

Minutes of the 4th conference call of the Stop TTIP working group for a pledge campaign

Wednesday, 16 December 2015, 4 pm – 6 pm

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1) Timeplan

December 2015

Before the holidays we would like to finalise the concept proposal drawing on the feedback and discussions from this working group call. Once the concept it is finished it will be shared with the campaign partners for feedback.

Additionally, possible development needs and ideas are currently being discussed with software developers and organisations who have experience with similar tools.

January 2016

In January we hope to prepare the campaign plan based on the feedback from the partner organisations. We would like to start drafting the budget and finalise the specifications for the software and website. Towards the end of January/early February the Stop TTIP Coordination Group will decide on the final campaign concept and budget.

January – March 2016

During this time period the development and testing of the software will take place. At the same time the MEP database will be compiled, the Stop TTIP website will be redesigned and the final formulation of the questions will be agreed upon.

March 2016

March 2016 will hopefully see the launch of the campaign towards the end of the month. The launch might include several stages, starting with selected countries or languages.

Questions

Who is included in the network, and who is included in the calls?

The network includes all partners who were involved in the ECI campaign. But it is open for new supporting organisations.

The Stop TTIP European Coordination Call decided to set up a working group for a pledge campaign. There was no set criteria for participation in the working group, and the minutes are shared with all network members.

Who decides on the final concept and what is the role of the working group?

The working group together works on a campaign concept proposal that will then be taken to the national alliances/supporting organisations for feedback.

The final decision on the concept will be taken by the new Stop TTIP Coordination Group which includes all Stop TTIP national contact persons, the citizens' committee as well as members from supporting organisations.

The information on the structure of Stop TTIP will be send out again together with the campaign concept proposal.

Have you considered the financials yet, as this campaign could turn out to be very expensive?

There is no budget yet. It will still take a while until we have talked to all programmers and have a better idea of what it might cost. The budget can only be created once we have more clarity on the concept proposal. We should be able to present a first rough budget in January.

What about the cooperation with votewatch.eu?

The technical cooperation with votewatch.eu is no longer being considered. We have found an open source alternative. However, a political cooperation with votewatch.eu is still being considered and on our agenda.

2) Formulation of the Pledge

Last time we had agreed upon a pledge that only allows the answer: "Yes, I will vote against CETA" (with the additional option of "in its current form" for the first phase of the campaign). However, during our discussions at the office we realised that we still need the information whether an MEP will vote against CETA or whether he or she will definitely vote for it, to allow the colour coding discussed in the calls and to be able to better target those who really are undecided.

Therefore, we would have to either allow the option "No, I will support CETA", or we have to ensure that we get the information, whether or not an MEP has already made a decision on this issue, from other sources.

Comments & Discussion

It was noted that allowing MEPs to also pledge "no" (so their support for CETA) might not be the best approach. If MEPs are marked as decided (eg. Using colour coding), this might keep people from contacting those who pledged "no" (thus, their support for CETA), even though a dialogue with these MEPs is important as well. It might not be the best approach to only target the truly undecided ones, instead of all of those who did not pledge "yes". To further a dialogue between the people and MEPs, it is better to stay with the original decision of only allowing a "yes" pledge. A dialogue is very important to get MEPs on our side.

On the other hand, it was argued that allowing both a "yes" and a "no" pledge would help to reduce the decisions people using the tool would have to make. People could also see more easily how big the impact of contacting a certain MEP will be.

Regarding this issue it was decided that the question of how to formulate the pledge will be kept open in the concept proposal, as this is not a vital question for the first phase of the campaign. A decision will be made once the national alliances/supporting organisations has given feedback on this question.

Another issue that was raised is that the “yes, I will vote against CETA” pledges might not be as useful because reforms might still be implemented before the campaign starts. We could thus have the pledge “yes, I will vote against CETA even if it is reformed / ISDS is reformed” or “yes, I will reject CETA in whatever form.” This way the question remains relevant over the next few months. It would be better to send the message right away that we will not accept CETA just because ISDS was changed.

Another option that was raised was to simply ask the MEPs to pledge again once the final text has been released and translated.

3) Excluding certain MEPs

Comments & Discussion

Several participants voiced their clear opposition to option 1 (not excluding any MEPs). If all MEPs are included, those organisations who have a no engagement policy with regards to some far-right MEPs, might not be willing to participate in the campaign.

Option 2 (widgets offer only those MEPs national campaigns find acceptable, but the central campaign website allows to get into contact with all MEPs) was also criticised. It was argued that even if you filter them out on the national level through the widgets, the MEPs deemed problematic by some, can still be contacted. Even those national campaigns who removed some MEPs, however, remain associated with the overall European pledge campaign. Thus, even option 2 can be problematic for some organisations.

It was decided that instead of option 3.1 and 3.2, the campaign concept proposal will only include a new option 3. This option 3 is that certain MEPs will be blocked on all campaign platforms based on the feedback of the different national alliances. The national campaigns decide who they do not wish to engage with and this will then be integrated into a list of MEPs the Europe wide campaign does not engage with.

4) Additional Points

How will the people who also signed the ECI be contacted once the tool is set up? Will the national organisations do that or will Stop TTIP contact them all?

Stop TTIP cannot contact all signatories, only those who said they were happy to be contacted and did this on a signature sheet that named Stop TTIP in its data protection policy. Some campaign partners applied for data ownership, thus they would have to contact their signatories.

The data handling throughout the Pledge Campaign will be the same as during the ECI. Organisations can apply for the data ownership of the data generated through their widget. However, the software could contact everyone with regard to some issues, eg. If a vote is coming up. Stop TTIP would not have access to this data though.

5) Next Steps

The campaign concept proposal will be send out to the network (supporting organisations of Stop TTIP) and national alliances. **Feedback can be given until the end of January. A specific day for the feedback deadline will be included in the email with the concept proposal.**

The Stop TTIP office in Berlin will start working on a budget in January.