

VOXBOX-discussion "The EP, the MEPS and the Citizens" (video recording)

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"EP, MEPs and Citizens - Evaluating the Outgoing Term and Drawing the Challenges of the One to Come" was the topic of the discussion which took place in Voxbox Studio in the European Parliament in Brussels on March 18, 2008.

The discussion was held within the "Now - Interacting with the European Union!" Initiative and was broadcast live on Europe Gateway.

On the eve of the fifty-first anniversary of the European Parliament we invited for a conversation Antonio Lopez-Istúriz (Spain) - Secretary General of European People's Party and Adina Valean (Romania) - deputy leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the EP. Wilfried Ruetten, director of the European Journalism Centre (EJC) and Julia De Clerck-Sachsse from the Centre for European Policy Studies also joined the discussion as experts.

Moderators of the discussion were editor-in-chief of Europe Gateway Ognian Boyadzhiev and the journalist from Radio Bulgaria Iva Letnikova. To visualize the whole recording, please click [here](#).

To listen to the audio recording in six parts, please click [here](#).

The first question was about the main message to the citizens that would urge them to vote on the elections in June:

According to Adina Valean during the elections the citizens generally observe what is happening on the national level. "Although we all want what is best for the citizens, the different groups have different methods to achieve those objectives. For example in workers protection the socialists want more protection while we would like for the workers to be able to choose and work more", she said. In her view these are exactly the questions that are common for Europe and that need to be in the basis of the campaign while at the same time the differences between the various political parties should be outlined.

"We all, in Bulgaria and in Spain alike, have the same problem - communication with the citizens. This results in difficulties in understanding of the essence of Europe and sometimes leads to euroscepticism. I am grateful that we are already speaking about the coming elections because we need to bring the EU back to the citizens. We need to talk with the citizens about whatever is important to them - for example, in Bulgaria we need to talk about energy", Antonio Lopez said. According to him, it is very important for the EU that Bulgaria and Romania be recognized as a successful example of integration in times of difficulties.

MEPs, representatives of the media and of civil society discussed the communication problems between Europe and its citizens, the question of how to turn Bulgarian and Romanian membership into an example of success, the future make-up of the Parliament and other topics.

Parliamentarians and experts agree on the idea that the messages and the discussions need to be put in understandable terms and at the same time media and politicians have to look for new forms of communication that will also allow activating the groups who have not voted before.

In the context of the restricted access of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens to the common labour market, Valean said that it was important that Bulgarian and Romanian citizens were convinced that they were not "second-hand" citizens of Europe in order for them to vote on the EP elections.

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In regard with the political make-up of the next European Parliament, the deputy leader of the ALDE group Adina Valean stated, that she expected that the make-up will remain generally unchanged. She expressed hope, that ALDE would be able to narrow the lead of PES.

At the end of the discussion Ognian Boyadzhiev announced the winner in the "EP 2009 Vote - Beyond the Sugar Cubes" Contest. Matthew Rushworth will visit the next event of the Initiative which will take place in France.

The communication campaign is implemented in the framework of a project approved in the Annual Work Programme of EP for 2008 for grants by DG "Communication".

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17 March 2009 - EP building, Brussels: DG Communication, "Presentation of the EP's communication strategy for the 2009 European elections". In focus are EP's vice-presidents Mr. Alejo Vidal-Quadras and Ms Mechthild Rothe, as well as Ms Francesca R. Ratti, director general of DG COMM. Radio Bulgaria's Iva Letnikova questions Ms Ratti in a special interview.



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