



## Video transcript. Learning by doing, with passion

My name is Timo I'm from France and I started to launch the European citizens' initiative because back in November 2018 I heard for the first time about the tax exemption on aviation fuels, on kerosene, thanks to the "gilets jaunes", thanks to the yellow vest uprising in France, because they were protesting against the rise in fuel taxes of cars.

Back then in Brussels, in the European institutions kerosene taxation was not high on the agenda at all, so we decided to launch this ECI to make sure that European institutions, MEPs, the Council, everyone here in Brussels and beyond, in the national capitals hear about the wish of European citizens to put a fair price on aviation pollution.

After six months of campaigning and after collecting over 60 000 signatures, we learned in early December that the European Commission was taking up our proposal and they were adding the proposal of taxing aviation fuels in the Green Deal.

After the announcement by the European Commission that our proposal would be in the Green Deal we felt extremely relieved, and we felt extremely happy because after almost one year of campaigning, of preparation, of hard work during our free time, it was the achievement of something, and it felt really good that, you know, as EU citizens we very often feel unheard by national politicians, even local and mostly, unfortunately, European decision-makers, but the ECI is really a great tool for it, you know, to make your voice of European citizen heard everywhere in Europe.

I think the most exciting part of the whole campaign was when the Dutch government invited us to the Hague to a very selective intergovernmental event to talk about aviation taxation and we felt very special because no NGO was invited, but it really proved that politicians and decision-makers in general take the ECI very seriously, because they invited us to this very selective event.

The most frustrating moments were when we would be sending dozens of emails a day to get partners on board, to ask celebrities, or journalists, or politicians to share the petition and we would get very few responses, but now that I've started working I realised how many emails we get a day, and you fully understand why people do not always answer your email, so do not hesitate to take your phone and just to call people, harass them!

My name is Sandro, I'm 22 years old and I'm from Germany. The European citizens' initiative and our whole journey gave me a lot of opportunities to increase my knowledge and at the same time I learned, I gained a lot of experience in marketing, in positioning ourselves, also to lobby and to network among organisations which are sharing the same values.

Basically, the the hardest hurdle was first of all to come up with a pan-European campaign, since we are just students and we basically don't have any experience in this, but at the same time it was also really interesting, because it gave me the possibility to use some content from my marketing courses, and in general to develop myself as a person.



Basically, everyone can start such a European citizens' initiative, because I had no idea about politics or the instrument before I started the European citizens' initiative, but even though we are just students, we entered the Green Deal and our proposal is picked up by the European Commission.

My personal responsibility throughout the campaign was to contact politicians, make partnerships with NGOs, do a bit of background check, just to see which NGOs or politicians would be more suited as our partners, and also we really had to focus on building a European community through social media, because we need, as you know, signatures from all around Europe.

The best part was taking up a big responsibility to deliver an initiative and a policy proposal to the European Commission. When we started the initiative we had to go around conferences which, was a first for me personally, and start chasing around representatives from NGOs, politicians, and start making a relationship with them, as we're students and this is something that we couldn't do alone, so building partnerships with the people that have expertise on the issue was something really interesting and enjoyable for me.

The worst part, or maybe actually the most stressful part was finding a balance between my responsibilities as a University student and also as a co-initiator of a European citizens' initiative and a pan-European campaign. Also, because we were students, and we started this effort very spontaneously, we were seriously underfunded and we had to cover our own expenses; however, I wish I knew earlier about the European Citizens' Initiative Forum, which gives really good advice on how to be able to obtain funds for people that have no experience like us.

My friends did not really understand the effort of the European citizens' initiative or of a pan-European campaign. They do understand the urgency of taking environmental action, but the ECI procedure as a whole was not really clear to them, as they are not really dealing with European affairs, but I wanted to explain to them that it's not really something very difficult, you just have to learn some very basic things about how the instrument works and then you just have to find a policy, or a problem, or a concern faced by many Europeans all over Europe, and this should be also a concern that could be turned into an initiative, and something that you're really passionate about.

I would encourage people who have a problem, or a concern that is faced by many European citizens not to think about it too much, and just take action, because in the end you do learn only by doing, and this is also our experience. We were very unexperienced in the domain, in politics in general, in policy making, but this is always something that you can learn on the way.

So I really, really, really want to stress: if you have an idea about how to shape the future of Europe, or solve a problem, please don't hesitate and start your own European citizens' initiative!



Launching an ECI is not always easy, it's a long process, it's a tough procedure, it's sometimes extremely frustrating, but the most important part of all it is never to give up!

Never give up, always believe in your proposal, be sure that you believe in your proposal, otherwise it's quite likely that you will give it up at some point, so, make sure you love your proposal and that it's really something you feel passionate about and, again, never give up!

