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## EU Profiler has a chance to bring voters one step closer to the European Union

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The European Parliament relentlessly tries to inform citizens about the reasons for voting in the upcoming elections. As on the previous occasion, the EP this time around is running an information campaign to reach citizens and hopefully thereby increase turnout. Similar tasks are fulfilled by many NGOs, which in different countries organize information campaigns regarding the EP and the elections.

What is still missing, however, among other things, is a reliable set of information regarding party programmes. In an idealized version of the democratic electoral process (often referred to in political science as the 'responsible party government model'), voters make an informed choice between the competing parties both on the basis of their programmes and on their government or opposition record. Most observers doubt that this is the case nowadays, both in relation to national and European elections.

Voters simply do not read parties' programmes, and instead rely on other sources to make their judgment about which parties to vote for, such as the media. In the European Parliament elections, this problem is further exacerbated by the fact confirmed by many opinion polls, namely that the EU citizens are not fully aware of the nature of the EP elections, let alone their lack of knowledge about party programmes. So what can be done to get voters interested in these elections?

One way of doing this is through developing Internet-based voting aid applications, which aim both at informing the citizens about party programmes on various issues, but which also are able to show which political party is closest to a given voter. This task is an ambition of the revolutionary voting aid application created for the European Parliament elections – EU Profiler ([www.euprofiler.eu](http://www.euprofiler.eu)), launched on 23 April. Created by a group of more than a hundred of political scientists from all over Europe and beyond, EU Profiler combines a very attractive format of presentation (through various visualisations it offers to the user) with the highest academic quality ensured by the presence of the prestigious European University Institute in Florence. What is especially noteworthy is that the EU Profiler is available for all EU Member States in their respective languages. The user is simply asked to respond to a number of statements, which then situates him or her on the European political landscape. In these times of e-democracy, such tools can not only enrich the electoral process and increase the public participation in political life, but even become the main source of information for citizens regarding party programmes. Voters, however, should not expect that the advice generated by the EU Profiler will always match their own party preference. Nonetheless, if EU Profiler only succeeds in giving voters food for thought, stimulating their independent research on what parties' programmes are, we will

be going closer to a much needed personalization of the EP elections, to a more active and aware civic involvement, and hopefully, to a higher turnout.

In other words, we will bring the citizens one step closer to the EU.

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