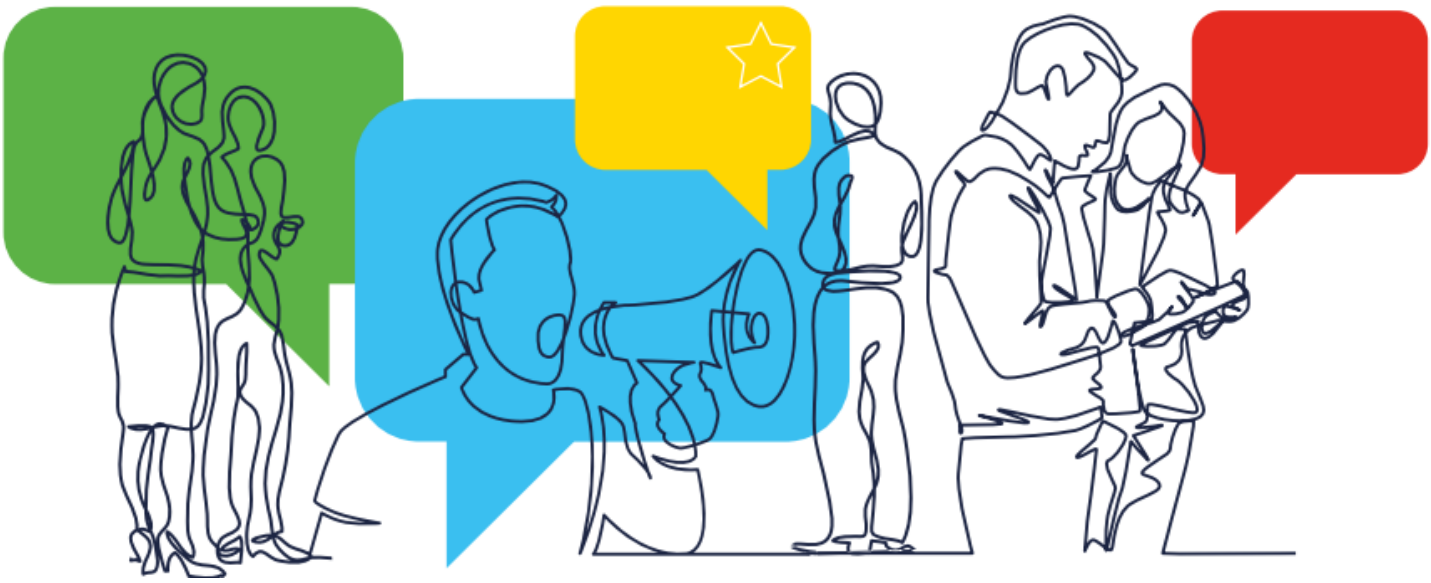
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How social media influencers can help build momentum for your ECI



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Why working with content creators is becoming essential for ECIs

One of the biggest challenges for any European citizens' initiative (ECI) is reaching people beyond your existing network. Even strong campaigns can struggle to break through crowded online spaces, especially across different countries, languages, and online communities.

Recently successful ECIs have demonstrated that content creators (social media influencers) can be one of the most effective drivers of online visibility, engagement, and signature collection. A trusted creator can introduce your initiative to entirely new audiences, help explain complex topics in an accessible way, and encourage people to engage with and share your campaign.A single post, story, repost, or mention from a creator can significantly increase visibility and have a strong impact on campaign success.

This is especially important online, as platforms tend to restrict the visibility of content and accounts deemed 'political'. In addition, influencer-driven content often performs well because people are more likely to engage with content shared by voices they already follow and consider trustworthy. **In practice, this means that well-placed collaborations with social media influencers can create a ripple effect far beyond your campaign's own channels.**

Therefore, crafting a content creator strategy is an important part of building support for your campaign. And although success is always influenced by timing and the ability to generate momentum, visibility and action can only come from people taking interest in and engaging with your ECI.

Define the goals for influencer campaigning

Creating a plan for collaborating with social media influencers involves setting goals and expectations and having a clear way to evaluate your progress and track your campaign's reach. Below are a few questions to ask yourself before reaching out to content creators.

What do I want to achieve by involving influencers in my campaign?

Obtain more signatures; make the campaign better known; grow the campaign’s own social media following; improve reach and interaction on posts, etc.

What do I want the influencers to do for me?

Get their audiences to connect to the cause and sign the initiative; encourage their audiences to follow/interact with your account; educate their audiences on the ECI mechanism so that they feel less reluctant to sign, etc.

Which campaigns do I draw inspiration from?

Campaigns that successfully reached younger audiences; initiatives that built strong online communities; creators who explain complex topics clearly; campaigns with engaging short-form videos; creators whose tone, values, or audience align with your ECI, etc.

Answers can vary depending on the stage of your campaign, but having clear goals sets the right expectations and stimulates creativity regarding your collaborations.

Map relevant influencers in your target countries

Content creators can adapt to local, regional, or national messages

ECI campaigns need to reach people across different countries, cultures, and online communities. While your campaign may have a clear central message, different audiences may respond to different styles of communication, examples, or priorities. This is where content creators play an important role. Creators understand the language, tone, references, humour, framing, and online culture that resonate within their audience.

Tip from organisers

When mapping influencers, remember that campaign partners can also help you reach influencers. This can happen directly, through their local networks, or indirectly, by increasing your campaign’s visibility in a country until local creators become aware of it and decide to get involved as experienced by "PsychedeliCare" ECI. See this video.

Allowing creators the creative flexibility to explain your ECI in their own way can make content feel more authentic and engaging.

Audience, values, and content category

To map influencers on your topic, you will need to narrow down the pool beyond just language and country. Reflect on the following questions:

What kind of audience do they have?

- Small, medium, large – this will likely influence their fee or whether they are likely to collaborate on a voluntary basis.
- What age groups, interests, or communities does their audience belong to?
- Does their audience overlap with the people you want your ECI to reach?

Please note!

For a better understanding of target audiences, check out the ECI Forum Guidance Note ‘How to Campaign’.

What are their values?

Where are they active on topics connected to your campaign?

What kind of content do they create?

Are there adjacent communities that may also connect with your initiative?

Could broader lifestyle creators, for example in music, cooking, sport, gaming, or culture, help introduce your ECI to audiences beyond political or activist spaces?

Choose a realistic influencer outreach approach

Keep in mind that influencers might have accounts on many platforms, but they are most visible on one or two. That is important when deciding what kind of content you expect from them, and how you decide to reach out to them. Moreover, content relating to the topic of your ECI might be more common on some platforms rather than others, but your campaign should diversify its presence on as many platforms as possible. Some platforms are country-specific, so researching where discussions about your ECI topic take place online can give you access to the right communities.

Tip from organisers

"Stop Destroying Videogames" mobilised niche communities such as Reddit, Twitch, and Discord. To incorporate such communities in your campaign, you can reach out to them through their moderators. Community moderators often keep in contact with influencers.

Creator outreach takes persistence

Reaching out to content creators is often a numbers game, especially at the beginning of your campaign. Many creators may not respond, may overlook your message, or may simply not have the time to engage. This is normal and should not discourage you.

For this reason, it can be effective to contact a broad range of creators rather than focusing only on a small number of large, popular accounts. **Micro-influencers can often have highly engaged audiences and may be more open to collaborating with campaigns.**

Tip from organisers

"Stop Finning – Stop the Trade" had a 12% response success rate by reaching out to 1200+ content creators that resulted in 160 posts being published by them. Reach far and wide to increase the number of posts generated by content creators.

To make outreach manageable, it can help to prepare a simple outreach template that can be personalised quickly for different creators. Your message should usually be short and clear on who you are, what your campaign is about, why you are contacting them specifically, and what kind of collaboration you are looking for.

Successful influencer outreach often depends on persistence and volume, rather than a few large accounts alone.

Paid and pro-bono collaboration

Several successful ECI campaigns have received voluntary or pro-bono support from content creators who genuinely connect with the cause. For many organisers, especially those working with limited budgets, this may be the main form of influencer collaboration available.

At the same time, **if your campaign has a communications budget, allocating part of it to creator collaborations can help expand your reach and allow for more ambitious forms of content.** For example, paid collaborations may make it easier to request dedicated videos, explainers, livestream participation, or longer-term support throughout the campaign. Even small collaborations can be valuable.

You should also encourage creators to support your campaign throughout its lifecycle. For example, creators may be willing to add your ECI signature link to their bio or profile description for a longer period, helping maintain visibility throughout the campaign.

Tip from the organisers

The direct message feature on most platforms has proven successful for "Ban Conversion Practices" ECI. Reaching out to an influencer by email or through a manager or agency is also possible, but it may take longer to get a response.

Ways to involve influencers in your campaign

Previous ECIs have shown that collaboration features across platforms can be highly effective. On Instagram, the “Collab” feature allows one post or Reel to appear simultaneously on both the campaign’s account and the creator’s account, combining visibility, engagement and audiences in a much more effective way than a standard tag. **This can significantly increase reach and interaction, as followers from both accounts see the same content and engage with it together.** Similar collaborative posting features also exist on TikTok and YouTube, including collaborative livestreams, shared videos, duets, stitches, and joint content formats. UsinThese tools

can be among the most effective ways for ECIs to reach new audiences organically and make collaborations feel integrated into a creator's usual content style. For example, see these examples from YouTube and Instagram.

In the early stages of a campaign, steadily growing engagement through repeated collaborations and community interaction is usually more realistic than expecting a single viral moment. Content created by influencers and supporters can also help expand your campaign organically. Posts that encourage discussion, emotional reactions, humour, creativity, or public participation are often more likely to be shared and adapted by users across platforms. This can include memes, reaction videos, trending audios, TikTok stitches or duets, Instagram Reels remixes, YouTube Shorts remixes, or users creating their own content around your campaign topic.

Platform features such as reposts on Instagram or stitches and duets on TikTok can help campaigns amplify these interactions further and encourage broader participation around the initiative. Highlighting and resharing user-created content can also help build a stronger sense of online community and momentum around your ECI.

Other ways influencers can get involved with your campaign include:

1. Creator explainer videos

There are many creators online who have expertise in diverse fields.They can explain the topic of your ECI, why it matters, and how people can support it in their own tone and style. This is especially useful for making complex or legal topics easier to understand and more engaging online. For example, creator Olive Badger created a YouTube video on technical misconceptions about "Stop Destroying Videogames" ECI from the perspective of a software developer and UN Rapporteur Francesca Albanese explained on Instagram her perspective on the "Justice for Palestine" ECI as an international law and human rights expert.

2. "Why I signed" videos

Creators share personal reasons for supporting the campaign and encourage their audiences to sign as well. These videos often feel more authentic and relatable than institutional campaign messaging. For example, a member and vice-president of the European Parliament, Nicolae Ștefănuță encouraged citizens on Instagram to sign "My Voice My Choice" ECI by presenting his reasoning for supporting the campaign.

3. Repeated collaborations

Rather than relying on one viral post, campaigns can benefit from creators mentioning the initiative multiple times throughout the campaign. Repeated visibility helps build familiarity, trust, and momentum over time. Artist Severina campaigned for "My Voice My Choice" ECI multiple times on Instagram, as seen here using the heart gesture associated with the initiative as well as here delivering signatures from Croatia to EU decision-makers.

4. Livestreams, long-form videos, and Q&A

Creators can host livestreams or discussions with organisers to answer questions, explain the ECI process, or discuss the issue in more depth. These formats encourage direct interaction and community engagement. For example, “Stop Destroying Videogames” published on YouTube a Frequently Asked Questions-video about the campaign.

5. User-generated content and participation

Campaigns can encourage supporters to create their own memes, videos, reactions, photos, or stories related to the initiative. This helps campaigns spread organically through online communities. For example, “Stop Destroying Videogames" has a Wikipedia-page that was contributed to by supporters of that ECI. Campaigns can also repost the content related to them made by other users, as “HouseEurope” ECI has done on Instagram.

6. Building creator networks and momentum

When multiple creators support a campaign publicly, it can encourage others to join as well. Reposting creator content, publicly thanking supporters, and creating a visible sense of movement can help build wider online momentum around the ECI. For example, “Ban Conversion Practices” ECI published an Instagram Story thanking supporters such as MEP Chloé Ridel for advocacy for the ECI and linking their Instagram accounts.

7. Leverage existing events and important dates

Creators and public figures are often most active around major events and international awareness days. Aligning your campaign with these moments can make it easier to secure endorsements and reach wider audiences. For example, “Justice for Palestine” ECI published an Instagram post for Europe Day, 9 May. Also, the organisers of “Ban Conversion Practices” timed the final stage of their campaign to coincide with the International Day Against Homophobia (17 May), when many public figures (such as Emmanuel Macron on his X account) shared content on LGBTQI+ rights, helping to increase the campaign's visibility and momentum. You can read more about the experience of the “Ban Conversion Practices” campaigners in this ECI Forum blog post.

8. Creator toolkit

Providing creators with ready-to-use materials such as visuals, facts, links, FAQs, or suggested messaging can make participation easier while still allowing creators to adapt content to their own style. “Stop Destroying Videogames” created a subreddit, linking important resources from the campaign, such as the ECI page on the European Union website.

9. Make space for joy and community

ECI campaigns often focus on serious issues, but audiences can become overwhelmed by a constant stream of negative news. Creating opportunities for joy and connection through collaborations with artists, musicians, and cultural organisations can help your campaign reach new audiences and build a stronger sense of community. Exhibitions, concerts, and other events also encourage participants to create content and share their experience with their circles, extending your campaign's reach both offline and online. For example, “Justice for Palestine” ECI created an Instagram post about an event they organised with artists performing a free concert. Also, “HouseEurope” ECI published a video on LinkedIn where artist Nikita Merkushin presents an artwork on transforming abandoned buildings.

10. Cooperate with organisations and communities (not just individuals)

Social media partnerships should not be limited to individual public figures and influencers. Magazines, museums, cultural organisations, and online communities can also help amplify your campaign. These partners often provide opportunities beyond digital promotion, such as workshops, competitions, exhibitions, or event spaces, allowing supporters to engage with the campaign in more meaningful ways. For example, “HouseEurope” ECI partnered with architecture organisations to offer workshops and design competitions for young professionals, turning online engagement into real-world participation while promoting the campaign. “HouseEurope” also published an Instagram post showing an art installation for the ECI, held at an exhibition. In another Instagram post from them, they promoted a competition for the reuse of old buildings.

Managing momentum and evaluating your progress

Key metrics

When working with content creators, it is important to monitor which collaborations, platforms, and types of content are helping your campaign grow over time.

Tip from organisers

"Ban Conversion Practices" ECI recommends keeping track of creator, outreach efforts, responses, and results in a shared spreadsheet or tracking document throughout the campaign.

Tracking your influencer strategy can help you better understand:

- which creators generate the most engagement
- which posts lead to increased visibility or signatures
- which countries or audiences respond most actively
- which formats perform best on different platforms

Success is not only measured through follower numbers or views. **Comments, shares, reposts, saves, link clicks, direct messages, and user-generated content can all be signs that people are actively engaging with your campaign.**

It can also be useful to compare signature growth across countries with your creator engagement efforts in those countries. For example, if a campaign suddenly gains visibility in a particular language or region following creator collaborations, this may help you identify strategies worth repeating elsewhere.

Monitoring results regularly can help your campaign adapt more quickly and focus energy where it is having the strongest impact.

Managing challenges

As the campaign progresses, you might be met with a variety of hurdles that require innovative problem-solving, as well as a team ready to react quickly. As Nika Kovač from My Voice My Choice emphasised in her interview with the ECI Forum: *influencers open doors; volunteers and national teams walk through them and collect the signatures.*

Tip from organisers

"Stop Destroying Videogames" found that critical voices can be used to amplify the conversation around the topic of their campaign. In their case, the influencer supporting their initiative was being critiqued by another YouTuber. This resulted in more content being produced about their ECI and more attention in their direction.

Moments of increased attention, whether positive or negative, can emerge quickly. A post may suddenly gain traction, a creator may unexpectedly support your initiative, or public debate and criticism may bring new visibility to your topic. In these moments, it is important to react quickly, stay engaged with audiences, and make it as easy as possible for people to learn about and sign your ECI. Engaging constructively with people who have reservations about your idea is also part of the purpose of the ECI: it creates space for public debate across Europe. These exchanges can help you find new supporters or at least clarify your message and improve your campaign. **Campaigns that**

respond creatively and strategically are often best positioned to turn online attention into long-term momentum and participation.

For more information on crisis management, check out this ECI Forum blog post and this Guidance Note on Team Structure.

Transparency and political advertising rules

Paid political advertising rules on major online platforms are becoming increasingly strict, particularly within the EU regulatory framework on transparency and targeting of political advertising. As a result, some platforms may restrict, label, or require additional transparency measures for paid political content and promoted posts.

Please note!

Influencers are still free agents, especially when they are not paid for their posts. Effective communication is necessary to ensure that accurate information is relayed to audiences and that the campaign maintains a positive reputation.

For ECI organisers, this means that it is important to understand both platform-specific rules and relevant national regulations when working with paid creator collaborations or boosted content. Sponsored partnerships must be clearly disclosed, and both the campaign and the creator may share responsibility for ensuring that content is labelled correctly.

Keeping clear records of paid collaborations, sponsored posts, and content-creator agreements will help campaigns remain transparent and avoid complications later.

Please note!

Labelling paid promotion accordingly is a requirement and is the responsibility of both influencers and campaigners.

Key takeaways

There is no single formula for successful creator campaigning. Some campaigns grow through a few highly engaged creators, while others succeed through broad networks of smaller supporters and online communities. **The most effective strategies are often those that remain flexible, authentic, and responsive to how people naturally engage online.**

Ultimately, influencer campaigning is not just about visibility. **It is about building trust, participation, and communities of support around your ECI.** With creativity, persistence, and the right partnerships, content creators can become one of the most powerful amplifiers of your campaign and help transform online attention into signatures and real momentum.

Checklist

Define goals and roles for your team regarding influencer campaigning.

Check EU and national legislation on paid social media content with influencers.

Map relevant influencers across broad and intersectional topics related to your ECI across the EU.

Plan outreach and collaboration format and set realistic expectations.

Monitor outreach to influencers and track their results.

Identify successful collaborations and scale them where possible.

Adapt your strategy based on what is generating engagement, visibility, and signatures!