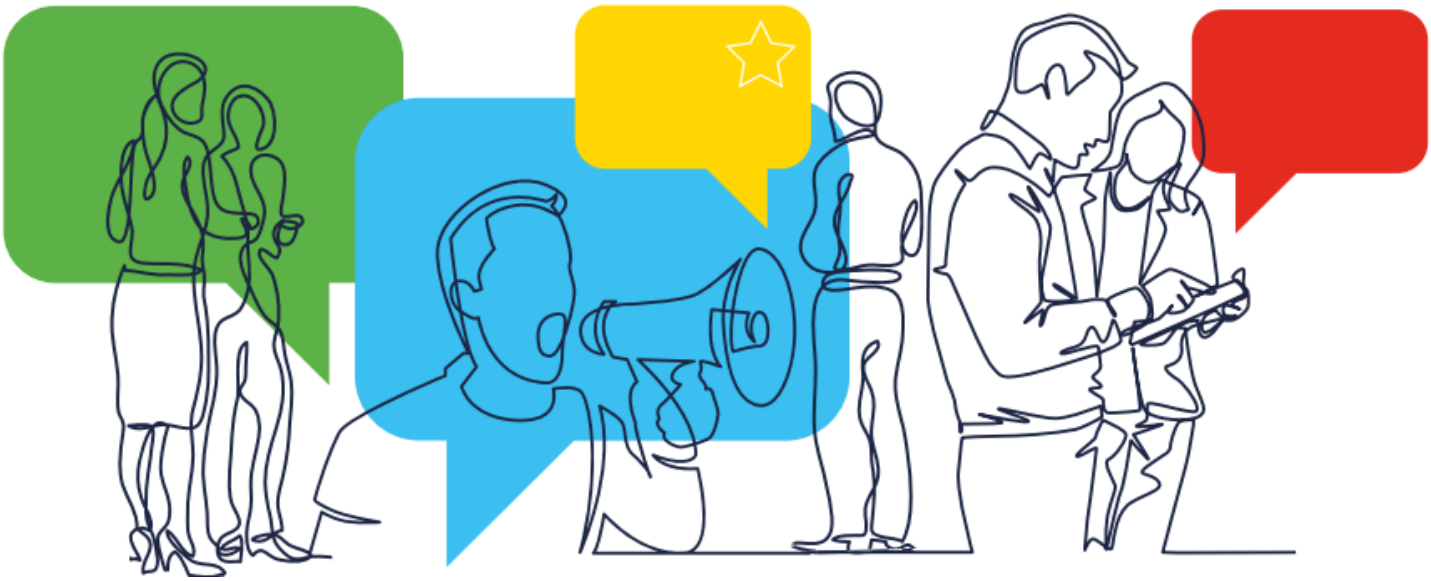
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EUROPEAN CITIZENS´ INITIATIVE FORUM

How to structure your ECI team



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Why a well-structured team is key to success

European citizens' initiative (ECI) campaigns demand **transnational coordination, clear communication, and a durable structure**. Running an ECI campaign means coordinating multiple national level campaigns, tailored to that specific region in terms of messaging. A well-structured, well-refined team allows a campaign to scale up, respond appropriately to unexpected events, maximise opportunities that arise, and sustain momentum.

You may decide to decentralise your campaign, and that can define the overall strategy.

- Think about **exploiting transnational opportunities**, driving EU-wide coordination, and ensuring legal compliance.
- Meanwhile, national teams put a campaign strategy into action locally, **adapting it to the regional context** by tailoring messages and leading the effort to collect signatures on the ground.
- **Clear roles, responsibilities, and tasks** at both European and national levels are crucial for an ECI to function effectively across borders and achieve lasting impact.

Starting from scratch

If you are building a campaign from the ground up, **consider recruiting experienced activists or campaigners**. The expertise of seasoned campaigners in civic mobilisation is **crucial for a transnational campaign** like an ECI, where understanding the intricacies of engaging diverse publics and navigating cross-border dynamics can make all the difference. Their experience helps streamline strategy, minimise training time, and ensures your team can effectively tackle the unique challenges of an ECI.

Most importantly start strategically—designate key roles according to your campaign goals.

Tip from organisers

PsychedeliCare built much of their team from professionals in psychology, psychiatry, medicine, and research—many of whom were new to activism but brought **deep subject-matter expertise**. This background **proved valuable for credibility, content development, and outreach** within their field. At the same time, they advise future ECI organisers to actively involve experienced activists when possible, as this can help streamline coordination, reduce onboarding time, and strengthen campaign structure from the outset.

Building from existing organisations

Building upon an established civil society organisations (CSOs) offers advantages such as **existing networks**, **administrative capacity**, **expertise**, and **credibility**. This can **ease outreach, fundraising, and further partnership formation,** and it has the potential to establish an **EU-wide coalition** that mobilises for the ECI.

Tip from organisers

My Voice, My Choice successfully built their campaign team starting from a Slovenian-based NGO. This gave them immediate access to a communications infrastructure and a pre-existing audience, helping them to quickly recruit further team members and expand their reach across borders.

Managing a transnational team

Coordinating an ECI team across multiple countries brings inevitable challenges—linguistic, cultural, and logistical.

- **Clear communication and flexibility** are key to keeping international teams aligned.

- Ensure that all **campaign materials are simple and accessible**, which makes it easier for team members across countries to understand and adapt.

- Consider **appointing national communication coordinators** in your target countries who can lead the effort to ensure all content is tailored to **resonate with local audiences**. This person should work with trusted translation tools or native speakers to make sure that key documents and campaign messages align with the overall message, ensuring consistency across the board while respecting regional differences.

Managing national teams

Consider providing materials such as campaign overviews, visuals, guidelines, and sample messages that can be circulated through existing networks to reach potential new team members and volunteers.

- Offering a simple, **supportive entry point helps build confidence** in your team's work and lowers the barrier to get involved in the campaign.

Tip from organisers

To build national teams, *PsychedeliCare* first reached out to partner organisations, asking for support in identifying interested volunteers across different countries. These organisations helped disseminate the call through their social media channels and newsletters. The campaign also created a contact form on their website, allowing interested individuals to easily express interest by indicating their country, streamlining the process of matching volunteers with national team needs.

A typical national team, for instance, might include:

- a **national coordinator** responsible for mapping local stakeholders

- a **content creator** adapting campaign materials to the national context
- a **volunteer coordinator** tasked with recruiting and engaging additional supporters

Replicating similar campaign teams and roles across all national teams helps build consistency across the campaign, making management and scaling much easier.

Tools and software for coordination

Efficient coordination in an ECI campaign relies heavily on the **smart use of digital tools**.

- Communication can be **streamlined through messaging apps** like WhatsApp or Signal which allow groups to be easily created.

Tip from organisers

PsychedeliCare heavily used WhatsApp communities as a central tool for internal communication, allowing them to connect efficiently with volunteers across the EU. They created a dedicated group for national coordinators, enabling fast information flow, task coordination, and cross-border collaboration. Their broader advice to other campaigns: **choose communication tools that volunteers are already familiar with** to keep coordination smooth and inclusive.

- **Visual collaboration** tools such as Miro or other online whiteboards help teams create and work through ideas. For **managing tasks and workflows**, platforms like Trello, Notion, or Slack are highly effective for assigning responsibilities, tracking progress, and ensuring transparency.

Tip from organisers

Stop Destroying Videogames built a Discord community of over 4,000 volunteers, providing a platform that can be used to **quickly mobilise support if needed**. Discord also allows campaigns to map volunteers' countries and strengths, identify local influencers, and organise rapid-response efforts and actions.

While nothing replaces the value of human resources**, AI tools can act as valuable robo-assistants** by effectively acting as a campaign-specific member of the team.

- For example, on ChatGPT, you can **build your own custom model GPT tailored to your campaign**, trained to follow your campaign guidelines, tone, and brand consistency to support in campaign strategy, map potential partners, help with volunteer engagement, and assist with scheduling and planning.

- **Video editing and image generation tools** such as Runway and MidJourney can help streamline the creative process and produce high-quality media for social media engagement, campaign materials, or visual storytelling.

- **Translation tools** such as DeepL can assist with the localisation of campaign materials into multiple languages.

When used thoughtfully and where human assistance is missing, advanced **AI tools free up your resources and time** to focus on strategising and network-building.

Division of labour: European and national levels

A significant component of the success of an ECI campaign hinges on the capacity to develop comprehensive cooperation that integrates European and national-level expertise. Here are some recommendations on how your campaign can structure effective teams and operate in a coordinated way.

Tip from organisers

My Voice, My Choice prioritised building a strong andconsistent **brand identityacross all national teams**. The core team in Slovenia ensured that messaging, visuals and campaign style remained unified across different countries, while still allowing national teams to **adapt the content slightly to local realities**. This consistency strengthened campaign **recognition**, built **trust** among supporters, and helped maintain a **coherent voice across borders**.

Below are common roles that help clarify responsibilities and foster smooth collaboration within a transnational campaign structure.

Possible European-Level Team Roles & Sub-teams:

- **Policy Team:** Develops the campaign's political positioning, monitors EU legislative developments, and liaises with policy-makers.
- **Lead Coordinator:** Oversees the campaign, ensures all parts work in sync, and serves as the main point of accountability.
- **Communications, PR & Social Media**: Shapes the campaign's public narrative, manages press relations and media outreach, oversees social media strategy, and builds the campaign's brand visibility.
- **Content Creator**: Produces engaging, on-message digital content for online platforms, aiming to grow reach, encourage engagement, and create viral potential.

Tip from organisers

My Voice, My Choice engaging **social media presence was critical to their success**. Their online platforms became a **hub for news and information** on democracy and fundamental rights-related issues and reacting quickly to global events. By **consistently sharing valuable content, they engaged supporters** and organically weaved in the call to sign their ECI, maintaining momentum and building a community around their cause.

- **Legal Team:** Advises on EU and national legal requirements, drafts terms and disclaimers, ensures GDPR compliance.
- **Science & Expert Team:** Conducts background research, provides scientific or technical expertise, drafts evidence-based materials, and supports advocacy with accurate, credible public communication in close collaboration with PR.

- **Fundraising Team:** Identifies funding opportunities, drafts grant applications, manages donor relations and campaign budgeting.
- **Coalition Building Team:** Reaches out to NGOs and potential partners, maintains relations with allied organisations.
- **Technical/IT Team:** Manages the website, ensures digital security.
- **Administrative Team:** Plans and executes campaign logistics, including event management, travel coordination, and shipping of materials.
- **Volunteer Management:** Onboards new volunteers, organises trainings, ensures team well-being and motivation.

Possible National Team Roles & Sub-teams:

- **National Coordinator:** Serves as the local leader, coordinates national-level efforts, and reports to the European team.
- **Events & Activities Team:** Plans local events, organises campaign participation in public happenings.
- **Communication & Social Media Team:** Translates and adapts messaging for national audiences, creates localised content, manages local platforms.
- **Onboarding & Volunteer Management Team:** Welcomes new members and instructs them for their roles.
- **Translation Team:** Ensures campaign content is localised and translated accurately.
- **Coalition Building Team:** Engages with local organisations, influencers, and media outlets to build support.

Roles may overlap, and individuals can take on multiple responsibilities based on their expertise and availability. For example, the Communications & Social Media Team can combine with the Events & Activities Team, where members handle both content creation and event promotion. Likewise, communications and translation teams can work close overlapping their responsibilities, by dealing with translations and best strategies to adapt messages to national contexts.

Tip from organisers

HouseEurope! asked all team members to think about their own way of raising awareness for the topic and telling the story. Each week, **the team members rotated who took over social media content**. Everyone contributed in their own way, creating a plurality of voices and content that support the initiative’s purpose.

Volunteer recruitment & management

Effective volunteer recruitment and management is about more than just filling roles—it's about fostering motivation and belonging. To incentivise participation:

- Offer **small but meaningful tasks** that allow volunteers to contribute without becoming overwhelmed.
- Take time to **understand their interests and strengths** and assign them to roles where they can feel both useful and fulfilled.
- Encouraging responsibility through **clear role ownership, public recognition, and a sense of community helps volunteers stay engaged** and committed over time.

Tip from organisers

Stop Destroying Videogames aims to get **volunteers to commit just one hour per week or month to the campaign**. This low-pressure **approach helped retain thousands of volunteers** and allowed the campaign to maintain engagement over time in a low-barrier way.

Crisis preparation & scaling up

Crises are inevitable—staff departures, tech failures, or a drop in social media engagement. Prepare by simulating these scenarios.

- **Cross-train staff** so no task depends on one person.
- For example, if the Communications Coordinator leaves unexpectedly, a Social Media Manager or Content Creator can temporarily take over press relations and content scheduling.

Tip from organisers

My Voice, My Choice stressed the **importance of having contingency plans** for key roles. By preparing in advance for potential staff changes, they were able to stay agile and keep operations running smoothly when team members transitioned out unexpectedly.

- **Diversify tech platforms** and prepare backups.
  - For example, if your main website crashes during a major launch, you can redirect supporters to a pre-prepared landing page hosted on a different server.

Tip from organisers

My Voice, My Choice experienced shadowbanning on social media following the U.S. elections, which sharply reduced their visibility on key platforms. Their experience highlights the importance of **digital resilience**: don't rely on a single platform. To stay visible, they expanded their presence to alternatives like Bluesky and Tumblr. **Diversifying your digital channels** early can help maintain outreach if one platform suddenly becomes unreliable.

- **Designate spokespeople** with ready-to-use talking points.
  - For example, a Campaign Coordinator or Communications Lead could be equipped with a short, three-point message to handle unexpected media interviews or public statements. These key messages should be prepared in advance by the PR team, in close cooperation with the Expert Team, to ensure both clarity and credibility.

Tip from organisers

Stop Destroying Videogames showed that **building an informed volunteer base and audience is key to crisis resilience**. When their campaign was misrepresented by an industry figure, they quickly mobilised their community to engage in informed discussion, correct misunderstandings, and turn the situation into an opportunity for greater visibility.

- **Segment volunteers** by skill and availability.
    - For example, volunteers who are skilled in design can be assigned rapid content creation tasks, while those with limited time can support signature collection on key action days.

Tip from organisers

Ban on Conversion Practices emphasised that fighting social media algorithms requires scale and consistency. Structuring a dedicated communications and social media team early on—and ensuring frequent posting, engagement, and rapid reactions—is crucial to staying visible. In their words, “it’s you against the algorithm.”

You can strengthen your team’s readiness by incorporating a visit to the ECI Forum into your training and onboarding process. For example, each ECI team is invited at the start of their campaign to a **videoconference with ECI Forum experts.** Familiarising all team members with ECI best practices, campaigning strategies and available resources ensures a shared understanding of the initiative's requirements and enhances overall campaign effectiveness.

Structure enables strategy

An **ECI is more than just collecting signatures** - it’s about **organising across borders, aligning efforts, and building a sustainable movement that extends beyond the signature collection phase**. Whether you’re five people or fifty, a **clear structure**, **dedicated roles**, **strong internal communication**, and the **ability to adapt** are your greatest assets.

To build a strong foundation, encourage your team to **engage early with resources** like the ECI Forum.

- Practical tools such as the blog post on real-world strategy tips for campaign organisers and webinar recording on ECI campaign structures offer valuable insights into best practices, common challenges, and lessons learned from experienced campaigners. Incorporating these resources into your team’s onboarding and training ensures they are not only motivated but also equipped with the knowledge to navigate the complexities of an ECI campaign.