



## EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE FORUM

# STOP GLYPHOSATE



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## | TABLE OF CONTENTS

Stop Glyphosate	3
The Stop Glyphosate campaign	4
The impact of the Stop Glyphosate campaign	7

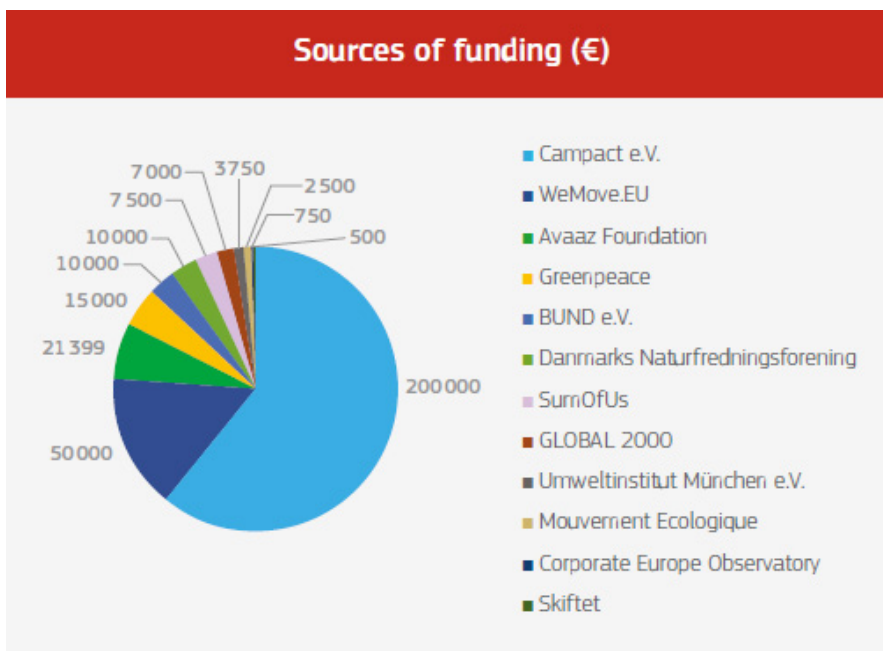


# 1

## Stop Glyphosate

The Stop Glyphosate initiative (full name: Ban glyphosate and protect people and the environment from toxic pesticides), which was registered on 25 January 2017, had three aims: to ban glyphosate, reform the pesticide approval procedure, and set mandatory EU-wide targets for reduced pesticide use.

Its main objective was to achieve a pesticide-free future without glyphosate-based herbicides. According to the organisers, exposure to glyphosate-based herbicides is linked to cancer in humans as well as to the degradation of ecosystems.



Uniquely, the organisers were able to raise 328 399 EUR from a variety of sources including Campact, WeMove.EU and Greenpeace, making it the most successful initiative ever as regards funding.

The Commission decided not to ban glyphosate but committed to carry out the actions described below.



### Success factors

- Audience of millions of Europeans willing to sign from day one
- No need to create a coalition but rather to mobilise the existing one
- Consistent funding base

## 2

# The Stop Glyphosate campaign

### Preparation

Since the initiative's partners had worked together on a petition to the European Commission in 2015 which successfully raised awareness, they thought that "a European Citizens' initiative was the next step" and a natural extension of their goals.

However, "it was difficult for such a large coalition to agree on how the initiative should be designed". Some partners focused on the link between glyphosate and cancer, others on the protection of biodiversity, and others on corporate power. They had to work hard to make sure that all their interests were taken into consideration and represented in the initiative.

They set up a decision-making circle (the 'Organising Circle') and 10 different representatives from the main organisations met each week to deal with the allocation of funds, the communication strategy, registration, the draft of the initiative and its annex, etc.

The initiative's coordinator wrote the first draft and then circulated it to the other partners for comments. Then, they met and went through the suggestions, integrating them into the document over several drafts. The same process was followed with the annex.

The 'Organising Cycle' started to set up the campaign around 6 months before the collection of signatures began. From then onwards, they worked on developing their strategy, resources, and capacities. It is important to mention that this group had already cooperated on other campaigns previously, therefore their alliance building was less time consuming than for most other European citizens' initiatives. Still, the organisers highlight that it is not sufficient to rely exclusively on your existing network.



## | Implementation

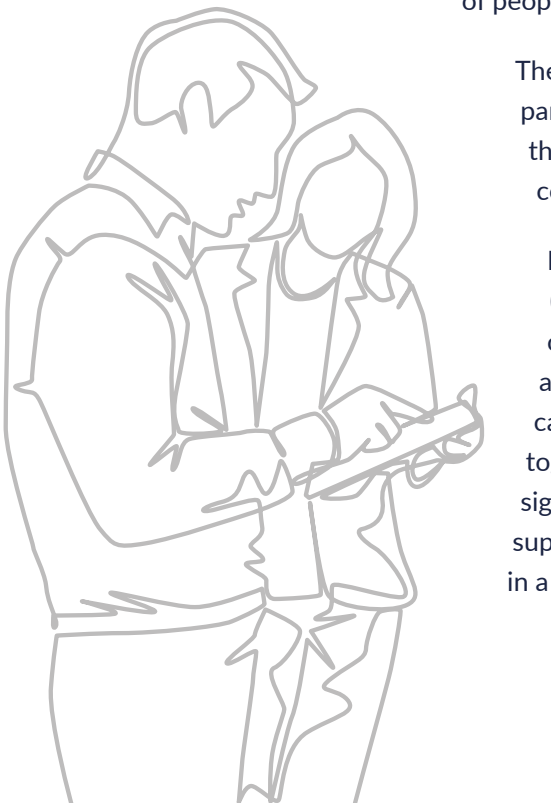
The organisers remarked that “email was the most important medium of the campaign”. Since the campaign was led by a multi-issue online campaigning organisation, they were used to reaching out to their members on a regular basis. Their partners carried out a similar strategy. Whilst the organisers did not focus on engaging with ‘traditional media’, they “encouraged partners to share the content on social media”. However, emails remained their main campaigning tool.

The organisers did not carry out paid online social media campaigns. However, they recognise that today, those tools have become more important. Facebook advertising varies in effectiveness across Member States. In those countries where the collection of signatures is simpler than in others (e.g. where no online ID is required), an advertised post is more likely to actually turn into an official statement of support. Facebook advertising also helps to understand better the origin of the statements of support.

The organisers created a list of national partner organisations that were willing to participate in the campaign and “persuaded them individually to enable signature collection on their websites” via the embedded form. They maintained these contacts and were regularly in touch with them.

Indeed, a stakeholder mapping across Europe was important at the early stages of the campaign. It is important to be aware of the fact that signatures from a specific country can be key and that setting up a network of organisations and influencers is crucial. That was extremely relevant for the success of this campaign: not only relying on their partners but also filling the gaps in the network that were identified at the beginning.

The organisers also state that “it is important to have a campaign website that has been optimised for search engines.” In fact, the website was one of the most common places where people signed the campaign (8-9% of signatures). The multilingualism of a campaign website is key to address a large number of people in their local language.



The organisers also wrote press releases in English and asked their partner organisations to translate them into the official languages of the countries where they were based, including the information and contact details of the local organiser.

Professional national campaigners were hired in three countries (Spain, Italy and France) where WeMove.EU, the initiative’s overall coordinating organisation, had senior campaigners. They also reached other EU countries in the absence of dedicated campaigners based there. Specifically, WeMove.EU organised, together with Campact and GLOBAL2000, one “offline collection of signatures” day. By sending out 5 000 signature collection packs to supporters all over Europe, they collected around 100 000 signatures in a single weekend.

## Collection of signatures

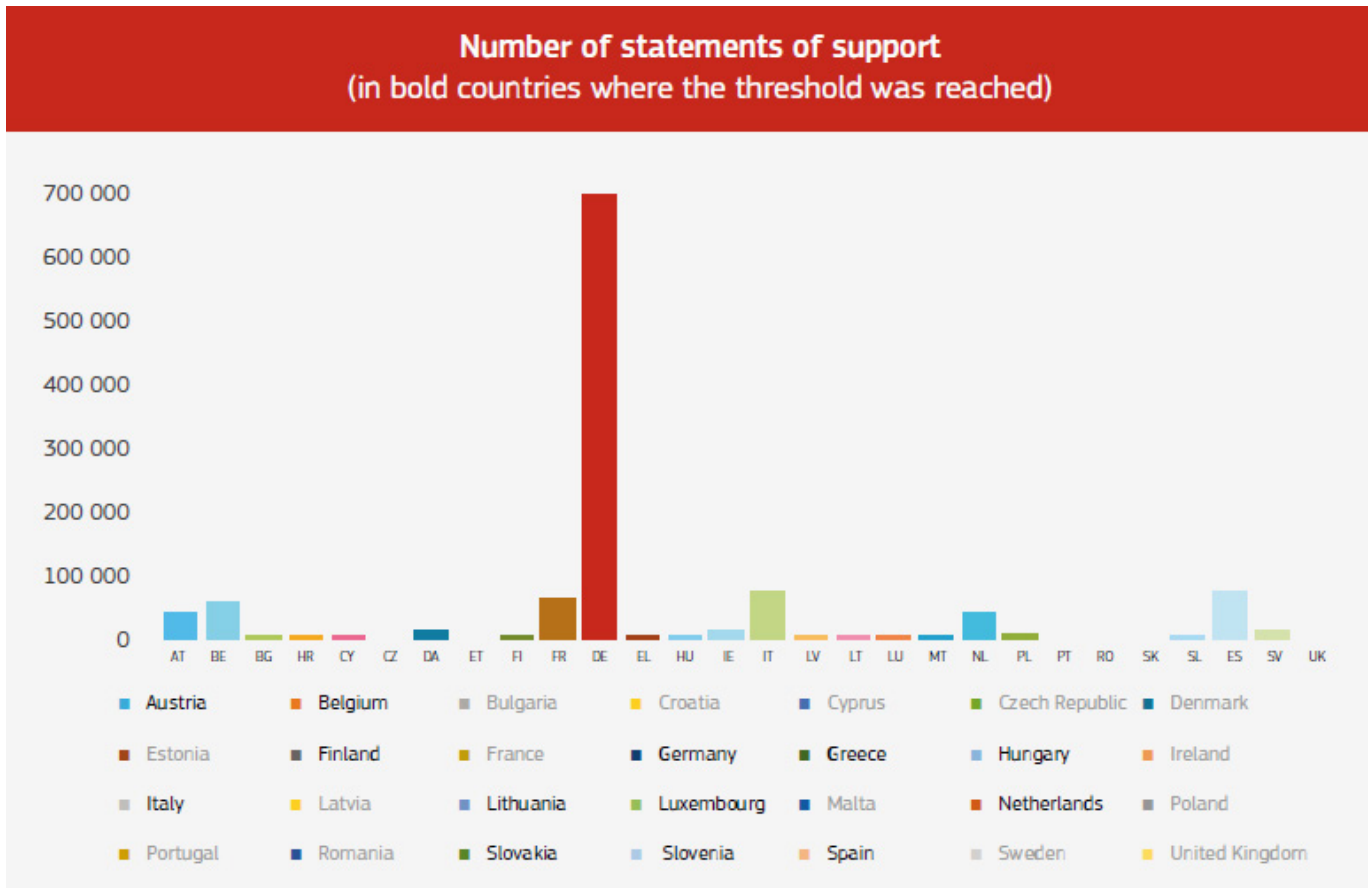
As regards the online collection, they used OpenECI, an online collection software that a number of other initiatives had already used in the past. In addition to providing the signature form, it allowed them to directly gather contact information from their supporters. They could also embed the signature collection form in any website.

Although the official collection period ended on 25 January 2018, the organisers were able to collect 1 million signatures within five months and decided to close the collection early on 2 July 2017. They were also keen to get their signatures certified quickly so that “the initiative could be submitted before the Commission took a decision on continuing the glyphosate license”.

!

## IMPORTANT:

From 01 January 2023, organisers will only be able to use the Central Online Collection System.



## Verification and submission

Although some countries finalised the verification process later than others, the initiative was submitted on 6 October 2017 accompanied by certificates confirming the validity of 1 070 865 statements of support.

# 3

## The impact of the Stop Glyphosate campaign

### Examination and Commission decision

The organisers met with the Commission – First Vice-President Timmermans, Commissioner Andriukaitis and senior officials from various services concerned – on 23 October 2017 (see [press release](#)). On 20 November, the organisers presented their initiative at a [public hearing](#) at the European Parliament.

They chose “the most knowledgeable individuals” for the meeting with the Commission. They followed the same strategy when preparing the public hearing – meeting before to decide what points they wanted to emphasise. Many Members of the European Parliament “were extremely supportive”.

In its [Communication](#) of 12 December 2017 (see [press release](#)), the Commission reached the following conclusions:

- There are no scientific or legal grounds to justify a ban on glyphosate.
- A legislative proposal will be made by the Commission to increase transparency in the evaluation of pesticides and to enhance the quality and independence of the scientific studies that are the basis of the assessments carried out by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).
- The implementation of the Sustainable Use Directive will be revised.

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



## | Follow up

Both the group of coalition organisations as well as individual supporters were contacted via email to be informed about the outcomes of the campaign.

The coalition of organisations remained active - also after having carried out the European citizens' initiative. Together, they tried to influence European legislation on a related topic (general food law). After this law was passed, their coordinated activity slowed down. Still, their email lists remain active today and the organisers stay in touch with their supporters on issues related to their cause.

Individual supporters remained important to the campaign - even after the European citizens' initiative concluded. The organisers explained that "supporters were a crucial power on a later stage" - especially when the general food law was discussed in the European Parliament.



## Hints and tips for future organisers

- Before you launch the initiative, build an online audience with hundreds of thousands of people who you are sure you can rely on to collect signatures. Time runs fast!
- Without a large audience to rely on at the launch, you need to collect around 3 000 new signatures per day organically over the entire one-year collection period.
- Make sure you have a very large group of people ready to start the collection as soon as the initiative has been registered.
- Most of the funds came from the strong member organisations that were promoting the initiative. Encourage member organisations to raise money to support their work during the campaign.
- Closely monitor progress towards your signature collection targets in each country
- Email communication is very important for carrying out a campaign.



## Lessons learned

- "If the Commission is relatively supportive of an initiative's goals, it might be an appropriate tool, but a successful initiative is not going to force the Commission to do something they do not want or are not in a position to do". However, the organisers also note that the tool could always "be used as an 'agenda setting tool' on the European level".
- The initiative was successful in the sense that it reached the 1 million signatures, the organisers met with the Commission, had a public hearing at the European Parliament and received the Commission's response including several follow up actions. However, the organisers are of the opinion that the initiative was unsuccessful because its objectives were not achieved.
- The organisers explained that timing is crucial if you want to make a difference in an ongoing legislative file. This could secure a larger impact in the end.