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European Elections: Outlook for 2009

The first European parliament elections to take place were held on September 10, 1952. This year they will take place from 4-7 June 2009. Even though the EU elections are of great importance, the public of the European Union has not given it the attention it deserves. For this reason, we find it important to inform the public on the EU Elections throughout the years and encourage the active participation of all not only for the upcoming elections but in the years following.

The EU Elections take place once every five years, while the European Parliament is the only institution that is "directly elected on a strictly European mandate". The members of the Council of the European Union, on the other hand, are elected at a national level.

General Procedure

Concerning the procedure, it is interesting to note that each member state is given the freedom to conduct the EU elections within their own grounds but according to their own decisions. However, all elections must follow the same exact democratic rules, including proportional representation, gender equality, privacy of ballot and the minimum voting age requirement of 18 must also be abided by.

The distribution of seats is in accordance to the population of each member state and is distributed proportionately. Each country is given a specific number of seats, ranging from the greatest of Germany (99 seats) to the least of Malta (five seats) according to its total population.

Chronology of EU Parliament Elections

Sept. 10 1952: First sitting of the EU Parliament
June 1979: First elections (63% turnout)
1981: First by-election took place in Greece
1984: EC 10 holds election (61% turnout)
1989: EC 10 holds election (58.5% turnout)
1992: Maastricht Treaty established the European Union
1994: EU 12 holds election (56.8% turnout)

1995: By-election took place in Austria, Sweden and Finland

1999: EU 15 holds election (49.8% turnout)

2004: EU 25 holds election (45.6% turnout)

2007: By-election took place in Romania and Bulgaria

June 2009: EU 27 holds election

Decreasing turnout rates for the EU Elections

It is apparent, from the above statistics that the turnout rates for the EU elections have been declining over the years. Voters do not seem to be showing a great interest in the elections due to a number of reasons, as stated in the "European Elections: Outlook for 2009". Such reasons include the following, amongst others:

European elections seem to be addressing issues at a national level, leading voters to not be aware of the policy issues and other such matters taking place at a European level. Voters seem to believe that even if they cast a vote, their opinions and voices will still not be heard and therefore, it does not make a difference whether they vote or not. There is a lack of information about the elections and Parliament. Citizens throughout the EU stated that they are not well-informed on the role and functions of the EU Parliament and so do not feel the need to cast a vote during the EU Elections.

In order to get passed the problems above, it is essential that citizens across the European Union are fully informed on the roles, functions and operations of the different instruments and institutions of the EU. It is also the responsibility of national governments, institutions and authorities to undertake initiatives to inform and raise awareness amongst the member states for such significant matters. Citizens must feel that their voices are heard and that their opinions do matter. A feeling of belonging to the EU should be awakened and encouraged.

Source: "European Elections: Outlook for 2009" <http://euractiv.com>

2nd International Conference on Mediterranean Studies: 09 April 2009, Athens Greece

5th Annual Marketing to Women: 15 April 2009, Toronto Canada

3rd International Conference on Women's Studies "Gender at the Crossroads: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives": 20 April 2009, Famagusta Cyprus

Online (GLOBIP) Conference: 24 April 2009, Online

1st Global Conference: Evil, Women and the Feminine: 01 May 2009, Budapest Hungary

3rd International Conference on SOCIOLOGY: 11 May 2009, Athens Greece

Green Cities Florida: 19 May 2009, Orlando Florida

Reconfiguration des institutions et transformation du lien politique: 27 May 2009, Ottawa Canada

EBES 2009 Conference: 01 June 2009, Istanbul Turkey

European Conference for Academic Disciplines: 01 June 2009, Bad Hofgastein Austria

3rd International Conference on PSYCHOLOGY: 08 June 2009, Athens Greece

Fourth Annual Women's Leadership and Empowerment Conference: 21 June 2009, Bangkok Thailand

European eParticipation Day



The first European eParticipation Day was materialised on March 4, 2009, a day that was arranged and coordinated by the European Commission. The main objective of the day was to highlight how Information and Communication Technologies are helping shape the political environment and to help enhance eParticipation – the use of information and communication technologies to provide individuals throughout the opportunity to express themselves and voice out their opinions concerning decisions that may have a direct or indirect effect on them.

More than 30 countries participated in the event, with approximately a total of 340 individuals registered. The participants ranged from members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, national parliaments, authorities, universities, non-governmental organizations and other such institutions and organizations from the public sector as well.

The developments of technology and the advancements that have been made have helped make our lives easier in a number of ways. The internet and information and communication technologies are highly present in our everyday lives, allowing for the minimization of boundaries and extension of outreach. This is one of the reasons for which the European eParticipation Day was held, emphasizing the need for citizens, authorities, politicians and other such groups to utilize these tools that have been developed over the years.

A special place for children

A report was adopted by the European Parliament in February 2009 concerning the needs of children in the EU and the emphasis that must be placed on their basic needs both in internal and external policies. The report contained Action Plans that provide support towards this cause, while it also included alarming statistics concerning the lives and conditions of children throughout the EU.

It is a common belief that children constitute the future and with the well-being of children, the EU will highly benefit in the long-run, since this will be passed on to future generations as well. Significant issues, as child trafficking, violence, education and difficulties in the work environment and employment are addressed.

It is quite distressing that more than 300,000 children are born each year with HIV positive and that 10 million children die each year from diseases that can be prevented. The fact that approximately 110 million children are involved in child labor leaves these children without a proper education, while the employment of these children goes against the International Labor Organization Convention on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment.

The above figures and facts, and the fact that the voices of these children and even adults are not being heard, has created the need for a framework and for actions that will uplift such phenomena and provide these children with the chance at a better future and the opportunity to live the life they deserve.

The Communication from the Commission to the Council, European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, strives to establish a common framework for the EU so as to protect and promote the rights of children and ensure that the process can be applied throughout the world, while all actors and involved parties are fully committed to the cause. In order to determine the means and instruments necessary to achieve this, the EU must take into consideration the differing situations and conditions of each country.

This will be accomplished by managing all the instruments that are available so as to take into account the existing difference, as follows:

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EU to phase out energy-guzzling light bulbs

On March 18, 2009 the European Commission adopted two regulations concerning energy efficiency. The need for energy-saving actions, which is supported by the EU energy ministers and the European Commission, is a reality. The EU energy ministers encouraged the decrease in the sales of luminescent light bulbs by the year 2012. However, households will be given the choice of compact fluorescent lamps (using 75% less energy) or efficient halogens (which use from 25 to 50% less energy).

The Commission declares that by undertaking such actions, the EU would be saving approximately 10 billion Euros each year on bills relating to energy, while the emissions of CO2 will be reduced by 32 million tons.

Further, the use of the new lamps, which are energy-saving, do not cause damage to the health of citizens, another advantage.

Another important fact is that just by turning off lights, when not necessary, would decrease the total waste of energy as well. "Intelligent lighting systems" that are equipped with sensors are available for businesses so as to consume less energy. As a result, these lighting systems, which would turn off lights when not detecting motion, would also help achieve the consumption of less energy, leading to energy savings. Even though the investment seems to be high, representatives of Honeywell, a producer of lighting systems, declare that such a system would pay off over time in the savings that would result.

Source: "EU to phase out energy-guzzling light bulbs", www.euractive.com/en/energy-efficiency/eu-phase-energy-guzzling

A special place for children...continued

1. Children and youth in development cooperation. The EU, according to the report, needs to make use of development cooperation and actions to eliminate poverty in those countries that do not have the instruments to do so.
2. Children and youth in trade policy. Policies developed by the EU should identify the necessity for the protection and the promotion of all human rights.
3. Children and youth in political dialogue. Being that political dialogue plays a significant role in the EU and serves as a means of communication between different institutions, organizations and authorities, importance should be placed on such dialogues so as to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. Regional and global actions. Actions that are undertaken at a national level will be accompanied by regional and global actions to address crucial issues.
5. The empowerment of children and youth. The fact that children and youth do not play an active role in everyday society should be concentrated on, by empowering children and youth and allowing them to take a stand in issues that affect them directly and indirectly.
6. Children and youth in humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid must address those countries that are in conflict or may be recovering from conflict since the needs of children and youth are often surpassed and not met.
7. Separated and unaccompanied children
8. Children associated with armed forces or armed groups
Children's education in emergencies.

All of the above must be addressed by the EU so as to ensure that the rights of children throughout are met and focused on. The report has provided with the need to address the above issues, while the EU places great emphasis on actions and initiatives in the above fields.

Source: Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A special place for children in EU external action <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

OPERA:
European Opera Days



Opera Zuid, Gianni Schicchi © Deen van Meer

European Opera Forum
'Creativity and Innovation'

Gran Teatre del Liceu,
Barcelona
17-19 April 2009

On the occasion of the 'European Year of Creativity and Innovation', the European Opera Forum 2009 will focus on how opera relates to these themes. The programme will mix plenary sessions and more specialized workshops, bringing together opera professionals and non-professionals, artists, figures from the wider society, and young opera lovers.

To read further visit the site below:

<http://www.operadays.eu/en/default.asp>

Ten EU member states sanctioned



The European Union was forced to sanction ten member states from the twenty-seven in total for not fulfilling their obligations in terms of the community legislation concerning the environment, and more specifically concerning air quality. This took place a couple days before the plenary session of the European parliament that was held in the beginning of February, 2009. The countries that were sanctioned include Spain, Germany, Cyprus, Slovenia, Estonia, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Sweden.

According to the article, these countries were charged with categories of having higher air pollution than the levels that are allowed by legislation of the European Commission and for which all member states must abide by. The European environment commissioner, Mr. Stavros Dimas, stated that the laws and the abiding of such laws is of high significance and they "should be our most absolute priority" being that the effects of air pollution have "the most serious effects on the health".

Source: <http://eudebate2009.eu>

Association for Development of Mountain Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

The Association for Development of Mountain Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria was established in the middle of 2006 by an initiative group consisting of local government representatives, business sector and other persons aiming to contribute to the solving of problems concerning heavier climate, economic and social conditions that the mountain municipalities have to develop in. In 2008 the Association established a Center for Sustainable Development of Mountain Municipalities to provide various services - training, financial and staff management, consultancy in project cycle management and strategic development to enhance the capacity of Bulgarian local self-government.

The mission of the Association for development of Mountain Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria is to contribute to the achievement of a profound structural change that should bring to bridging the gap between the socio - economic development of mountain areas and this of the rest of Bulgarian municipalities, thus providing conditions and participants in the process of sustainable development.

Main objective of the Association for development of Mountain Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria is to achieve a change that should bring to bridging the gap between the economic development of mountain areas and this of the rest of Bulgarian municipalities.



Main Activities

- supporting the sustainable development of the mountain municipalities and regions;
- preservation of the cultural and historical heritage, the natural resources and the natural heritage through developing good quality and sustainable tourism.
- preventive restriction of the consequences from natural disasters;
- helping and financing the learning and educational, youth, consulting, publishing and advertising activities;
- holding of and participating in national and international thematic fora and programmes
- making the activities of the Association popular in Bulgaria and abroad.

Contact Details

Address: 1404 Sofia 23
Tvardishki prohod Str., floor 3, office 10-11, Bulgaria
Telephone: +359 2 818 5889
Fax: +359 2 818 5859
E-mail: bulmonte@mail.bg
Website: www.bulmonte.org

Did you know.....

The amount of time that people spend on travel has been consistent at 1.1 hours per person per day in all societies

The Great Pyramid of Giza is the only one of the Seven Wonders of the World that still survives?

Today, there are more than 2,700 different languages spoken in the world, with more than 7,000 dialects?

Cypriot culture is among the oldest in the Mediterranean? By 3700 BC, the island was well inhabited, a crossroad between the East and West.

Finland is ranked as the most competitive economy in the world, ahead of the United States, according to the World Economic Forum?

eCLAU— Youth In Action Programme 1st Transnational Meeting in Reggio Emilia



The eCLAU project, which is translated in the Aragonese dialect as "key", has officially begun with the kick-off meeting in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The eCLAU project belongs to the Youth in Action programme of the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency, and primarily focuses on the active participation of youth through e-participation, issues relating to climate change and the 2009 EU Elections.

Participants from all partners of the consortium were present and actively participated in the two-day discussions and presentations that were held and organized by the Province of Reggio Emilia.

The lead partner is ASAEI (Spain), the Aragonese Association of Local Authorities, while the other partners involved include the Province of Reggio Emilia (Italy), ALDA - France (Association of Local Democracy Agencies), the Association for the development of mountain municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADM MRB) and the Institute of Entrepreneurship Development (Greece).

The two-day meetings that were materialised included a detailed presentation of the programme and the tasks and responsibilities of each partner, while each partner also presented with their ideas and suggestions concerning the activities they are responsible for. Throughout the duration of the project, the partners are committed to all activities, while national workshops will be realized in each country and an international conference will be held in February 2010 in Zaragoza, Spain.

To keep up-to-date with the project and its activities you can visit the website of the project, which is currently being constructed: www.e-clau.net

Further, a forum will take place each month, starting from April concerning issues of great significance throughout the EU and we welcome individuals, organizations, authorities and institutions throughout Europe to take part. We will be sending you information concerning the forums, while you can also find information on the website above.

The informative electronic newsletter is published by the Institute of Entrepreneurship Development and constitutes voluntary effort of its members, the opinions and comments of which do not necessarily express the institute's views.

We would like your suggestions for upcoming issues. You can send information, inquiries, proposals and general comments that could be published to the following address:

newsletter@entre.gr

The newsletter is published periodically to communicate activities and plans.

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Cooperating Institutions



CENTER FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY
KADIN ARAŞTIRMALARI VE EĞİTİM MERKEZİ
DOĞU AKDENİZ ÜNİVERSİTESİ



Address: Ioustinianou 3,
41222

Larissa, Greece

Tel./Fax: +30 2410 626 943

E-mail: info@entre.gr

Website: www.entre.gr

