

# EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE FORUM





# ECI Forum Webinar

Communication approaches and ideas  
for ECI campaigns

*Tuesday 9 October 2018*

Host: Simon Blackley, ESN communication consultant

Guest Speaker: Pablo Sánchez, Right2Water initiative



## Overview of the webinar

- Duration – 50 minutes
- Part 1 – Simon: communication tips
- Part 2 – Pablo: Right2Water experience
- Part 3 – Q&A
- Listening languages – English, French, German, Italian, Polish
- Interaction – submit comments and questions at any time using the chat



## Key challenges

- Citizens' committee (organisers)
  - 7 EU citizens, 7 different Member States
- 1 million statements of support in 12 months
  - from date initiative registered by Commission
- Build and coordinate an effective campaign team
  - different countries, languages and organisations
- Create clear campaign messages
  - leaving room for local adaptation
- Persuade supporters to complete a form
  - the initiative's demands may not go as far as they'd like
  - in some countries the form asks for a lot of personal data



## What you'll need

- Time – be ready on day 1 and don't delay anything
- Campaign team in each participating country
- Central coordination team
- Energy, enthusiasm and creativity
- Campaign plan
- Resources to implement the plan

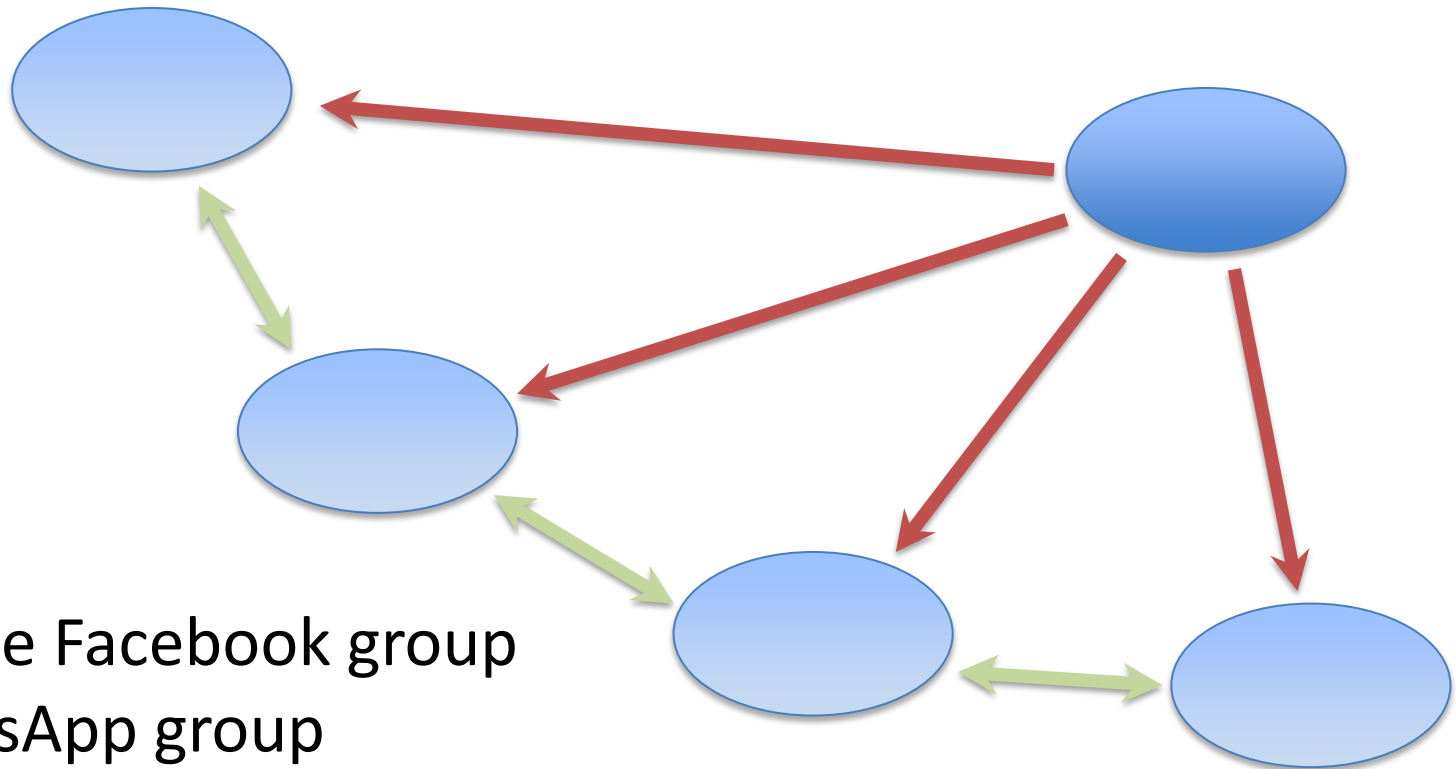


## Get organised

- a strong Europe-wide network
- focus where you are strongest
  - countries where partner and public support is strong
- agree core campaign objectives
- agree financial aspects
  - local funding or pooled resources?
- teams and tools
- meet and start working together



## Hub, spokes and rim



- Private Facebook group
- WhatsApp group
- Slack channel
- scheduled Skype meetings



## Communications plan

- **Pre-launch**
  - establish ecosystem of stakeholders
  - develop and test messages and materials
- **Public campaign**
  - 12 months, 1 million signatures
- **Follow-up**
  - continue to communicate with stakeholders and supporters





## Key target audiences

- In what **groups** will you most easily find signatories?
  - try to get hold of proper research
- Define **personas** for 4-5 typical supporters
  - name, gender, age, profession, interests, affiliations, etc.
  - get to know each persona
- **Where** do the groups gather, online and offline?
- What kind of **language** do they use?
- What **appeals** to them? What turns them off?
- **Differences** between personas, countries?



## For each major action

- Target group(s)
- Channel(s) – social platform, media campaign, physical event
- Key messages
- Media formats
- Time/resources needed
- Start and finish dates
- Target – how many signatures?



## Planning tips

- Design and plan to create cumulative impact
- Go for low-hanging fruit first
- Avoid summer and Christmas holidays
- Capitalise on relevant national/local events



## Key messages

- Explain the **purpose** of the initiative in two or three sentences
  - to your grandmother, next-door neighbour, a 10-year-old
- Distil the explanation into **five words**
- Make sure messages are **positive**
- Also explain the European Citizens' Initiative **process**
  - Why do they need to fill in a statement of support form?
  - How will changing EU law improve the situation?
- **Localise** messages
- **Test** your messages on members of target audience
  - Do they react the way you hoped?
  - Fine-tune and test again



## Website – get the basics right

- **Easy to find** – register a short, relevant, memorable domain name
- **Multilingual** – in the languages of each of your campaign countries
- **Explanatory** – clear, short explanations
  - the problem your initiative addresses
  - the solution you hope for
  - the European Citizens' Initiative process and timescale
- **Motivating** – report the number of signatures gathered in each country, and the running total in close-to-real time
- **Useful** – provide links to other *relevant* information
- **Call to action** – display a prominent button to go to the online collection system



## Social media strategy

- Partners' existing Facebook pages or a dedicated campaign page?
- One central page (with content in several languages) or one in each campaign country?



## Social media planning

- Identify **target communities**
- Select the **social platform** those communities use
- Identify **intermediaries and influencers** with big followings
- Develop and test **appropriate material and messaging**
- Roll out the campaign in **waves**
- **Promote** posts that work well organically
- **Monitor** results carefully
  - Where do people drop out on the way to the online collection system?
  - What is the blockage? Can you fix it?



## Social media tips

- Respond to comments and questions
- Be polite but firm with trolls, block persistent haters
- Be patient – not everyone will sign immediately
- Encourage intermediaries and influencers to share key posts
- Use relevant conferences or TV programmes and their hashtags to reach new groups





## Social media communication

- **Multimedia** content – infographics, GIFs, photographs, short video
- **Multilingual** assets can be used in all target countries
  - wordless video accompanied by short text in the appropriate language
- Use a single international campaign **hashtag**
- Drive traffic to your **website**
- Encourage supporters to **share** campaign content
- **Monitor** the results
- **Repeat and replicate** what works best in each country
- **Refine or drop** what does not work so well



## Other channels

- Only attend **relevant** events
  - Look for **speaking** opportunities
- Training persuasive **volunteers** is a better use of resources than printing leaflets
- **Postcards or cards** with campaign slogan, URL and hashtag
- **Simple photocopied sheets** explaining difficult terms and why personal data is necessary
- Cultivate **personal** links with interested journalists
- Train one press **spokesperson** in each office



## For more information...

### Guidance notes

- [Procedural steps](#) – the successive phases of an initiative
- [How to look for partners](#) – practical tips and hints
- [How to draft an initiative](#) – legal requirements and practical advice
- [How to campaign](#) – common sense advice on promoting your initiative
- [How to collect signatures](#) – often the hardest step
- [How to raise funds](#) – for your campaign

### Success stories

- [One of us](#) – pro-life initiative with papal backing
- [Right2Water](#) – the impact of prime-time TV coverage
- [Stop Glyphosate](#) – building on an existing pan-European network
- [Stop Vivisection](#) – the power of large groups of volunteers

### Previous webinars

- [Procedural steps and tips for drafting an initiative](#) (BG, DE, EN, FR, IT)
- [How to look for partners](#) (DE, EN, ES, FR, IT)

### Forum newsletter

- [Sign up now!](#)

### European Citizens' Initiative promotional materials

- [Free materials in all EU languages](#)

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*The ECI Forum is a pilot project, operated by a consortium of three organisations – ESN, ECAS and CARSA – on behalf of and under contract to the European Commission.*