

WeMove Europe gGmbH



WeMove Europe gGmbH - Activity report 2020

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Foundation

WeMove Europe gGmbH was founded on 11/03/2016 as a 100% daughter organization of WeMove Europe SCE mbH.

The non-profit “We Move Europe gGmbH” – Society for EU-wide education, Democracy, international understanding and Environmental protection – promotes education, democratic principles, European political discourse for, and by, European citizens and fosters international understanding and action within the European community on matters such as the climate crisis.

Given that the European Union has issued the biggest economic stimulus package ever, for the post-COVID-19 recovery, financed through an EU budget, promising a greener, more digital and resilient Europe, it is all the more important that European citizens are educated about, and given access to, instruments of democracy, so that their voices may be heard when it comes to protecting the Environment. The EU works best when citizens are engaged, for example by creating their own petitions addressing European institutions through instruments of citizen participations made available by the European Commission.

This provides citizens the ability to directly critique and learn about European institutions.

Precise Activities & Charitable causes

Introduction

In 2020, WeMove Europe gGmbH launched a variety of campaigns or was called upon by civil society partners to support them in solidarity, including through our participatory tool YouMove Europe.



Our work consists of processing topics in an accessible and understandable way and making them easily accessible digitally to our European community.

2020 in short:

We have made a significant contribution to environmental protection with campaigns to save forests, against fossil fuels, against toxins in everyday products and plastic waste.

We have managed to bring topics such as gene drives closer to a broad mass of people. On the one hand, these topics are so technically complicated that scientists still have questions about their effects, but on the other hand, it is already clear that our environment will be affected by them in the long run.

With other campaigns on the situation at Europe's external borders, we have campaigned for compliance with the rule of law and democratic principles within the EU and especially at Europe's external borders.

In the spirit of international understanding and tolerance, we have advanced expressions of solidarity with democracy and human rights movements in the United States of America and Belarus.

This report is a short introduction to the outcome of our campaigns in 2020, presented in accordance with the mission reflected in the statutory purposes in our statutes.

Through our digital campaigning, we promote usage and development of possibilities for the internet as a medium for political discussion and involvement in the EU government. European Citizen Initiatives (ECI) is one of the available tools for civic engagement where WeMove Europe gGmbH is acknowledged for its expertise, which places us in the role as advising collaborator with organisations launching ECIs. In 2020, WeMove Europe gGmbH cooperated in two ECI initiatives organised by larger coalitions, and as well participated with a financial contribution toward the coordination of the ECI 'Save Bees and Farmers'

Purpose: Education

WeMove Europe gGmbH promotes education through civic education and dissemination about political decision-making processes in the legislative EU branches.

Moratorium on Gene Drive Organisms

Gene drive is a new technology that develops genetically engineered mosquitoes, flies and rats raised in laboratories. This is still in the experimentation process, but if released into nature, they could potentially destroy entire ecosystems and species.



WeMove members helped to finance an [opinion poll](#) which showed the majority of Europeans want to ban this specific technology until all risks are assessed and it can be considered safe and unharmed for the environment.

Through a petition, 285,502 people in Europe have called on the EU to prevent the release of gene drive organisms into the environment and to work for a global moratorium on the release of gene drive organisms.

"A huge risk for humanity and biodiversity. Once again, the industry does not want to spend time nor money to estimate it before releasing this risk into the wild. Who is to decide upon this, us all or just a few ?", says a member of the WeMove community who signed the petition.

Thousands of messages from active members of our community who care about the environment were sent to environmental ministries across the EU, leading up to the decisions on the issue.

The EU ended up recommending a call on a global moratorium to release the gene drives until we can assess the risks.

The charitable causes this serves are protection of the environment and education. Through our initiative, we made "Gene Drives" a very difficult and technical topic accessible for thousands of people across Europe. The results of the poll was shared to media across Europe, promoting what citizens expected in terms of protection of nature and the environment.

Purpose: Democratic State

WeMove Europe gGmbH promotes democratic governance by encouraging respect for the rule of law and transparency.

Europe, Support a Free Belarus

In response to the election fraud in Belarus, our community called for Alexander Lukashenko not to be recognized as President of Belarus and for the opposition leader, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, to be recognized instead:

We called to support democracy. The EU must support this issue and take responsibility for it. We see that the role of the EU is to advocate for democratic elections abroad.



The initiative started in Poland, the neighboring country of Belarus, and it was important not only to engage in Poland, but also to reach out to the EU institutions. In September 2020, the EU Council made the decision not to recognize Lukashenko. 91,500 people signed this petition with our partners Akcja Demokracja, Declic, Skiftet, aHang, #aufstehn, Uplift. This is an open

campaign. We will continue to act with partners.

Purpose: internationalism, tolerance in all areas of culture and the idea of international understanding

Promoting common bonds and direct communication between citizens from all over the EU.

Global Solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter

Our digital campaigning partners at MoveOn in the US organised a call-out for solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and invited us to join.

We responded to the call and WeMove Europe's members, together with members of 20 other organisations across the world, sent a strong message of support to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, during the outbreak of the protests in the US.



A campaign was launched with a message from a staff member of MoveOn and Black Lives Matter to our English, Italian and German communities. In total 153,000 signatures were collected from around the world, of which around 50,000 signatures of support came from WeMove Europe members.

As a result of the campaign, an advertisement was placed in the New York Times on June 19th, a big day of action for Black Lives Matter and the anniversary of the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the US.

Our participation and dissemination in this action, arise from our purpose of international spirit, tolerance and international understanding. The campaign contributes to denounce and fight racism.

Purpose: protection of the environment

Romania - save Europe's last large virgin forests!

We supported a petition started by EuroNatur Foundation (Germany) and Agent Green (Romania) on our YouMove platform, asking the Romanian government to consider the will of all the people who signed the petition and act for the protection of the paradise forests.



After the petition was handed over to the Romanian government in June 2020, the government promised to stop logging in national parks.

As part of the campaign, justice was also sought for Liviu Pop, a forest ranger who was shot trying to protect the forest.

Protecting Romanian forests means protecting some of the last habitats for wildlife, and protecting the homes of Europe's largest and most healthy populations of bears, wolves and lynx.

When we stand up for forests, we also stand up for the safety of those, like Liviu Pop, who work hard to protect nature.

It took 15 months of persistent efforts by all partners involved, from mid 2019 to August 2020, to bring this campaign to a success, resulting in 136,420 signatures being collected. In the midst of the campaign, the European Commission also put Romania under pressure and threatened Romania with an infringement procedure.

WeMove members reacted very emotionally about the topic of the forests. We received endearing messages about how forests in all corners of the world matter to all humanity and how Europe in particular is responsible to protect its nature locally.

Our signees gave us the following feedback: *"Nature is all we have. It gives us the air we breathe and it has to be preserved. Too much has been damaged already", WeMove Europe signee*

This is an article, that one of our partner organisations published:

<https://www.euronatur.org/en/about-euronatur/press-room/press-releases/detail/news/more-than-122000-people-are-demanding-the-protection-of-the-romanian-virgin-forests/>

This campaign serves our charitable cause of environmental protection. It was a true grassroots work which our community brought to the European level through our engagement to raise international understanding for this cause, in the spirit of solidarity.

Act now: single-use plastics ban under threat

Plastic is everywhere: in our food, in plants and even in the placentas of unborn babies.



We moved the EU to ban single use plastics in 2019. This year, we campaigned to stop companies from undoing our win, as they try to water down the guidelines on how to implement the plastics ban at a national level.

Member states have to transpose the ban by July 3 2021. As we are moving towards 2021, we are fighting back against companies who are trying to change the wording of the implementation guidelines, so that items like single-use packets of crisps can be considered reusable. This would effectively cancel our win and therefore we continue to campaign as the European Commission has not yet adopted the guidelines. We work with partners Rethink Plastic and Break Free from Plastic.

In 2021, we plan for a follow up campaign aimed at replacing all single-use plastic with reusable systems, including the collection, cleaning and reusing of packaging.

This campaign showed that it's possible to bring people together from all corners of Europe, to demand a more sustainable and responsible world. 155,835 people signed our petition to make sure we stop plastic, initially with a ban on the use of single-use plastic. Thanks to the mobilisation of citizens across Europe, we managed to get the European Commission to draft a second much stronger version of the Single-use plastic Guidelines in December 2020. However since then, the industry has been pushing back to revert to the previous and much weaker draft of the guidelines. We've called on the European Commission to stay strong but the outcome is unclear.

The campaign promotes environmental protection and international communication, to come together to achieve a shared goal. Encouraged by our members, our campaign continues:

"Thank you all for all the time and effort you've put in, enabling each one of us who desperately wanted to do something worthwhile to do so. And thanks to all for sticking with it, and continuing to monitor the results."

YouMove Europe

In 2020 there were 77 petition campaigns set up on the YouMove platform in 19 different languages. WeMove ensures continuous maintenance of the platform and support for the organisations running the campaigns, by providing campaigning set-up advice, petition set-up guidance and technical support. To improve our capacity to deliver this support we reinforced our team with an externally hired consultant from June until the end of the year.

Some of the campaigns initiated really took off and grew Europe-wide with WeMove's support and promotion (see specific campaigns in this report, such as the successful campaign on saving Europe's last primordial forests in Romania and seeking justice for Liviu Pop, the forest ranger who was shot trying to protect the forest).

After a couple of years of further (technical) developments of the platform, 2020 was the year of testing its new outfit and preparing for the relaunch of the platform. With extra

external capacity and in-house tech staff, a smooth transition was ensured from the rapid growth in recent years to running a more stable YouMove environment and maintain a steady development going forward. While some technical developments and maintenance will always be required, this year's focus was on giving content and user guidance support.

There was a small decrease in usage of the platform in this transition period and from the YouMove petitions in 2020 we received about 264,000 new contacts (in 2019: 564,000) and YouMove petitions collected 400,000 signatures in total (in 2019: 806,000 signatures).

The team

WeMove Europe gGmbH has in 2020 benefitted from the internal capacity of the small and committed WeMove Europe gGmbH team remaining after the temporary expansions in 2019. This team, plus in addition external consultancy reinforcement for the YouMove project in the second half of the year, has ensured a wider and increasing campaigning output in 2020. The approach and work efforts for fundraising have come under review and after some years of experience with a fundraiser role on the team, it was closed in August 2020.

Financial Development

In 2020 we generated 409,000 euros.

The level of reserves remains closely the same in 2020, with a small amount of 24,650 euro retrieved from the project reserves, covering costs in relation to YouMove platform development.

Laura Sullivan (Managing Director)