



NewsEurideas



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The Upcoming European Elections

In light of the upcoming European elections, politicians are in campaign mode trying to best position themselves in relation to the key issues on the agenda. As expected the main point on the agenda will be the economy and how political leaders have dealt with the crisis, either by implementing austerity measures or relying on growth policies. Moreover, the elections will take the pulse of citizens concerning the direction in which the EU is heading.

With the support of experts we feature some of the main issues on the table. David O'Leary, who is a Director in the Government Relations team at Burson-Marsteller Brussels and project leader of Europe Decides, shares his views on campaigning and presents the PollWatch 2014 project. Jo Leinen, MEP and President of the European Movement talks about the main challenges that will be facing the EU's new leaders and Martyn Griffiths, Public Affairs

Manager at Eurogroup for Animals, reflects on a key concern – the welfare of animals as a possible central issue during the elections.

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Everything is on hold...

Because of the upcoming European elections everything seems to be on hold in Brussels. At the moment campaigning takes the lead over making policies. And, while the candidates are busy fighting for voting interests, organisations are trying to get their issues at the forefront of the political agenda. This is generally how it's going to be for the next few months but from September onwards it should be back to business as usual.



This election also has special significance because it will be the first time that voters will indirectly choose the next president of the European Commission. The EU has been criticised in the past for its democratic deficit but the elections are one of the key arguments that demonstrates that citizens have a say in how the EU functions. Moreover, 500 million Europeans are expected to cast their vote and there so define the political direction of the EU. And, as mentioned, they will indirectly choose the leader of the EU executive for the first time in history.

As for the issues on the agenda, the very efficiency of the EU will be put under the spotlight. EU citizens will be casting their vote on whether the EU handled the financial crisis well or not. The election will also offer the opportunity to take the pulse on whether EU Member States should opt for austerity measures or growth policies. So, as expected, the main issue on the agenda will be the economy and jobs. Still related to the bad economic state these past few years, resentment towards the EU has grown and so has euroscepticism. As such, polls have shown that public confidence has dramatically decreased. A record number of 60% of Europeans tend not to trust the EU, a figure that has doubled since the onset of the financial crisis.

Another lingering issue this election will be the youth vote which has been known to be elusive and thus have very low turnout numbers. But a recent survey released by the European Commission revealed a more encouraging picture: 65% of eligible voters below the age of 30 plan to vote this year, with a particular rise among first-time voters. This forecast not only points to the importance of the upcoming election but would also mean that candidates will have to take a slightly different approach to win these new votes. And since reaching the youth will be pivotal, candidates should also be thinking about using smart communication in their campaigns by making the most of social media such as Twitter, Facebook or blogs in order to connect to citizens. From this perspective, things seem to be evolving, as MEPs become more media-savvy and overcome the limits of traditional means of communication. So these next months will bring exciting political debates, hopefully some innovative campaigning and will take the pulse of European citizens on key issues.

By Violeta Marian

Taking the pulse of Europe

Interview with David O’Leary, Director in the Government Relations team at Burson-Marsteller Brussels

David O’Leary is a Director in the Government Relations team at Burson-Marsteller Brussels and project leader of **Europe Decides**, an initiative looking at Europe’s year of change in 2014. He formerly worked at the European Parliament.



What can you tell our readers about the Europe Decides initiative and its objectives?

Europe Decides is an initiative launched by Burson-Marsteller to follow the European Parliament elections in 2014 and the subsequent changes in the European Commission and in the presidency of the European Council. We are organising a series of activities, including our website (europedecides.eu), Twitter account ([@europedecides](https://twitter.com/europedecides)) and events in Brussels and other capitals. Our aim is to be informative and insightful about what is a complex process, using our political expertise in Brussels and in our network of offices around Europe. Aside from marketing, this our contribution to promoting the Europe debate and a transparent and democratic process.

Is it difficult to have a voice and be heard in such an active political environment, like Brussels?

I don’t think so. There are many opportunities – especially now, with the widespread use of social media – to get your message across, and the reality does not really match the stereotype of big bucks and big business having it all their own way. On issues such as animal testing, or the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), the little guy won. The arguments and the presentation of those arguments are much more important. The recent ‘Vapers are Voters’ campaign on e-cigarettes shows how a disparate group of people can coordinate themselves and put pressure on politicians to recognise and act on their case – not least in an election year.

Can you tell us about the PollWatch project and its aims? How does it differentiate itself from other opinion polls?

PollWatch 2014 – which will launch on 19 February – is a project run by VoteWatch Europe in partnership with Europe Decides and Burson-Marsteller. PollWatch 2014 will track opinion polls ahead of the Parliament elections and use a statistical model developed by political scientists, including Professor Simon Hix of the London School of Economics, to translate this data into seats in the European Parliament – something that is not done with other polling projects. It will give a real picture of how the Parliament will look. The project is the successor to Predict09.eu, which provided a very accurate prediction of the make-up of the results of the 2009 polls.

Euroscepticism has been on the rise due to the economic crisis. How do you think this will reflect in the votes comes the EP election?

Fringe parties have always done well in European elections as voters see these polls as a 'free hit' against their government (irrespective of the actual importance and power of the European Parliament). However, against the backdrop of the euro crisis, economic stagnation, fears about migration and discontent with the EU's structures, we can expect more Eurosceptics and extremists to feature in the new European Parliament (on the Right and the Left), especially in the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands and Hungary. The extremist, anti-EU or anti-system parties could win around a quarter of all seats. What will really matter is whether groups of these parties can work together (thereby getting access to speaking time, funding and roles in the Parliament's decision-making bodies) and how the mainstream parties react. A big vote for fringe parties could mean a 'grand coalition' between the centre-left and centre-right to pass legislation and carve up the key political roles.

In your opinion, will campaigns rely more on non-traditional means of communication to get their message across, such as social media?

Social media is – or at least should be – part of any advocacy campaign. More than half of all MEPs are on Twitter, and this proportion will rise considerably after the election. MEPs are using social media – including Facebook and YouTube, too - to inform citizens of what they are doing, how they intend to vote, and even who they have met – so monitoring what is happening online is a key part of any campaign and something that Burson-Marsteller helps its clients to do. Communicating messages online is also an increasingly successful way of winning over MEPs (such as on the e-cigarettes issue) and showing a body of support for an issue. Finally, thought leadership initiatives – such as Europe Decides or the LillyPad website (lillypad.eu) by pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly and Co are good ways of building dialogue and trust with policymakers.

Issues on the European Agenda

Interview with Jo Leinen, MEP and President of the European Movement

What are the objectives to the European Movement organisation and how do you pursue them?

The [European Movement International](#) (EMI) is the oldest and one of the most important pan- and pro-European civil society organizations. We are working for a more united Europe, founded on the principles of peace, democracy, liberty, solidarity and respect for human rights, which is open to any European state that subscribes to these fundamental values. Founded shortly after the end of WWII in 1948 the EMI was driven by the wish that such a catastrophe must never happen again and that the only way to avoid confrontation is



to pursue common goals through supranational institutions and a united Europe. That a strong European Movement is still needed is evident in current times. On the one hand anti-European sentiments and nationalism are on the rise again in many Member States. The EMI, its national councils and its members are defending the European project against easy populist parables. That doesn't mean that the EU cannot be improved, but the process of European integration as such is non-negotiable for us. On the other hand the European Union has a great appeal to non-Members, as can be observed in Ukraine right now, where thousands of people protest and freeze in the streets, because they see the future of their country as part of the European family. We are in the process of building ties to this pro-European movement in order to support them on their way. An ad-hoc EMI delegation will soon travel to Ukraine to meet with representatives of Euromaidan.

Do you believe that holding European elections for the EP is enough to contradict people which argue the EU suffers from a democratic deficit?

With the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 and the subsequent steps of integration, especially the Treaty of Lisbon, the foundations for a truly democratic European Union are in place. We have a parliament that co-decides on the vast majority of laws and the council as a "second chamber", representing the Member States, the other constituting element of the European Union besides its citizens. The real dangers to democracy in the European Union are the drift towards intergovernmental decision-making and the lack of citizens' involvement in EU-affairs. We must avoid that, under the pressure of the crisis, central decisions are taken in an intergovernmental setting between the governments without involvement of the parliament, as it has happened in recent years. Furthermore the key to a more democratic Europe is to connect the citizens further to the European institutions and to foster citizens' participation. The new procedure for the election of the Commission President by the parliament and the nomination of top-candidates by the European political parties could work as an important catalyst to spur voters' interest in the next elections. But more has to be done. Especially the European political parties must be strengthened to be able to fulfil their function as link to the citizens. The EMI contributes towards the establishment of a European wide public sphere and the engagement of civil society by offering a network of very diverse members, having in common that they want to drive European integration forward. With national councils in 39 European countries and numerous international associations as members, we facilitate cross-border contacts between groups that otherwise probably wouldn't engage with each other.

One of the leading issues during this election will be migration and protecting freedom of movement. Do you think concerns about excessive migration are warranted?

One has to distinguish between migration and the freedom of movement of persons. EU-citizens moving to another Member State aren't migrants in a classical sense - they are exerting their citizens' right to move freely within the EU - a right that lies at the very heart of European integration. An attack on this right is an attack on everything the European Union stands for, above all the principles of equality and non-discrimination. There are plenty of safeguards to avoid the exploitation of national social welfare systems by EU citizens from another Member State. They just have to be implemented. All available statistics point out that EU "migrants" are contributing to the welfare of their target countries and in average are better educated and apply less for social welfare than natives. It is irresponsible that some are trying to fuel fears from intra-EU migration for political gains without having any proof for significant misuse. If one looks closer, these statements are clearly driven by domestic politics, especially in the UK, where the government lets itself being pushed around by UKIP

and euro-sceptics within the conservative party. Furthermore the freedom of movement is no one-way-street; around 300.000 British nationals live in Spain alone.

What will be the main tasks and challenges facing the EU's new leaders following the 2014 elections to the EP?

The crisis eased its grip on Europe, but it is far from over. The focus must be to reduce the unacceptably high unemployment in some EU-countries, especially among the youth, to restore growth and to position Europe as a leading player in green technologies and education. This will also contribute to restore trust in the EU and its institutions, since the economic crisis and the crisis of confidence are closely interconnected. But we also have to ensure that such a crisis will never happen again. We have a European monetary policy, but still no European economic policy. The steps towards more coordination in economic affairs are not sufficient. We need EU institutions that have the necessary competences to act effectively and efficiently. The key to avoid conflicts in Europe after WWII was not closer coordination, but the introduction of supranational decision-making. The current treaties must be changed in the light of the experiences we made during the last 5 years. Under the leadership of the EMI numerous NGOs founded a "Civil Society Alliance" to promote the holding of a new convention consisting of representatives of all Member States' governments, the European Parliament, the national parliaments and the European Commission. The convention should elaborate the necessary changes as an open and transparent forum, accessible for civil society.

Speaking for those who can't

Interview with Martyn Griffiths, Public Affairs Manager at Eurogroup for Animals

Martyn Griffiths is the Public Affairs Manager at [Eurogroup for Animals](#) since January 2010. His background saw him study Management Science at Aston University in the UK followed by post-graduate studies in Media and Public Relations at the Welsh School of Journalism, University of Wales, College of Cardiff.

In your opinion what are the current gaps in EU's policy on animal welfare?

- Minimising live animal transport and enforcing current legislation;
- A clear strategy for minimising the number of animals used in research and the promotion of alternatives;
- A clear ban on the cloning of animals for food;
- EU wide standards for the breeding and trade of companion animals;
- Reduction in the trade and keeping of exotic pets improving their welfare;



- Introduction of an animal welfare framework law that will provide the highest levels of welfare possible.

Through which means does Eurogroup for Animals intend to reach its goal to make animal welfare a central issue in the 2014 European elections?

Eurogroup has launched a dedicated campaign to put animal welfare at the heart of the elections. We have a clear Manifesto that sets out our policy goals and which has been communicated to all the political groups and which is currently being discussed at national level and indeed personal level. We have already been collecting candidate signatures to an election pledge which sets out our work programme for the next parliament term. This is currently being signed by Current MEPs and will be used by our member organisations for all candidates in due course. We have also launched a dedicated web site and will soon launch an MEP selector tool where members of the public can go to compare the different candidates and choose the more animal welfare friendly ones to vote for.

In addition we will work with our national organisations and their members to get closer to the voters and make a difference.



What do you expect to achieve by putting animal welfare on the political agenda in this election year? What end result would make this campaign a success in your opinion?

We believe Article 13 of the Treaty which recognises animal sentience needs to be expanded to all policy areas and we will work to achieve this. We hope that our campaign will educate candidates of the importance and relationship animals have to humans and that a greater proportion of MEPs will join the Intergroup for Animal welfare and conservation and raise the profile and awareness of all related issues

Can you take us through the main points of your manifesto on animal welfare?

Overarching objective: Support the introduction of an animal welfare framework law

The European Commission is currently discussing the possibility of adopting an overarching animal welfare framework law, as provided for by the second strategy on the welfare of animals. It is a unique opportunity to show that the EU is serious about animal welfare. Such a law must cover all groups of animals, including pets (cats and dogs) and wild animals. It must allow for new standards for these species for which none exist yet and create tools to improve the protection of all animals through better education and training, thorough citizen awareness and improved enforcement of existing legislation. This is also the right opportunity to show that Article 13 of the Treaty is properly taken into account by ensuring coherence and consistency with other policy areas.

1. Improve farm animal welfare

The European Parliament needs to support a move from over-intensive to innovative animal welfare friendly systems of production, taking fully into account the impact of transport and slaughter. Indeed, there is an ever-increasing tendency in the EU to move to industrial ways

of farming which impact negatively the welfare of animals. In the near future the European Parliament must support animal welfare improvements every time a relevant policy is discussed with can be detrimental to the well-being of farm animals, be it in the area of climate change, resource efficiency, sustainable food policy or rural development and the CAP. There is a need for legal standards to be adopted to protect the welfare of dairy cows, farmed fish and beef cattle, among others. Citizens demand products which come from systems with better welfare and they should be better



informed about methods of production and how animals have been treated at slaughter and how long they have been transported. MEPs should fight for it and promote win-win solutions for the animals, the farmers and the other actors of the food chain.

2. Reduce the number of animals used in research and testing

Despite the EU commitment to reduce the number of animals used in research and safety testing, new technological developments have led in recent years to an increase in these numbers. The future European Parliament should support the adoption by the European Commission of an EU wide strategy for the development, validation, acceptance and use of non-animal testing methods, in the context of the revision of EU legislation (for example on authorisation of feed and food) and in the context of new technologies (such as nanotechnology) to guarantee that the impact of these new rules on animal testing is fully considered.

The strategy should include: the implementation of data sharing, to avoid duplication of animal testing and the inclusion of non-animal test methods and 'Intelligent/Integrated testing strategies' in data requirements for authorization, as well as the promotion of alternative, non-animal test methods.

3. Protect cats and dogs

The welfare of cats and dogs is currently regulated by EU Member States, despite the huge impact that cross-border activities involving these animals can have on human and animal health and welfare, consumer protection as well as on the functioning of the internal market. In November 2010, the Council of Ministers adopted conclusions calling on the Commission to take action to deal with the welfare of cats and dogs. The European Parliament also adopted a resolution and the EU strategy on the welfare of animals provides for a study on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices. Political groups should ensure adequate protection of cats and dogs by supporting the following in their election manifestos:

- EU rules to improve the breeding and sale of cats and dogs.
- Compulsory identification and registration in an appropriate database, which is linked to an EU database.
- Licensing of cat and dog breeders and traders.

4. Improve the welfare of wild animals

Wild animals are protected in the EU mostly through the Habitats and the Wild Birds Directives for native wildlife, and by EU Wildlife Trade Regulations and the zoo Directive for exotic wildlife. These laws however only briefly touch upon animal welfare and are not properly enforced,

leading to major problems due to inadequate transport or keeping conditions among others. Political groups should firmly engage in safeguarding the welfare of both native and exotic wild animals in the EU by including the following objectives in their manifestos:

- Banning the import of wild-caught animals and restricting the number of exotic species that can be imported and traded in the EU, in line with EU policies which tackle related concerns including human health, animal health and the protection of the environment.
- A dedicated overarching legislative framework to protect marine mammals from all threats, similar to what already exists in the US (Marine Mammal Protection Act US, 1972), Mexico and France.
- Create and adequately fund the implementation of an action plan to tackle wildlife trafficking. Specifically, the action plan must tackle enforcement, anti-poaching and demand reduction in source, transit and demand countries.

5. Use EU trade agreements to boost animal welfare in partner third countries

The EU is currently negotiating several trade agreements with non-EU countries, including the US. It is a major opportunity to call for the inclusion of animal welfare as an important concern of EU citizens. The European Parliament should not only call for measures to ensure that animal welfare standards are not undermined in the EU, it should also take this opportunity to push for better considerations for animal welfare in trade partner countries. Not only farm animal welfare must be safeguarded but the protection of wildlife must be guaranteed through the inclusion of specific considerations in trade agreements.

What are the main steps that the EU can take in order to improve the treatment of animals? What can citizens do?

We really want EU citizens to engage with these elections and actually show the candidates that EU citizens are really concerned about animal welfare and know what problems exist and want solutions found as quickly as possible.

We do not want MEPs to see animal welfare legislation as administrative burden but that a one welfare society approach is beneficial to all . Citizens are concerned about animal welfare: they have signed petitions, joined campaigns and sent numerous letters to Members of the European Parliament since it was created. As a result, for years the European Parliament has supported many initiatives to improve the welfare of animals. The European Parliament being the only EU Institution directly elected by citizens, it is essential that it continues to respond positively to these expectations from the citizens they represent. It is thus vital that members of the European Parliament and the political groups they belong to clearly state how they plan to improve animal welfare in their programmes for 2014-2019.

As the Federation of Animal Protection Organisations in the European Union, Eurogroup for Animals believes that there is a need for both new policies and legislative initiatives and for better enforcement of existing ones. We are concerned that there is currently little political willingness at EU level to adopt policies leading to better animal welfare. We believe that future members of the European Parliament and their parties should show their engagement in favour of improved animal welfare as a central factor to promote good animal and public health, as well as environment protection.

AGENDA

FORUM FOR EUROPEAN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS



1



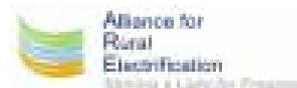
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1 ▶ February 11-12, Seminar - Beyond Austerity, Towards Employment: a Gender Aware Framework

FEPS, in collaboration with TASC, ECLM, the Open University and the School of Oriental and African Studies, organises a roundtable discussion in Brussels with the objective to discuss the changing position and role of both women and men in the labour market in Europe, considering whether or not recent austerity policies have had particularly gendered effects and where the roots of such gendered impacts lie. Further, the roundtable discussion will debate how to create the conditions for a gender-equitable and expansionary macroeconomic framework in Europe. A macroeconomic framework where equitable growth, creating quality jobs, increased living standards, and macroeconomic stability are at the core.

Details

2 ▶ February 12, European Pet Night

The event will be held under the patronage of Member of the European Parliament Julie Girling. Our guest speaker is Katie Bristow-Wade from PAWS (Parents Autism Workshops and Support), who will explain how PAWS brings together parents of children with autism, to share experiences and explore the potential that a pet dog might have within the family.

Details

3 ▶ February 19, Implementing the Common European Asylum System

In 2012, there were over 330,000 applications for asylum in the EU, representing a 10% increase on the previous year highlighting the need to provide adequate protection measures and responses throughout the EU.

Details

4 ▶ February 19, Reinventing Europe through Local Initiative

The European project is in need of renewal. A growing disconnect between the EU and its citizens threatens the democratic legitimacy of the EU and compounds its inability to keep pace with the needs and interests of local communities, which continue to feel the impact of the economic crisis and austerity, and are increasingly concerned by the pace of EU and government action on challenges such as social inequalities, the rise of populism, territorial disparities, climate change and ecological degradation.

Details

5 ▶ February 19, Energy Access Business Matchmaking Event

A half-day event to put rural electrification organisations and professionals (project developers and designers, service providers, consultants, etc) and financiers in contact.

Details