

## Discussion in Paris: My MEP and Me: Real or Virtual Dialogue?" (video recording)

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**The Director of the EP Information Bureau in Paris Mr. Alain Barrau gave an awarding diploma to Matthew Rushworth - the winner in the European essay contest &bdquo;2009 EP Vote - beyond the sugar cubes".**

The ceremony took place on April 3, 2009 in Paris during the discussion "My MEP and I - is the dialogue real or virtual?" with the participation of students and experts from France, Bulgaria, Great Britain and Austria.

The essay contest was a part of the "Now - interacting with the European Parliament!" project, funded by EP and implemented by the European Institute, the Centre for Policy Modernization, Europe Gateway, partner organizations and media from numerous member states.

Here we are offering an original video recording from the discussion into multiple parts. To see the whole video (in French), please click [HERE](#) to scroll through the different parts.

### **Other useful links:**

[Photo gallery - Paris event](#)

[Radiobroadcast \(in English\)](#)

[Matthew Rushworth receiving his award \(reportage\)](#)

The author of the winning essay is the 29-year-old Matthew Rushworth from the United Kingdom. He is a law student and he has a degree in history from London School of Economics. He saw the announcement on <http://parliament.europe.bg> and decided to take part in the contest almost as a lark. Matthew won a four-day trip to Paris and Versailles and the right to participate in the two closing public events of the project - the round table in Paris today, and the debate under the motto "The MEPs, the Citizens, the Solutions" which took part in Versailles yesterday.

"While I was traveling from London to Paris I thought that there would be nobody waiting for me on the station and that it was all a April Fool's Day prank", Matthew said. He thanked Alain Barrau and the organizers for the award and the recognition. According to Matthew Rushworth, if each EU member state acts separately on the problems it faces, it would be harder for all of them to find the necessary solutions. "If we change our perspective, if we act as a Union, if we debate and find solutions together, it will turn out that we are a lot stronger. This is for our own benefit, for the benefit of the citizens" - this is

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how Matthew defined the strongest motivation for participation of the Europeans in the coming elections in June.

Students from the IPJ Institute for Journalism also took part in the round table in Paris today. They think that MEPs are easy to approach and open to debates, and that communication with them is actually easier than communication with the representatives in the national parliaments. Alain Barrau showed to the manager of Institute and to one of the instructors the new promotional materials by EP which aim at increasing voter turnout in the European Union. The representative of the [cafebabel.com](http://cafebabel.com) initiative Monika Oelz said, that together with the virtual forms of communication between citizens and elected representatives - online chats, video conferences, etc - direct contact should not be neglected, especially when it came to specific everyday cases. "After all, we are real life people", she concluded and called upon the participants and the readers of Europe Gateway to get involved in the European discussion by posting their opinions on the new website, which the team of Café Babel created especially for the elections at [eudebate2009.eu](http://eudebate2009.eu)

The discussion which took part in the EP Information Bureau in Paris was moderated by Ognian Boyadjiev from Europe Gateway and by Sonya Vaseva, a journalist from the French editors' office of Radio Bulgaria. The radio programme dedicated to the European Union will have a special feature including interviews and reports from the events in France.

The programme director of the European Institute Lubov Panayotova announced, that the "Now - Interacting with the European Parliament" Initiative would continue and with the support DG Communications of EP. She said that the new project which would be called just "Interacting with the European Parliament" and would include a series of explanatory radio programmes in several languages on Radio Bulgaria. The highlight in the communication actions will be the countries from the Western Balkans.

The participants and the organizers agreed to intensively exchange news from the election campaigns in their countries and to give the floor to citizens on all issues concerning the candidates for members of European Parliament.