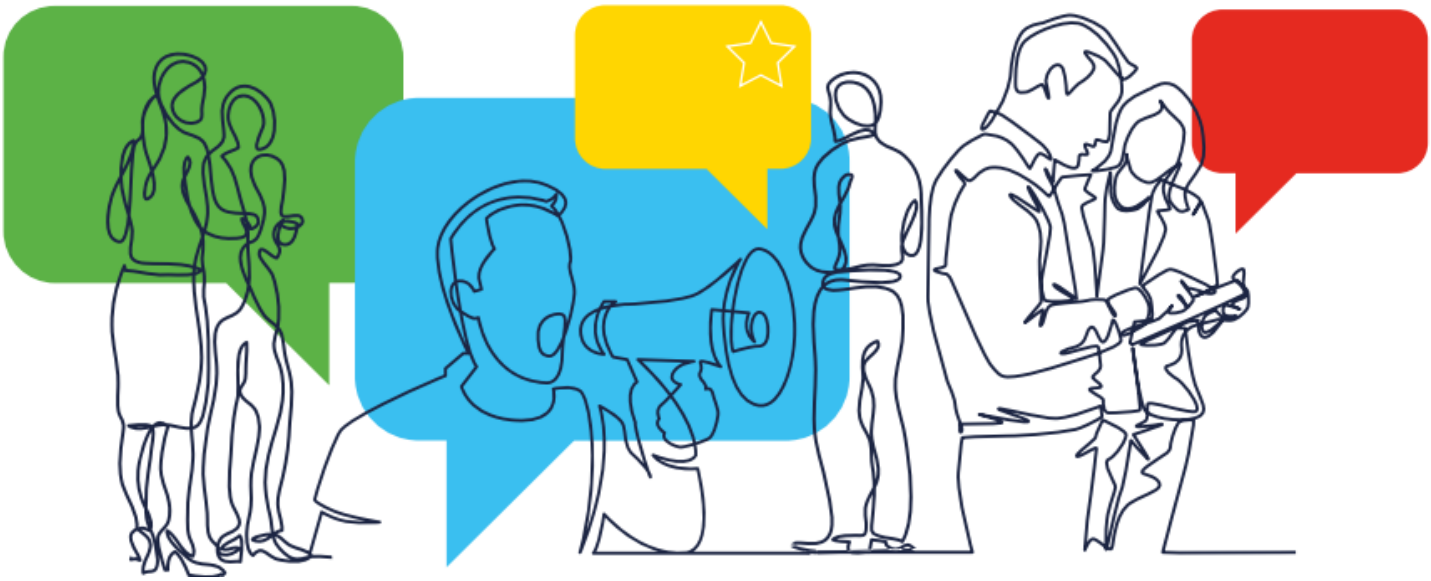
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EUROPEAN CITIZENS´ INITIATIVE FORUM

How to look for partners: practical tips



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Fostering citizens’ engagement in EU policy

EU citizens have the right to participate in the democratic life of the European Union. There are many ways in which Europeans can exercise this right (e.g. petition the European Parliament, participation in public consultations, addressing the European Ombudsman, etc.). However, the European Citizens’ Initiative remains a unique tool available to citizens to influence the EU agenda.

If citizens organised in a group of organisers are able to collect 1 million signatures, while meeting minimum required thresholds in at least one quarter of the Member States (currently seven), within 12 months, they can invite the European Commission, within the framework of its powers (see the guidance note on How to draft an initiative), to propose legislation with the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

This guidance note offers practical tips and useful resources to help organisers find the right partners and build strong, successful coalitions. For further details on the ECI procedure, please refer to the European Citizens' Initiative - The basics. For further information on the campaign, please refer to the guidance note on How to campaign and How to structure your ECI team.

Tip from organisers

Stop vivisection collected over 1 million signatures thanks to the support of an EU-wide alliance of more than 250 animal protection groups, scientific organisations and companies selling ‘animal crueltyfree’ products.

The group of organisers

The group of organisers must be formed by at least seven EU citizens old enough to vote in the European Parliament elections and live in at least seven different EU Member States. Both EU citizenship (regardless of the Member State) and place of residence matter for meeting this requirement.

TIP

Use the ECI community section of the European Citizens' Initiative Forum. Choose reliable and experienced people as members of the group of organisers. Use your partner organisations to identify the perfect spokespersons for the initiative.

Contact persons – one representative and one substitute – will be designated to speak and act on behalf of the group with the Commission. The group of organisers may designate two more persons who will act on behalf of the contact person in case he/she is unavailable. It is also possible to create a legal entity that will represent the group of organisers, which will increase the visibility of the initiative. However, this legal entity must be created according to the rules of a Member State. The challenge will then be to choose the legal form and legislation of the country the most suited to the needs of the initiative and the group of organisers.

TIP

Find partners before launching your initiative! The campaign is on the right track if your partners are **numerous**, **diverse**, **proactive**, and **spread throughout the EU**.

Partners to support the group of organisers and the campaign

Partners of the initiative are the various individuals and organisations that will extend and amplify your messages to help you raise awareness of the campaign and persuade people to sign statements of support.

Whereas organisers will already have close links with some of them, others will need to be recruited. For that purpose, the group of organisers should carry out a full audit of potential supporters at local, regional, national and European level in the following categories:

- **intermediaries** – membership organisations sympathetic to the subject of the initiative such as trade unions, NGOs, associations, etc.;
- **sponsors** – some intermediaries may be willing to support the campaign (with funds or through 'in kind' support). You may also want to consider applying to relevant charitable foundations;
- **influencers** – politicians, journalists and 'celebrities' who are willing to support your initiative can boost the collection of signatures and make the initiative known at the same time;
- **volunteers** – the online communities that follow organisers and partner organisations or cluster around relevant topic-specific hashtags are an important source of the volunteers who will help to carry the campaign messages into those communities, both online and offline, and to gather signatures.

TIP

Steps you should follow when contacting a potential partner:

1. Look for organisations in other Member States that share your interests.

2. Arrange a meeting/call as early as possible.

3. Explain your initiative, how the potential partner can contribute and what may be the benefit for this organisation. This will help to convince it to get involved and active.

4. If potential partners are willing to support your initiative, clearly define roles and expectations.

5. If they are not willing to help, ask for recommendations of others who might be interested.

Tip from organisers

Both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI publicly supported the *One of us* initiative, giving it significant visibility and credibility.

TIP

• Ask for formal letters of support from as many partners as possible. Together, they will form an ecosystem to share and spread your campaign messages.

• European NGOs and associations are often quite well resourced and have well-developed communication systems and networks. Use them!

• Members of the European Parliament are well connected in Brussels and may help to open doors for you there. Contact them!

• Use your own contact networks as an additional way to look for partners: family, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, colleagues from work, school or university.

• Active use of social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.) can significantly boost organisers' chances of reaching potential partners.

• Focus the campaign on countries where the topic of the initiative is already well known.

• Partners will have different reasons to support the initiative, so make sure that all share a common interest: the success of your initiative!

Tip from organisers

After the *Right2Water* initiative was explained in a sketch on a German prime time show, around 200 000 signatures were collected in the following days!

Other sources for searching partners

EU Transparency Register

The Transparency Register is a voluntary register covering organisations that try to influence EU policymaking and EU institutions.

From private companies, industry associations and consultancies to NGOs, agencies, think tanks, research and academic institutions and municipalities, all kinds of organisations can be found in this database. Around 12 000 registrants share information related to their websites, contact details, goals, specific activities, staff, budget and fields of interests.

A general search can be done by entering keywords such as ‘environment’, ‘data protection’, ‘trade’, ‘consumers’, ‘youth’, ‘transport’, or ‘taxation’. A more detailed search can also be performed in the ‘Advanced search’ tab. From top to bottom, search categories go from section or type of organisation, to location, level of interest (European, global, national, regional or local), fields of interests, etc.

TIP

Other useful websites for finding partners:

Ideal-ist Partner Search is an international ICT network.

Keeping your partners motivated and engaged

Once you have gathered around you a large number of partners, you should also create the proper conditions to work together and keep them motivated throughout the campaign. For this purpose, you should:

- Create a common set of values to be able to reach citizens;
- Set clear and realistic objectives and define goals for each partner throughout the campaign;
- Develop a sense of community through the organisation of regular online and, if possible, in-person meetings;
- Keep your partners informed about the progress made and provide positive feedback once objectives are reached in order to keep the morale.

Tip from organisers

Stop glyphosate's organisers made a list of national organisations that were willing to participate in the campaign and worked with them individually.

TIP

For further details on how successful initiatives looked for partners, please refer to the Success stories on the European Citizens' Initiative Forum.