

Bulgaria to mark Europe Day with a series of events

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Bulgaria will celebrate Europe Day May 9, with a diverse four-day program of events and attractions across the country. Celebrations are organized by the European Commission Representation and by the European Parliament Information Office in Sofia. The decision to celebrate May 9 as Europe Day was taken in 1985 by EU leaders, because on this day 60 years back, the first step was made towards the creation of the European Union. Bulgaria joined Europe Day celebrations in 2005. This year's program of the day includes exhibitions, children's shows, happenings, eco-events, sporting games, concerts, demonstrations of national cuisines etc.

"Six information desks will be set up in Sofia aimed to present in an entertaining way what Europe can do for its citizens", the head of the European Commission Representation in Sofia Zinaida Zlatanova said:

"These information centers will have improvised ballot boxes installed in them. Every visitor will be invited to vote on the most important task of EU in 2010", she said. We suggest three reply options – enlivening of Europe's economy, resolving the problems of poverty and social exclusion and a larger share of citizens in EU decision-making. The results will be summarized and presented on 13 May. The poll is aimed to help us find out what Bulgarian citizen perceive as EU priority. The poll is also a good feedback tool on how we work and what matters to citizens."

Celebrations of Europe Day in Sofia started on Wednesday, 5 May, with the exhibition 50 Years European Parliament. On 6 May a display opens in the space between Sofia University and the National Assembly with 31 caricatures by Bulgaria's top cartoon artists on the theme of Bulgaria and Europe. It will be on till May 15, and will then move to other Bulgarian towns. The culmination in the program will be the happening on May 9 in Sofia's South Park. In the locality known as The English Lawn, a football match will take place between the teams of the National Assembly and the European Parliament.

"The idea is to look at the important topic of the Lisbon Treaty enforced on 1 December and at the new role it delivers to national parliaments, in a new, creative way", said Violeta Stanicic, head of the EU Information Office in Bulgaria.

"We decided to address this landmark concept with a sense of humor", she added. "We invited Svetlin Tanchev, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee in the National Assembly, and Slavi Binev, Chairman of the inter-parliamentary sporting group in the European Parliament, to organize the match. The National Assembly side includes 16 MPs from all parliamentary groups."

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The EP side convened by Slavi Binev, includes 5 MEPs and members of families of MEPs.

More from members of the two teams:

"Well, let us hope we'll see some fair play from the opposite side", Slavi Binev said. "What we have to make obvious is that opponents are not annihilated. On the contrary – for you to move forward, you need an opponent to challenge you."

"What we want to show is that when the cause is national, we are able to unite on a stance and defend it with dignity", Svetlin Tanchev from the National Assembly side said. "I think that football, a game dominated by team spirit, provides a good allusion to the need of team work in political affairs."

By Radio Bulgaria.

English version Daniela Konstantinova.

Also on the occasion of Europe's Day, a series of four thematic TV programs, recorded at the European Parliament's TV-studio in Brussels, will be aired on the Bulgarian private TV channel PROBG starting Monday, 10 May 2010. Each Monday of the month of May (namely, May 10, 17, 24 and 31) will be aired one discussion of this four-part series. The starting date has been selected with the idea to be as close as possible to Europe's day. The programs are moderated by PROBG's Victoria Angelova. Members of the European Parliament and experts are participating in those mini-debates - Iliana Iotova MEP (S&D-BSP) and Prof. Vladko Panayotov (ALDE-DPS), as well as European Institute Foundation Director Lubov Panayotova and Tihomira Trifonova - editor of the book "Europe 2020 - Civic Vision" and expert at the Center for Policy Modernization. The PROBG newscasts are produced in the EP's new TV-studio in Brussels in the framework of a series of events, organized by the team of the project "Interacting with the European Parliament".