Press Release

**SHARKPROJECT supports the demands of the European Citizens' Initiative "Stop Finning – Stop the Trade" to end the shark fin trade in the European Union (EU). The collection of signatures has started on February 1st, 2020 and will last for one year until one million votes have been gathered overall from at least seven EU member states.**

The trade of shark fins relies on the wasteful and unethical practice of cutting the fins off sharks and discarding the animal back into the ocean while it is often still alive. Because of their high commercial value and use in a traditional soup in Asian culture the practice of shark finning still occurs and **Europe is one of the major players in the global fin trade.**

Every year, between 63 and 273 million sharks are killed, and many species are increasingly threatened worldwide.[[1]](#footnote-2) Globally sharks are targeted for their meat and liver oil, but **the biggest threat is still shark finning**. The steep erosion of shark populations across the globe has severe impacts, as many sharks are ‘apex predators’ and play an active role in maintaining healthy and productive marine ecosystems.

The ‘[Stop Finning — Stop the Trade](https://stop-finning.eu/?lang=en)’ European Citizens’ Initiative started collecting signatures on 1 February 2020. EU citizens will now have one year to support the requested change by collecting one million votes to **demand the end of shark fin trade in the European Union**:

<https://eci.ec.europa.eu/012/public>

By demanding to “end the trade of fins in the EU including the import, export and transit of fins other than if naturally attached to the animal's body”, these citizens **aim to strengthen the EU’s legal framework**. Should their endeavour succeed, the European Commission could then decide to propose a new regulation to achieve this goal.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Such a new regulation would go one big step further than the current EU legal framework, which requires — **since 2013 and for all EU vessels** — that fins remain attached to the carcass of the shark until unloading at port. However, **fins can then be separated and traded across the world.** While a steep improvement from the EU’s former regulation,[[3]](#footnote-4) this requirement still allows fins to be traded across Europe and EU fishers to feed Asia’s strong demand for shark fin soup.

In June 2019, **Canada became the first country of the G7 group to ban shark fin imports on its territory**,[[4]](#footnote-5) and citizens around the world are increasingly requesting the end of such cruel and useless practices. Europe must follow suit.

European citizens have the power to show their will of stronger wildlife protection to the EU’s decision makers. At a time when the scientific community regularly rings the alarm bell regarding the steep biodiversity’s erosion[[5]](#footnote-6) and the risks associated with climate change,[[6]](#footnote-7) we have no choice but to change our production and consumptions patterns. **It is high time to end the shark fin trade in Europe!**

**This initiative is already supported by 20 environmental NGOs**, including SEA SHEPHERD, SHARKPROJECT, BLOOM, Blue Sharks, APECE, iSea, The Global Shark Conservation Initiative (TGSCI), STOP FINNING, Sharks Mission France, Sharks Educational Institute (SEI), Aktionsgemeinschaft Artenschutz, Mundus maris, Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine, Deutsche Meeresstiftung, VDST, Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz (DSM), Shark Savers Germany, The Dolphins’ Voice, Pro Wildlife and EJF, and more organisations keep joining.

To be validated, a European Citizen’s Initiative must gather at least one million signatories overall and reach a [threshold for at least seven Member States](https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/thresholds_en). These thresholds correspond to the number of Members of the European Parliament elected in each Member State, multiplied by 750.

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| **Member State** | **Threshold** |
| Germany | 72 000 |
| France | 55 500 |
| Italy | 54 750 |
| United Kingdom | 54 750 |
| Spain | 40 500 |
| Poland | 38 250 |
| Romania | 24 000 |
| Netherlands | 19 500 |
| Belgium | 15 750 |
| Czech Republic | 15 750 |
| Greece | 15 750 |
| Hungary | 15 750 |
| Portugal | 15 750 |
| Sweden | 15 000 |
| Austria | 13 500 |
| Bulgaria | 12 750 |
| Denmark | 9 750 |
| Slovakia | 9 750 |
| Finland | 9 750 |
| Ireland | 8 250 |
| Croatia | 8 250 |
| Lithuania | 8 250 |
| Latvia | 6 000 |
| Slovenia | 6 000 |
| Estonia | 4 500 |
| Cyprus | 4 500 |
| Luxembourg | 4 500 |
| Malta | 4 500 |

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1. <https://www.iucnssg.org/faqs.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. In the press release that followed the official registration of the Initiative, the European Commission notes that "should the initiative receive one million statements of support within 1 year, from at least 7 different Member States, the Commission will have to react within 6 months. The Commission can decide either to follow the request or not, and in both instances would be required to explain its reasoning". [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Before Regulation (EU) No 605/2013, the former regulation — dating back to 2003 — banned the practice of shark finning, but left a loophole allowing boats with a ‘special permit’ to continue it. Around 200 of such special permits were annually held by Spain and Portugal. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-68/first-reading>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)