
Part I – The First European Citizen’s Initiatives

0. An Overview of the First Two Years of the European Citizens’ Initiative

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ECI Campaign coordinator Carsten Berg and researcher Paweł Głogowski outline some basic facts from the first two years of the ECI. They look at how many ECIs were begun, how many were rejected, what subjects were covered, from which countries signatures came and how many signatures were collected online and on paper. They also take an in-depth look at the three ECIs which each collected over one million signatures.

Over 5 million signatures were collected.

1,000s of conversations and debates took place among European citizens.

100s of events were organized by citizens’ groups across Europe.

These are some of the first quantitative results of the introduction of the European Citizens’ Initiative.

Out of 40 proposed ECIs, 23 were registered and 17 were rejected

Between its entry into force on 1 April 2012 and 1 March 2014, 40 initiatives submitted an application for registration to the European Commission. Of those, 23 initiatives were accepted for registration by the Commission and started the very involved and challenging ECI signature gathering process. A surprisingly high number – 17 proposed ECIs – were declared inadmissible by the Commission for being “outside the Commission’s competence”.

Of the 23 ECIs registered, two were withdrawn and never resubmitted. Four ECIs “gave up” and stopped collecting signatures before the end of their 12-month signature collection period, but did not officially withdraw.

As of 1 March 2014, 13 ECIs have ended and eight are still ongoing. Out of these, three ECIs have managed to collect over one million signatures from at least seven member states.

This is a first general summary of the ECI in numbers. From these numbers it is clear that citizens actually have made use of the ECI. Furthermore, as Table 1 shows, they have used it for very diverse subjects, including the environment, reproduction, animal protection, education, health and market liberalisation.

Table 1 – The First 21 European Citizens’ Initiatives

#	Official title	Time-frame	Subject-matter	Web page	Signatures
1	Fraternité 2020 – Mobility. Progress. Europe	09.05.2012 – 01.11.2013	Enhancement of EU youth exchange programmes.	en.fraternite2020.eu	71,412
2	Water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity!	10.05.2012 – 01.11.2013	Right to clean drinking water and sanitation.	right2water.eu	1,840,486

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#	Official title	Time-frame	Subject-matter	Web page	Signatures
3	One of Us	11.05.2012 – 01.11.2013	Juridical protection of the dignity and the right to life of every human being.	oneofus.eu	1,897,588
4	Stop Vivisection	22.06.2012 – 01.11.2013	Phasing out animal experiments.	stopvivisection.eu	1,326,807
5	High Quality European Education for All	16.07.2012 – 01.11.2013	Adoption of common education goals reflecting EU basic values.	euroedtrust.eu	No data
6	Pour une gestion responsable des déchets, contre les incinérateurs	16.07.2012 – 01.11.2013	Harmonisation of laws in terms of waste neutralization.	ice.id.st	754
7	Suspension of the EU Climate & Energy Package	08.08.2012 – 01.11.2013	Suspension of the 2009 EU Climate & Energy Package.	-	No data
8	Central public online collection platform for the European Citizens' Initiative	27.08.2012 – 01.11.2013	Creating an Online European Initiatives Platform.	openpetition.de	No data
9	30 km/h – making streets liveable!	13.11.2012 – 13.11.2013	A 30km/h (20mph) EU-wide default speed limit for urban/residential areas.	en.30kmh.eu	46,449
10	Single Communication Tariff Act	03.12.2012 – 03.12.2013	One unique all-inclusive, monthly flat-rate communication tariff within the boundaries of the EU.	onesingletariff.com	No data
11	Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) – Exploring a pathway towards emancipatory welfare conditions in the EU	14.01.2013 – 14.01.2014	Better cooperation between the member states aiming to explore the UBI as a tool to improve their respective social security systems.	basicincome2013.eu	294,578
12	End Ecocide in Europe: A Citizens' Initiative to give the Earth Rights	21.01.2013 – 21.01.2014	Adoption of legislation to prohibit, prevent and pre-empt Ecocide.	endecocide.eu	114,842
13	Let me vote	28.01.2013 – 28.01.2014	EU citizens' right to vote in all political elections in the country of residence.	letmevote.eu	3,500
14	ACT 4 Growth	10.06.2013 – 10.06.2014	Development of female entrepreneurship as a strategy for sustainable economic growth in Europe.	act4growth.org	890
15	Teach for Youth – Upgrade to Erasmus 2.0	17.06.2013 – 17.06.2014	Eliminating educational inequity within the EU.	teachforyouth.wix.com/teachforyouth	421
16	Do not count education spending as part of the deficit! Education is an investment!	06.08.2013 – 06.08.2014	Combat inequality by providing equal opportunities for education and training to all young people in Europe.	invest-in-education.eu	No data
17	European Initiative for Media Pluralism	19.08.2013 – 19.08.2014	Protection of European media pluralism.	mediainitiative.eu	14,780
18	Weed like to talk	20.11.2013 – 20.11.2014	Adoption of a common EU policy on the control and regulation of cannabis.	weedliketotalk.wix.com/wltd	No data
19	European Free Vaping Initiative	25.11.2013 – 25.11.2014	Classification of electronic cigarettes as general purpose recreational products.	efvi.eu	15,234
20	Turn me Off!	03.02.2014 – 03.02.2015	To prohibit the practice of leaving the lights on in shops and offices when unoccupied.	turnmeoffinitiative.weebly.com	No data
21	New Deal 4 Europe – For a European Special Plan for Sustainable Development and Employment	07.03.2014 – 07.03.2015	A public investment plan to help Europe get out of the crisis through the development of the knowledge society and the creation of new jobs.	newdeal4europe.eu	No data

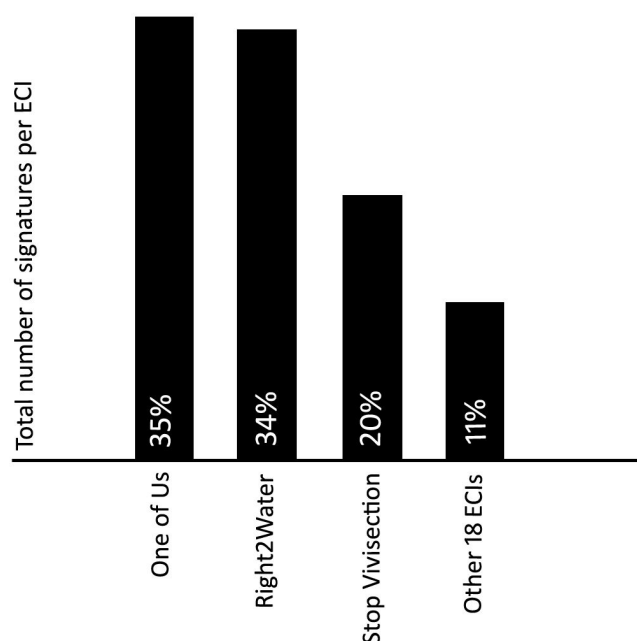
Table 2 – Proposed European Citizens' Initiatives refused registration by the Commission

#	Official title	Date of refusal	Subject-matter
1	My voice against nuclear power	30.05.2012	Future without nuclear power and with a sustainable energy system.
2	Recommend singing the European Anthem in Esperanto	30.05.2012	European Anthem to be sung using specially adapted lyrics in the neutral pan-European language, Esperanto.
3	Strengthening citizens' participation in decision-making on the collective sovereignty	30.05.2012	To ensure European citizens' sovereignty in the recognition of a new EU member state, which democratically separated from another EU member state.
4	Abolition of bullfighting in Europe and the use of bulls in celebrations of cruelty and torture for fun	19.07.2012	Development of an act that sets and develops the scope of Article 13 TFEU.
5	One million signatures for a "Europe of Solidarity"	06.09.2012	To establish the principle of the "state of necessity" to prevent austerity measures from threatening the existence and well-being of a country.
6	Creation of a European Public Bank focused on social and ecological development and solidarity	06.09.2012	States should be able to borrow at very low rates necessary funds for investments to create jobs, develop public services and resolve imbalances.
7	Unconditional Basic Income	06.09.2012	Gain support for the introduction of a universal, individual, unconditional basic income to ensure a life in dignity and participation in society within all member states of the EU.
8	Enforcing self-determination Human Right in the EU	21.01.2013	Proposal for an EU accommodation of the self-determination human right.
9	Together for a Europe without legalised prostitution	18.07.2013	To remove the legalisation of prostitution.
10	Cohesion policy for the equality of the regions and sustainability of the regional cultures	25.07.2013	The cohesion policy of the EU should pay special attention to regions with national, ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics that are different from those of the surrounding regions.
11	Stop cruelty to animals	25.07.2013	To obtain a uniform treatment of animals, by introducing their subjective rights.
12	Minority Safe Pack – one million signatures for diversity in Europe	13.09.2013	To improve the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities and strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity in the Union.
13	To hold an immediate EU Referendum on public confidence in European Government's (EG) competence	29.10.2013	To organise an EU referendum asking: "Should the current failing form of EG be replaced by one without a democratic deficit?"
14	Right to Lifelong Care: Leading a life of dignity and independence is a fundamental right!	05.11.2013	To propose legislation that ensures the fundamental right to human dignity by guaranteeing on a lifelong basis adequate social protection and access to quality sustainable long-term care above and beyond health care.
15	Our concern for insufficient help for pet and stray animals in the European Union	06.11.2013	The residents, workers and tourists in the EU shall be able to live and travel in Europe, without fear and without mental and physical discomfort concerning welfare of pet animals.
16	The Supreme Legislative & Executive Power in the EU must be the EU Referendum as an expression of direct democracy.	23.01.2014	The EU legal system must immediately provide the legal basis for a referendum mechanism independent of member countries' current constitutions.
17	A new EU legal norm, self-abolition of the European Parliament and its structures, must be immediately adopted.	23.01.2014	The EU legal system must immediately provide a legal basis for self-abolition of the European Parliament and its structures if it does not fulfill key EU Treaty regulations.

Almost 90% of signatures from just three ECIs

In respect of the 5.5 million signatures collected by the first 21 ECIs, the first striking observation is that signatures are concentrated within a few ECIs (see Figure 1). Almost 90% of ECI signatures were collected by the three successful initiatives: *One of Us* (35%), *Right to Water* (34%) and *Stop Vivisection* (20%). The remaining 11% of signatures largely come from four closed ECIs: *Unconditional Basic Income*, *End Ecocide*, *Fraternité 2020* and *30 km/h – Making Streets Liveable*. This means that the other six closed ECIs only collected a tiny percentage of total ECI signatures.

Figure 1 – Signature Concentration on few ECIs



Two current ECIs have a hopeful future

Among the eight ongoing ECIs, two have a rather pessimistic future: *ACT 4 Growth* and *Teach for Youth – Upgrade to Erasmus 2.0* have not yet reached 1,000 signatures, yet expire in June 2014. Two others have more hope for future success: the *European Initiative for Media Pluralism* and the *European Free Vaping Initiative*. Each has collected around 15,000 signatures and both still have time to collect more, with deadlines in August and November 2014 respectively.

ECI Divisions: tiny upper class, small middle and large lower class

If one divides the 21 current and completed ECIs into three groups according to the number of collected signatures one could identify a small “upper class” of three millionaires (ECIs which have collected more than one million signatures), a small “middle class” of four ECIs concentrated on the lower end (ECIs which collected between 40,000 and 300,000 signatures) and a large “lower class” of 14 ECIs with fewer than 40,000 signatures.

The categorisation does not only correspond to the number of signatures collected by each group, but also to the level of organisation and funding. This shows that in the current ECI framework ECI organisers must either have stable funding or a huge pan-European network of volunteers.

Without at least one of these two elements, collecting one million signatures in 12 months seems like a “mission impossible”.

A special focus on the first three successful ECIs

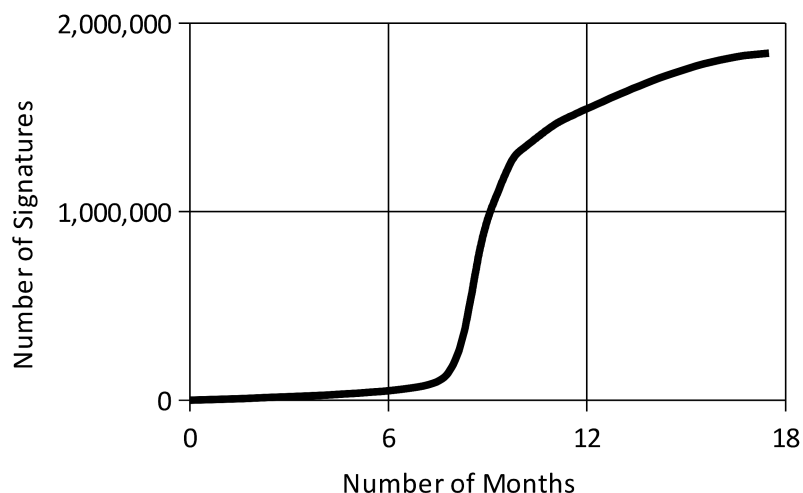
The ECIs *Right to Water*, *One of Us* and *Stop Vivisection* are the pioneers among the first of more than 40 attempts to set the EU agenda. All of them have hit the magic hurdle of one million statements of support. However, they each reached their goal in very different ways. A closer look at the growth rates of signatures offers interesting insights into each individual campaign’s design and infrastructure.

All ECIs began to collect significant numbers of signatures relatively late in their campaigns. This is probably related to the dysfunctional online signature collection system software (OCS) which stopped many ECI campaigns for several months and led the Commission to extend official deadlines. Only *Right to Water* would have succeeded within its original 12-month deadline. The other two ECIs each had an impressive “last sprint”, collecting significant numbers of signatures during their final months.

Right to Water was the best-prepared and equipped campaign among all of the first ECIs. With 100,000 Euros fundraised before starting the campaign and with a similar amount of money raised in member states like Germany, this campaign was able to start with an ideal infrastructure. The funds were used for paid staff and the manifold tasks connected with an ECI. In particular, funds were used for practical and organisational issues such as translations, the registration, legal expertise, the development of the website, the facilitation of the online collection system, regular newsletters and volunteer and signature return management.

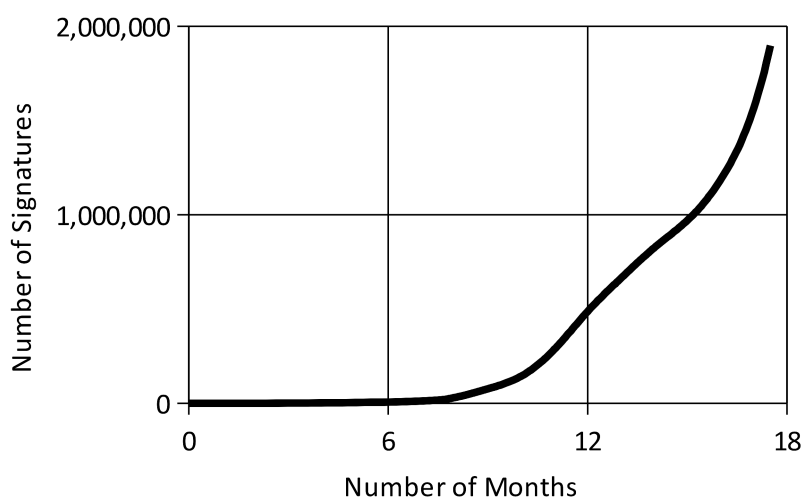
Even though *Right to Water* was well prepared, it too had a long phase before it took off with signature gathering. After the first six months, only 3.5% of the necessary signatures had been collected. Their real success only began after a German national TV report on water privatisation caused large-scale “snowball effects”. Within eight weeks after this TV report, more than one million signatures had been collected, primarily in Germany and online. This made this ECI the first to reach the million signature goal.

Figure 2 – Right to Water – Signature Gathering Graph



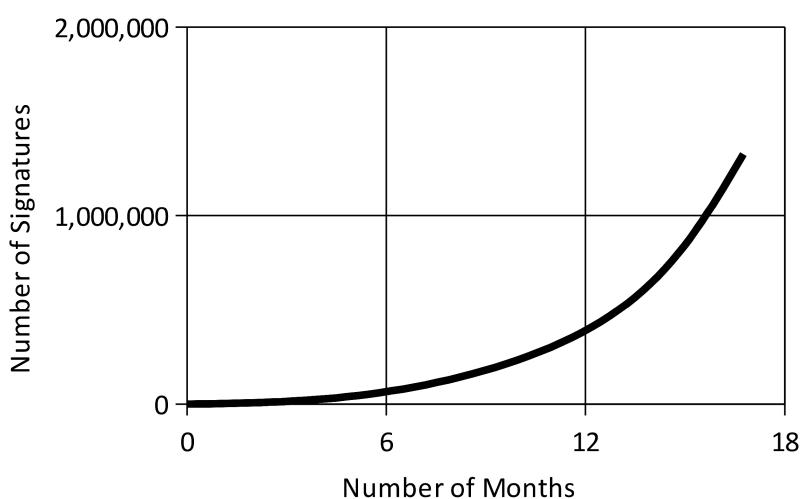
The ECI *One of Us* experienced a similar slow start. However there was no “big bang” event that helped them to take off. Instead one can observe a very steady growth which gives evidence of a solid campaign team and stable infrastructure. General media attention was relatively low key but it received prominent support from both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis. This ECI was backed by thousands of volunteers who largely collected signatures on paper. But it also received a considerable amount of funds at 160,000 Euros. All of these factors combined to make the ECI *One of Us* currently the largest ECI in history with 1.9 million supporters.

Figure 3 – One Of Us – Signature Gathering Graph



In stark contrast to the first two successful ECIs, which had significant funding and professionalised campaigns, the ECI *Stop Vivisection* is the first successful ECI which was purely driven by volunteers. Its tiny budget of only 14,000 Euros makes this ECI all the more impressive. They also had to wait six months until their online signature collection system (OCS) started to work. As of July 2013, four months before the end of their deadline, they had only collected 500,000 signatures. A large percentage of these were collected on paper. Only an intense and expansionary use of the internet changed things. This ECI had the best social media traction which brought an impressive addition of nearly 800,000 signatures during its final months.

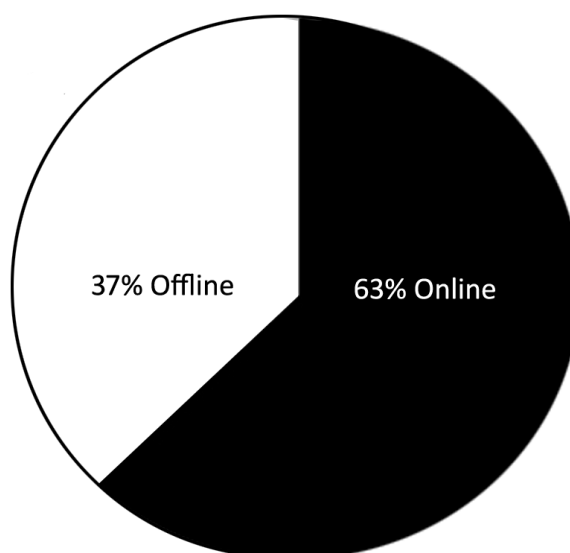
Figure 4 – Stop Vivisection – Signature Gathering Graph



Over 1/3 of all ECI signatures were collected on paper

The decision to collect signatures online or on paper is probably one of the crucial questions which ECI organisers have to ask themselves before starting the signature collection. While the media have often portrayed the ECI as primarily an e-participation tool, current experience shows that the ECI is not only an online tool. In fact, most ECIs use *both* paper and online signature collection.

Figure 5 – Offline versus Online Signatures



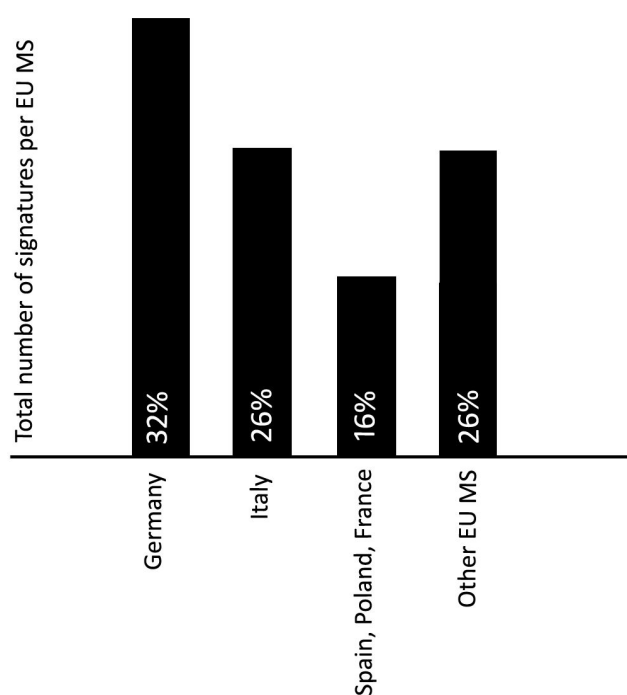
Of all the signatures collected by all ECIs, 37% were collected on paper. The *One of Us* ECI collected 65% of their almost 1.9 million signatures on paper. The *Stop Vivisection* ECI collected 44% and the *ECI Right to Water* collected 18% of their signatures on paper. Smaller ECIs have also collected signatures on paper: 18% of signatures for *30 km/h* ECI and 7% for *End Ecocide*.

Paper signature collection brings with it additional challenges. Signatures collected on paper have been declared invalid by national authorities at much higher rates than those collected online (see also the [interview with Axel Minrath and Ulrich Schmitz, page 93](#)). Paper forms are sometimes illegible and ECI supporters fail to include essential information like ID numbers. Paper signature collection also requires many more campaign workers and is more risky in terms of data protection liability than online collection. However, if the data requirements were to be reduced, it could be much more effective, making the whole ECI instrument more participatory.

Most ECIs from large member states

Given the basic data on the overall number of signatures, it is interesting to analyse their origin in the individual member states of the European Union.

Figure 6 – Signature Concentration on few Member States



Just two countries, Germany and Italy, lead the field for ECI signatures collected. Around 32% of all ECIs signatures have been collected in Germany and 26% in Italy. Next come Spain, Poland and France, which altogether collected 16% of all signatures.

Part of this is related simply to the size of the country. It is not surprising that five of the six largest EU states collected 74% of all ECI signatures. The UK is an exception. Only 1.5% of total ECI signatures have been collected from UK citizens. ECI rules have prevented many UK citizens living abroad from supporting an ECI, but this is probably not the main reason for this low participation rate.

Country support also seems to be tied to campaign presence in different countries, as well as the relevance of the issue in a country. For example, the ECI *Right to Water* benefited from a strong German campaign team as well as national media coverage of water privatisation. The ECI *One of Us* drew strong support in predominantly Catholic countries such as Italy, Poland, Spain and France. The ECI *Stop Vivisection* was aided by the strong involvement of Italian animal rights organisations and collected the largest number of its signatures from Italians.

Details on the number of signatures by country, when available, are included in the articles about individual ECIs.

Carsten Berg successfully campaigned for the adoption of the ECI at the 2002-2003 Convention on the Future of Europe and has since worked as the Coordinator of The ECI Campaign to ensure a citizen-friendly implementation of the ECI.

Paweł Głogowski is a researcher and active member of The ECI Campaign core team.

The text, tables and figures in this file are a part of the book:

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14 analytic and prospective contributions, and two interviews.

You may order the book by email: contact@citizens-initiative.eu

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