

THE STOP VIVISECTION INITIATIVE

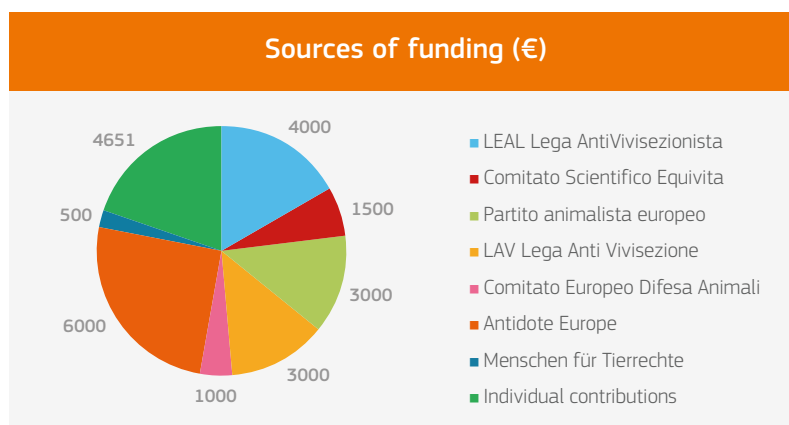
The [Stop Vivisection](#) initiative was registered on 22 June 2012. Its goal was to propose a European legislative framework aimed at phasing out animal experiments.

The initiative's objective was twofold:

- > to annul Directive 2010/63/EU of 22 September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes
- > to present a new proposal to make compulsory the use of data directly relevant for the human species

The European Commission shared the organisers' conviction that animal testing should be phased out, but did not accept that scientific principles invalidate the 'animal model'. The Commission's view is that animal testing does not impede the development of alternative research methods. The Commission therefore did not repeal Directive 2010/63/EU, considering that it already allows for progress towards the final goal of full replacement.

This initiative set an important precedent in that, for the first time, external experts were invited to take the floor during the public hearing at the European Parliament alongside the organisers of Stop Vivisection.



Success factors

- > Broad network of volunteers
- > Aggressive communication campaign
- > Massive use of social media

The Stop Vivisection campaign

Preparation

The Stop Vivisection campaign was supported by an EU-wide alliance of more than 250 animal protection groups, scientific organisations and companies selling 'animal cruelty-free' products.

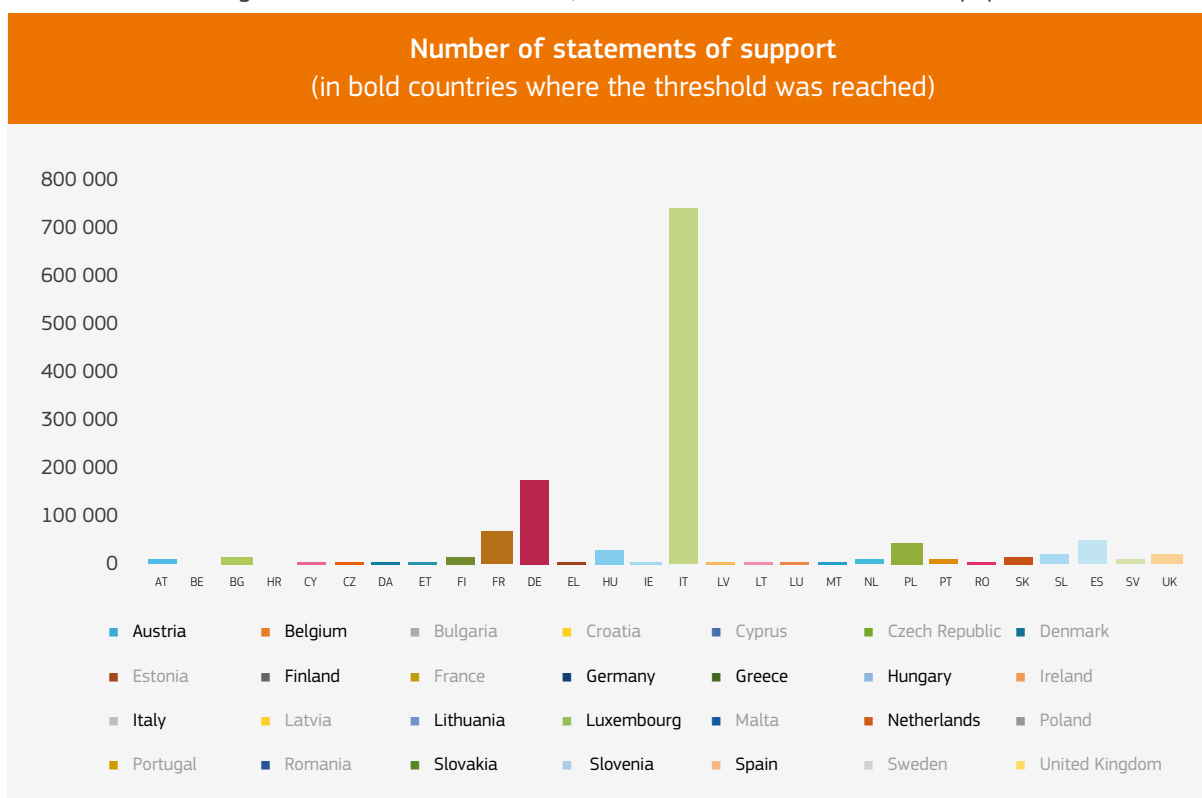
A strong network of volunteers, built up before launching the initiative and strengthened during the campaign, was key in collecting 1 million signatures. 'New contacts and empowering experiences during the campaign have prepared these volunteers for other similar projects in the future'.

Collection of signatures

A key factor in the collection of statements of support was the spillover strategy followed during the campaign. Organisers developed strong networks in one country, collecting as many signatures as possible and using this country as a leverage for the next one. Indeed, once a critical initial mass of support had been created, the focus of the campaign moved on to the next country in a coordinated way.

The initiative's limited funds created specific challenges related to the setting up of 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.

Just under 60% of signatures were collected online, while over 40% were collected on paper.



Verification and submission

The initiative was submitted on 3 March 2015 along with certificates confirming the validity of 1 173 130 statements of support.

Examination and Commission decision

The meeting with the Commission took place on 11 May 2015 (see [press release](#)). The organisers met with European Commission Vice-President Jyrki Katainen and the Director-General for Environment. The organisers also presented their initiative at a [public hearing](#) at the European Parliament on the same day.

In its [Communication](#) on 3 June 2015 (see [press release](#)), the Commission committed to a series of follow-up actions:

- > Accelerating progress in the three Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) through knowledge sharing;
- > Support to the development, validation and implementation of new alternative approaches;
- > Enforcement of compliance with the three Rs principle and alignment of relevant sector legislation;
- > Engaging in dialogue with the scientific community.

Regarding the last point, the Commission organised a scientific conference in Brussels on 6-7 December 2016 to debate on alternatives to animal testing. At the same time, the Commission reported on the progress of the follow-up actions (see [report](#)).

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

Lessons learned



For the organisers, “the campaign built volunteers’ civic skills and transnational connections and strengthened the European identity of everyone involved”.

Despite difficulties with the online collection system, they consider the online collection of statements of support was “crucial” to the initiative’s success in collecting 1 million signatures.

According to the organisers, ‘a successful initiative has one logical conclusion: legislative change’. Even if this does not always occur, ‘a well organised European citizens’ initiative is a public awareness exercise that will contribute to political change’.

Hints and tips for future organisers



- > Volunteers are the most important and powerful resource... rely on them!
- > Use online communication tools and social media in your campaign.
- > Update regularly the volunteers on signature collection to boost their morale and motivate them.
- > Rely on partners’ personal contacts and networks: they are key to an initiative’s success.
- > Focus on countries where you have strong partners in order to reach national thresholds.

This “success story” is based on an interview carried out on 15 February 2018 with Mr. Andre Menache, Director of Antidote Europe and representative for Stop vivisection. 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.