
2. One of Us

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Editor's summary: This ECI was launched by national pro-life movements to put the issue of life on the EU agenda. It asks the EU not to finance activities that destroy human embryos. It is an atypical example of an extraordinarily well-coordinated and successful campaign run by highly motivated volunteers who collected the majority of signatures on paper, rather than online. Like other ECI campaigns, it encountered challenges with the online collection system, limited financial resources, building an EU-wide network and attracting media coverage.

An ECI to end EU financing of activities that destroy human embryos

The objective of the ECI *One of Us* is the protection of the human embryo. A recent European Court of Justice judgment, *Brüstle vs. Greenpeace*, defined the human embryo as the beginning of the development of the human being. This ECI asks the EU to end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos, in particular in the areas of research, development aid and public health.

This ECI addresses regulations (EC) No 1905/2006 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation and (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002, that decides the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities.

Using the ECI to put life issues on the EU agenda

Great importance has been given to the new ECI tool as an appropriate way to reduce the so-called "democratic deficit" in the European Union (EU) and bring citizens closer to the EU. However, the ECI is not different from agenda-setting initiatives at national level; there is no guarantee that the law will be changed if the initiative is successful. Nevertheless, a successful ECI creates considerable political pressure. In politics, no achievement is everlasting or unchangeable.

It is important to underline the fact that the *One of Us* ECI is a unique initiative with a concrete legislative proposal to the EU institutions. We realise that an ECI cannot change the allocation of competences within the EU. This ECI does not imply any explicit or implicit recognition of EU competences on life issues. It is possible to support this ECI and at the same time affirm that currently the EU has no legal basis for activities in this field.

A successful ECI merits a meaningful political response

With regard to the ECI *One of Us*, it should be noted that very few researchers in very few countries would actually benefit from EU funding for controversial stem cell research. It is also unlikely that the funding of abortion in third countries really has great support in the wider public.

The ECI is a new instrument, which has been heralded as introducing a new era of participatory democracy in the EU. *One of Us* is one of the very first ECIs. It has collected significantly more signatures than required by the ECI regulation. Therefore, if the EU decided not to change the law as this ECI proposes, the price to pay in terms of credibility would be rather high.

The best possible outcomes of this ECI would be that: 1) the EU Financial Regulation will be changed as proposed; 2) a new EU-wide pro-life movement is created; and 3) politicians become aware that the right to life is a concern shared by many voters and that they need to take account of this.

Official EU and member state support structures were helpful

The official support structures offered by the EU institutions and member state governments were very helpful to our ECI campaign. We especially appreciated the technical help and training from the Commission regarding the online signature collection certification procedure, as well as the use of the Commission's servers in Luxembourg. Advice from the Commission's Secretariat General regarding the legal aspects and contacts with member state authorities was equally helpful. The structure created across the EU, especially with the national committees and national coordinators, with central coordination being based in Brussels, worked well.

Regular EU-wide progress reports kept volunteers motivated

A horizontal and vertical information flow within the campaign structure was absolutely key to our ECI's success. Specifically, every week, all national coordinators received the latest figures on signatures collected all over the EU. Our supporters could thus participate in and be informed throughout the campaign of its evolution not only in their own country, but in other countries as well. Daily reports and website updates were also part of campaign facilitation.

It was particularly important for all country coordinators to know when a new country had reached the required minimum number of signatures or when a country had a special signature collection date. Nothing was more encouraging than seeing fellow campaigners in other European regions and countries succeed.

Setting a series of clear goals helped the campaign make steady progress

It was very important to set different goals during the ECI campaign, both country-specific and EU-wide. We also always let national coordinators know of their country's progress towards each goal.

Our *first* goal was to meet the minimum signature requirements in seven countries, as required in the regulation. Our *second* goal was to collect 1,000,000 signatures. Our *third* goal was to collect 1,200,000 signatures. This is because 20% of the signatures could be invalidated by the national authorities. Fortunately, more than 90% of our signatures were accepted. Our *fourth* goal was to collect 1,500,000 signatures. Our *fifth and final* goal was to be the ECI to collect signatures from the largest number of countries and have the largest total number of signatures.

Campaign encountered OCS and organisational challenges

We did, however, encounter some challenges. Specifically, we had technical difficulties at the beginning, mainly related to the certification procedure for the online signature collection system (OCS). We also had difficulty creating a network of contacts and a solid structure in the member states to coordinate the campaign at the national level. Furthermore, we were handicapped by a lack of promotion of our ECI in the general media. We also lacked funds to develop the campaign from the central office in Brussels and within the member states.

Solid national pro-life movements and committees essential to success

Countries with solid pro-life movements, such as Poland and Italy, were essential to our success. The work and objectives set by strong national committees in France, Germany and Spain contributed to success in those countries. We collected the fewest number of signatures in countries where we lacked a solid national committee and where we had a very limit budget for campaign supporters.

It should also be noted that we collected most of our signatures on paper, at tables set up by volunteers at events. Specifically, we collected 1,235,260 signatures on paper and 662,328 signatures online (see [table on page 28](#)).

Ana del Pino is Campaign Manager of the ECI One of Us. www.oneofus.eu

Table – Offline versus Online Collection – Final Figures November 2013

<i>Country</i>		<i>Signatures Collected</i>			<i>Country Quota</i>	<i>Relation Paper/Online</i>
<i>Code</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>on Paper</i>	<i>Online</i>	<i>Total</i>		
AT	Austria	21,571	10,972	32,543	14,250	66% / 33%
BE	Belgium	1,291	4,851	6,142	16,500	21% / 79%
BG	Bulgaria	254	807	1,061	13,500	24% / 76%
CY	Cyprus	2,779	4,082	6,861	4,500	41% / 59%
CZ	Czech Republic	-	12,079	12,079	16,500	0% / 100%
DE	Germany	144,448	29,689	174,137	74,250	83% / 17%
DK	Denmark	5,247	2,516	7,763	9,750	68% / 32%
EE	Estonia	3,740	1,231	4,971	4,500	75% / 25%
EL	Greece	32,500	21,777	54,277	16,500	60% / 40%
ES	Spain	121,674	45,817	167,491	40,500	72% / 27%
FI	Finland	-	1,260	1,260	9,750	0% / 100%
FR	France	32,285	74,711	106,996	55,500	30% / 70%
HR	Croatia	4,621	11,628	16,249	9,000	29% / 71%
HU	Hungary	43,914	8,892	52,806	16,500	83% / 17%
IE	Ireland	5,910	4,892	10,802	9,000	55% / 45%
IT	Italy	533,591	97,433	631,024	54,750	85% / 15%
LT	Lithuania	10,070	1,713	11,783	9,000	85% / 14%
LU	Luxembourg	5,217	421	5,638	4,500	93% / 7%
LV	Latvia	11,195	2,000	13,195	6,750	85% / 15%
MT	Malta	2,103	23,171	25,274	4,500	8% / 92%
NL	Netherlands	5,631	21,947	27,578	19,500	20% / 80%
PL	Poland	141,899	107,066	248,965	38,250	57% / 43%
PT	Portugal	62,555	11,106	73,661	16,500	85% / 15%
RO	Romania	5,844	131,201	137,045	24,750	4% / 96%
SE	Sweden	1,530	1,484	3,014	15,000	51% / 49%
SI	Slovenia	1,820	2,603	4,423	6,000	41% / 59%
SK	Slovakia	28,150	4,631	32,781	9,750	86% / 14%
UK	United Kingdom	5,421	22,348	27,769	54,750	20% / 80%
EU	<i>Signatures</i>	1,235,260	662,328	1,897,588	1,000,000	65% / 35%
	<i>“Significant” Countries</i>	12	10	19	7	

Bold numbers mean that the Country Quota is reached.

Source: www.oneofus.eu/situation-per-country

The text and the table in this file are a part of the book:

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