organisations

Collaborate with organisations that already have strong citizen engagement and support. Their established networks will help amplify your message and reach a wider audience.

Expand your network

Focus on building new relationships and partnerships to grow your outreach. The more connections you build, the greater the impact your initiative will have.

Empower your supporters

Encourage those who join your cause to become active promoters of your campaign. Equip them with the right tools—such as key information, communication resources, and important campaign dates—so they can share your message across their own channels.

Additional information

Additional information regarding Fur Free Europe is available on the organisers' website *(https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/fur-free-europe)* and the dedicated Commission's webpage. For additional information on the follow-up of the initiative, please visit the following Commission's page.

Check out more guidance materials featuring the organisers of Fur Free Europe*(https://citizens-initiative-forum.europa.eu/search_en?search=fur+free+europe)*