

THE ONE OF US INITIATIVE



One of Us, registered on 11 May 2012, was one of the first European citizens' initiatives that succeeded in collecting at least 1 million signatures. The initiative concerned legal protection for the dignity, right to life and integrity of every human being from conception. Its main objective was to end EU funding of activities involving human embryos, in particular in research, public health and development aid.

Success factors

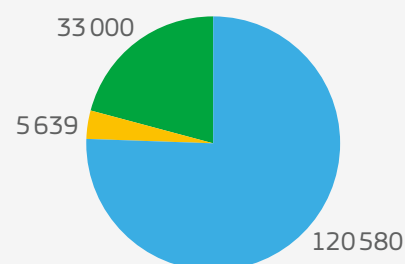
- Public support from the Vatican
- Strong national committees
- Campaign focus on countries where the topic was well known

The One of Us initiative is the only one of the four successful initiatives for which its organisers provided a [draft legal act](#) requesting three legislative amendments. In addition, based on the network created for the campaign, the organisers set up an organisation with its own legal personality, in September 2013, the 'One of Us Federation'.

The European Commission decided not to carry out the required legislative review as it considered the existing legislative framework appropriate.

Sources of funding (€)

- Fondazione Vita Nova
- Fondazione Provida de Catalunya
- Fondazione Valores y Sociedad



The One of Us campaign

Preparation

NGOs from countries with solid and well-established pro-life movements (France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Italy) started contacting pro-life NGOs in other countries that could manage the campaign through national committees.

They raised funds for the central coordination of the initiative in Brussels (to organise meetings, pay travel expenses, etc.) thanks to the contributions of the partner organisations. In addition, each national committee raised funds for its own national campaign.

Collection of signatures

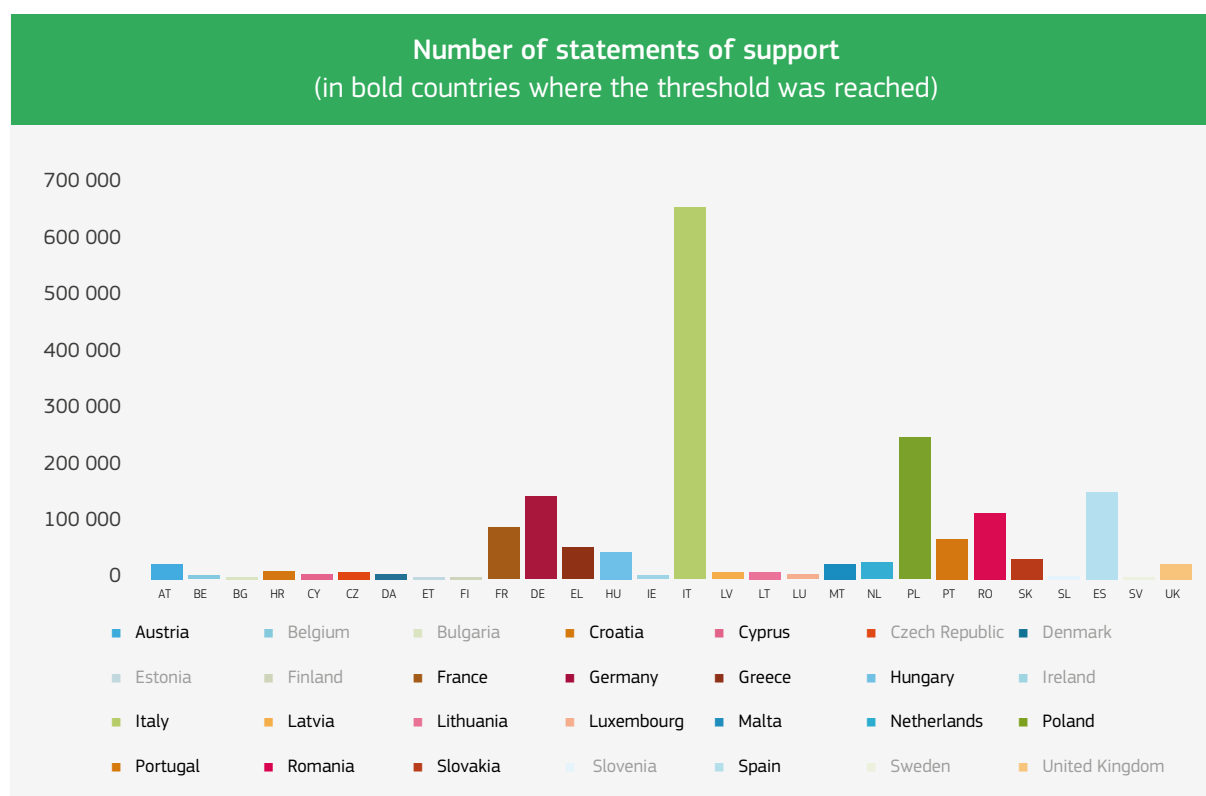
An overall campaign strategy was agreed within which each national committee implemented its own version of the campaign, looking for a national ambassador to promote the initiative and encourage people to sign the statements of support.

The strategy was based on the following milestones:

1. to meet the minimum signatures requirement in seven countries
2. to collect 1 million signatures
3. to collect 1.2 million signatures in case some were not validated
4. to collect 1.5 million signatures to strengthen the message of the initiative
5. to collect the maximum possible number of signatures from the largest possible number of countries.

One of the main challenges faced by the organisers was the technical difficulties of setting up the online collection system. However, in response to these difficulties faced by the organisers during the start-up phase of the European Citizens' Initiative, the Commission provided beyond its obligations under the Regulation the hosting of the organisers' online collection systems as well as technical assistance and training. It also exceptionally accepted statements of support collected until 1 November 2013 (beyond the official 12 months) for all initiatives registered before 31 October 2012.

When the collection phase ended on 1 November 2013, around 65 % of the signatures had been collected on paper by volunteers, and the remaining 35 % had been collected online.



Verification and submission

The initiative was submitted on 28 February 2014 along with certificates confirming the validity of 1 721 626 statements of support.

Examination and Commission decision

The organisers met with the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science and the Deputy Director-General for Development and Cooperation on 9 April 2014 (see [press release](#)). The organisers presented their initiative at a [public hearing](#) at the European Parliament the following day.

In its [Communication](#) of 28 May 2014 (see [press release](#)), the Commission stated it was not going to submit a legislative proposal because the funding framework had been recently debated and agreed by EU Member States and the Parliament.

More information on the follow-up actions can be found in the [European Citizens' Initiative website](#).



Lessons learned

- The organisers were aware that even if the Commission was not obliged to propose legislation, “a successful initiative would create considerable political pressure and debate across Europe”.
- Despite the fact that the initiative was publicly supported by both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, “the campaign was adversely affected by a lack of coverage in the media”.
- Last but not least, they focused the campaign in countries with solid pro-life movements (e.g. France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Italy). Few statements of support were obtained in countries where they lacked a solid national committee, where they had very limited financial resources.



Hints and tips for future organisers

- Send your legal questions to the helpdesk of the European Citizens' Initiative forum.
- Communicate! Establish horizontal and vertical information flows within the campaign structure.
- Motivation is critical, so update national coordinators on signature collection weekly to encourage them.
- If the goal of 1 million signatures seems too much to start with, set a series of clear country-specific and EU-wide targets and deadlines, and monitor progress carefully.
- Focus the campaign on countries where the topic of the initiative is already well known.

This “success story” is based on an interview carried out on 26 February 2018 with Ms Ana del Pino, One of Us coordinator in Europe. The information provided is independent and cannot be considered to be the opinion of the European Commission or of any other EU or national institutions. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.