

WeMove Europe gGmbH

Activity report 2021



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Foundation

WeMove Europe gGmbH was founded in March 2016 as a 100% daughter organisation of WeMove Europe SCE mbH.

The non-profit “We Move Europe gGmbH” is a society for EU-wide education, democracy, international understanding and environmental protection. It fosters action in these fields, within the European community, and promotes European political discourse for, and by, European citizens. Indeed, the EU works best when citizens are engaged and address European institutions through instruments of citizen participation made available by the European Commission, for example through their own petitions. Citizens’ assemblies are also another illustration: recent experiences in Europe have shown how powerful they can be, for example to address climate change.

This empowers citizens, and enables them to learn about and directly engage and communicate with European institutions.

Visual identity

In 2021, work has been concluded on developing a new website and with that, a new WeMove Europe gGmbH logo. They both reflect our new visual identity for communicating our history, experience and expertise in the European digital campaigning space. The official launch of this new visual identity will be in the beginning of 2022. Our new brand has been developed in cooperation with, and is meant to solidify and make it easier to navigate the visual identity relation between WeMove Europe gGmbH and its legal partner WeMove Europe SCE.

Precise Activities & Charitable causes

Introduction

Through communications and a series of online and offline tools, WeMove Europe gGmbH promotes the participation of citizens in political discussions and involvement in the European political agenda. Our YouMove platform also offers Europeans the opportunity to create their own petition campaigns and disseminate them to a wider audience, and bring real change.



Once more, in 2021, WeMove Europe gGmbH is putting its expertise at the service of a European Citizens' assembly. Since June 2021, we have been coordinating the campaigning work around the Climate Citizens' Assembly in Spain. What is at stake here is civil society awareness and involvement in solving the climate crisis. Citizens want to be heard by their political representatives, and WeMove Europe gGmbH is focusing on making this moment of strong civic engagement a model success story for other European countries.

In 2021, WeMove Europe gGmbH also developed new participatory projects, often with partners from civil society. And we decided to scale up two of our 2020 campaigns - related to biodiversity and the end of single-plastic use - because some initiatives need sustained efforts over time to be effective.

Through internet-based educational formats, we were able to make some challenging topics accessible and understandable for all citizens. We informed them about fundamental EU environmental issues, like the improvement of air quality standards, biodiversity preservation from gene drives, the replacing of plastics with reusable systems, or the potential of regenerative agriculture for our farmers. People from all over Europe got involved in these campaigns, sharing ideas in webinars, signing petitions, commenting on them, writing to their representatives and taking action on social media. All these possibilities have been promoted by WeMove Europe, so that people could play their part in the EU democratic space. Also, inviting our community to take part in a climate march before the world COP 26 summit, was a unique occasion to promote internationalism, and generate connections between people from all walks of life.

Here is a detailed presentation of the outcomes of our 2021 campaigns, displayed following the missions reflected in our statutory purposes.

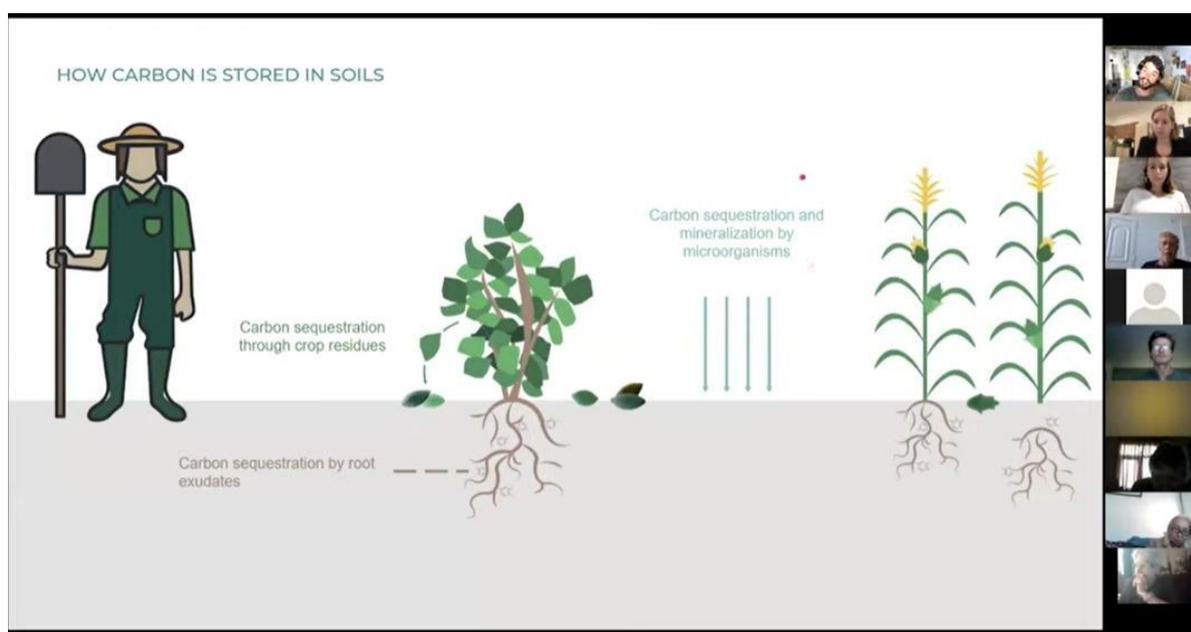
Purpose: Education

WeMove Europe gGmbH contributes to citizenship education by informing its members about the political decision-making processes at EU level. In 2021, again, we used internet-based educational tools. We designed and hosted public information events, and disseminated information online in order to generate citizens' expression and participation on pressing environmental issues.

Webinars “Saving the climate with agriculture”

In September 2021, WeMove Europe gGmbH organised two public webinars to connect with its community from across Europe and, together, learn about the power and potential of regenerative agriculture. One took place in [English](#), the other one in [German](#). The goal of these webinars was educational, trying to answer the questions we regularly receive from our members: what does good farming look like nowadays? What’s the problem with agriculture right now? What has to change? What do farmers say? What would be the alternative to the Common Agricultural Policy? WeMove decided to Inform and engage our community that cares about environmental issues and agriculture.

In the audience, participants could gather online with three experts in agriculture, first



listening to them, and then engaging into a conversation, directly voicing their questions and concerns. The experts have been invited to talk about alternative sustainable farming systems. They represented Climate Farmers, the European Agroforestry Federation, and the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food). Their experience demonstrated that it is possible to restore fertility to our soils, save animals from extinction and fight climate change. The solutions are out there and many people are already working on them.

These online meetings generated a positive feedback from participants, like the following: *‘I find it very impressive what you have initiated and are initiating as WeMove Europe! It is sad that the 'bad' agricultural agreement was signed anyway and the interest expressed by the citizens was and still is paid little attention to. But all the better if you can come up with better alternatives, as I always consider that more effective than demonstrating against something*

existing. Being 'for something' is better and more powerful than being 'against something'. Otherwise, I find it admirable what you are achieving. I say this with a somewhat bad conscience and sense of guilt, because it is the older generation, which I now also belong to, that has done or is still doing considerable damage to the environment and society with its short-sighted and often irresponsible behaviour. That is why I completely stand behind what you are doing and I am happy to support you.” Michaela, Germany

The webinars have been attended live by 350 German members and 150 International English members. Afterwards, we also counted more than 3090 views of recording on Youtube in German, and more than 730 views in English. These webinars allowed to spread awareness about the potential of agroforestry at the European level.

Moratorium on Gene Drive Organisms

Gene drive technology emerged as a new genetic technique of engineering living organisms. But by spreading, they can replace their natural counterparts until they’re eradicated, thus harming biodiversity, human health, agriculture and peace. This is why in 2020, WeMove Europe gGmbH decided to open a public debate about it. During the first phase, our members funded an [opinion poll](#). It highlighted that the majority of Europeans wanted to ban this specific technology. Over 260,000 European citizens also signed the petition to call for a moratorium, to give experts time to find out if Gene Drives are safe.



... In 2021, it went a step further. Our members were given the opportunity to send tweets and emails directly to their environment and agriculture Ministers in eight European countries. Our internet-based format gave them detailed information about the political decision-making frame. Then, European citizens could address personal messages to their representatives, drawing their attention to the implications of releasing any gene drive organisms into nature before we understand and know how to avoid the risks. In total, more than 35,000 mails and around 6,000 tweets have been sent. Combining education and online tools, we promoted what citizens expected from politicians in terms of protection of nature and the environment.

Together with our partners, we are now planning a petition handover to environmental ministers ahead of the next UN conference on biodiversity, postponed to 2022.

Purpose: Democratic State

WeMove Europe gGmbH launches campaigns aiming at the political participation of citizens in EU political decision-making processes. With a simple petition, European citizens have a window to express what they expect from their own political systems. As the role of our platform is to promote democratic principles, we give citizens tools so that they can fully participate in all aspects of their lives.



Protect our health. Clean air now!

Combining health and environmental aspects, our campaign “Clean air for all” reflects the needs of European citizens on issues that affect their daily lives. Air pollution causes asthma, cancers, and chronic diseases. It leads to hundreds of thousands of deaths in Europe every year. This is why more than 70,000 Europeans decided to take political

participation: they signed a WeMove Europe petition related to air quality.

Launched in March 2021 with the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), this campaign took place in German and eight other European languages. All signees decided to use our platform as a tool to get heard as full actors of a living European democracy. The current EU air quality standards are not as strict as the World Health Organization (WHO)’s regularly updated guidelines. They could be based on the latest available science to protect our health, and that’s what the petition calls for.

In May 2021 the EU Commission published its Zero Pollution Action Plan for air, water and soil. Unfortunately, the action plan did not announce alignment with WHO’s guidelines in the upcoming legislative revision of the Ambient Air Quality Directives. Since their update in September 2021, Europe is even further from the WHO’s air quality standards.

In the second half of 2022, the Commission will make a legislative proposal to revise the EU’s air quality standards after running an impact assessment, consulting the directorate-

generals of the Commission and meeting with stakeholders. WeMove Europe gGmbH will continue to call for the harmonisation of the EU's air quality standards with the guidelines set by the WHO, in line with the petition signed by citizens. WeMove Europe gGmbH will deliver the signatures of the petition to the decision makers in 2022.

“As a scientist, I work with citizens who want to monitor their local environment, and who advocate for the importance of better air quality. Smog, soot, fine dust (PM2,5), NO2, WHO research shows its damage to health. Investing in cleaner air has multiple co-benefits for the climate, for our health, and for the liveability of our cities, both in Eastern and Western European cities. From a science-based point of view, better policy is needed, possible, desirable, just, and the right thing to do. The air we breathe is a shared commons that we need every day, it is not a waste bin.” Linda, Netherlands

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

WeMove Europe gGmbH proposes activities creating connections among cultures, and contributing to internationalism. 2021 offered a special opportunity to get full attention from political stakeholders worldwide: the following initiative illustrates WeMove's willingness to contribute both to environmental protection and to international spirit and tolerance.

October March #Back To The Climate



In November, world leaders were to gather at the Glasgow climate change conference. As they would decide their goals for the next 5 years, the moment was key to give strong visibility to citizens' expectations. Together with a coalition of Belgian environmental NGOs, WeMove Europe gGmbH took part in the Brussels massive climate march of October 10, before the COP26 summit. Demonstrations being an instrument of democracy, it was a unique occasion for European citizens to be heard when it comes to protecting the environment at an international level.

WeMove Europe gGmbH decided to take advantage of this moment and an invite has been sent by mail to all our Belgian members, both of the French and the English international language lists of people physically residing in Belgium.

There was a positive perception from our community, as shown by the following mail we received: *“Many of us will participate in the march on Sunday October 10. We are aware of the urgency. Changes are necessary for the future of our common home! Thanks for reminding us!”* Bernadette (Belgium)

Some members came from very far away. Participants were grateful to find posters with climate slogans and designs. The members met us briefly before joining other sections of the march. Our staff and some partners and allies walked within the feminist and queer bloc of the march, where people of all genders were welcome. In total, 70,000 people gathered that day with a clear message : European citizens want to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Purpose: protection of the environment

Rethink packaging



As a follow-up of last year’s campaign [Act now: single-use plastics ban under threat](#), we started a new petition in June 2021, calling on the European Union to go beyond banning single-use plastics and transition all of the European Union to reusable systems. Together with expert partners on plastics, WeMove Europe gGmbH is promoting the most environmentally friendly way we can

deal with waste. [“Choose reuse”](#), motto of this campaign, consists in replacing all single-use plastics with reusable systems, including the collection, cleaning and reusing of packaging. So far, this petition counts 96,360 signatures from all over Europe.



In November 2021, to get exposure for the campaign and attention from European decision-makers, we decided to run advertisements in the Brussels metro. In strategic locations, we featured stories of what Europe would look like if we had strong reusable systems, applied for example to restaurants or bottle deliveries. On that occasion, Anna Cavazzini, member of the European parliament, came with WeMove to view the ads and committed to push for voting for strong reusable systems.

Our community also expressed their willingness to go a step further on that matter, writing testimonies from all over Europe. Here is one of them:

“Not only do they wrap products in excess packaging, but on top of that, they are deceiving us with the size of that packaging, which is often double of what would be necessary. That doubles the use and waste of packaging material. We should start drawing attention to this particular issue and ask legislators to tackle it with determination.” Mercedes (Spain)

The review of the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive is expected in summer/autumn 2022. Reducing waste and the amount of harmful substances it contains represents a major contribution to environmental protection, one of our charitable purposes. We will continue to follow developments and look for opportunities to escalate the campaign.

Purpose: Civic engagement

Citizens' Assembly for Climate in Spain

A citizens' assembly is a democratic tool in which randomly selected ordinary citizens come together to discuss a specific political issue in a structured way. Starting in November 2021, a government-led Climate Citizens' Assembly (CCA) process has started in Spain. The country is thus following other European examples, like in the UK or France. One hundred Spanish citizens started discussing the question "A safer Spain in the face of climate change - how do we do it?". From November, monthly online assembly sessions are being held, continuing in 2022.



The coordination of the campaigning work has been taken forward to WeMove Europe gGmbH. Indeed, in the past years, our entity has conducted Citizens' assemblies in Germany, and can dedicate its expertise to make things happen once again. In accordance with our charitable purposes, our ambition is to mobilise civil society in the process of design, implementation and follow-up of this assembly. With quality and independence as ground principles, we are also aiming at concrete results, like the adoption of the assembly's recommendations after it happened.

This campaign comprised different approaches to engage allies and citizens in making the Spanish CCA a success.

Get civil society on board



We wove decisive alliances in order to trigger Civil society engagement. WeMove established a specific country-wide alliance of NGO workers, grassroots groups activists, academicians, narrative specialists and other interested stakeholders. Called *Marea Deliberativa*, this alliance born in October 2021 is coordinating campaigning work around the assembly, implementing advocacy and campaigning activities, organising regular coordination meetings, liaising with the Ministry, and managing

information flow across partners in Spain and Europe. It is composed of over 40 organisations, movements and individuals.

We also worked in close partnership with existing environmental coalitions of organised civil society, and with KNOCA, a transnational network of climate assemblies experts. We could both learn and share the learning from our own experience.

Generate action and get responses



WeMove Europe gGmbH raised awareness and interest in the process and its outcomes through a series of communications towards its members. Over 112,000 people opened WeMove mailings related to this campaign, and around 5,414 people took part in the following actions.

- In September, over 2,500 people sent tweets or emails to Teresa Ribera, the Spanish Minister for Ecological transition. They [shared their expectations to see the standards of the assembly improved](#). Following this, the Minister called WeMove and Extinction Rebellion for a face to face meeting, where she committed to consider our community's amendments.
- We invited the audience at large to take part into a government's public consultation related to the assembly's work. This step helped determine [citizens' priorities to tackle climate change](#).
- There's also been a very qualitative engagement in smaller-scale events:



- ◆ 100 people took part in an action on the ground in Madrid on 24th October. Our people's assembly organised along the climate march was very well attended and with a vibrant energy throughout. Some key figures noticed the action, and civil society at large became aware of our existence.
 - ◆ In December, over 60 people engaged throughout a 2-hours [digital workshop](#), run both in English and Spanish. It showcased a documentary on the UK Citizens' Assembly on climate, and had its producer as a speaker.
- In the run up to the first session of the CCA, from 13 to 20th November, the public has been invited to watch and share brief videos related to the assembly's challenges. They were posted daily on *Marea Deliberativa's* social media.

Educate and communicate

This Climate citizens' assembly was challenging in terms of public education beyond our community. Combined with our online and offline actions, our media work resulted in national coverage. Done by the coalition emerged from this project, a specific social media work also contributed to give visibility and inform about the CCA's progress.

All along the process, many participants expressed the will that governments need to listen to citizens and take urgent action in the face of the climate crisis. Some testimonies also came from our online community:

"I like the idea of citizens' assemblies: it is a way that democracies get real instead of being mere appearances. Democracy should allow the expression of all opinions and concerns from citizens. My faith in democracy was truly declining a lot. Getting together to try to bend big lobbies, by contributing through contents and ideas to influence opinions and important decisions in Europe, makes me want to participate in these assemblies and restore the authentic sense that the ancient Greeks gave to participation and authentic Democracy."
Patxi, Spain

WeMove Europe gGmbH is still following the CCA process until the end of it in mid-2022, to ensure a quality assembly which is independent, fully funded and with binding results. This work aligns with our goal of empowering citizens to achieve a transformative democracy.

YouMove Europe

The YouMove platform enables citizens from all over Europe to publish their own petitions related to European policies, thus contributing to the public debate. WeMove Europe gGmbH ensures both continuous maintenance of this platform and technical support and advice for any person or group who wants to run a campaign in the European sphere.



By the end of 2021, WeMove Europe gGmbH had put in place a dedicated YouMove team responsible for developing the platform, supporting the initiators of petitions, providing campaigning advice and cooperation with partners.

In the first half of 2021 we've run growth projects focusing on our YouMove community in Poland and in Italy, so as to expand the base of our supporters. As more people engaged in campaigns and more partners/groups initiated campaigns, it strengthened our ability to campaign on issues that citizens find important.

In 2021, a total of 65 new campaigns were set up on the YouMove platform in 8 different languages. YouMove petitions collected almost 713,000 signatures all along the year (a 78% increase compared to last year).

YouMove has been the launch platform of some petitions which took off gaining visibility through WeMove's support. This brought impressive successes, for example for the following campaigns: "Support the Rescue Bill: depenalise abortions in Poland!", "Stop Rio Tinto's mine destroying Serbia's nature!", and "Stop new macro-harbour at Tenerife".

The team

2021 came with some changes to the team, as our long-term campaigner in Poland left us and after an interim gap supported by consultant capacity, we could welcome a new brilliant campaigner to our team! The team has been further enlarged with a project coordinator for the Citizens' Assembly project in Spain. The service support capacity for activities from WeMove Europe SCE has been reviewed in 2021, ensuring specific support for campaign documentation, YouMove processes and fundraising and major donor processes, leading to a revision of the general service support charges.

Financial Development

Income in 2021 amounted to 153,000 euros, with support from individual donors and the European Climate Foundation. Activities in 2021 have partly been covered by drawing from the project reserves (63,000 euro) and the general reserves (67,000 euro). Main investments were for the further development and maintenance of the YouMove platform.