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[« Parlorama.eu portal reopens despite EU politician](#)

To be active is not enough – be interactive!

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The European Parliament is looking for all kinds of ways to shorten the gap with voters and to increase their participation in the upcoming elections. Web pages, blogs, forums, Facebook, Myspace, online information platforms – hundreds of info projects are outdistancing on originality. Let's focus on the most interesting among them!

The European Parliament live



Recently the EP can be given credit not only for its numerous colourful brochures and information materials but also for its own television which broadcasts live the ongoing events in Strasbourg – sessions of the committees, hearings, press conferences, briefings, positions of commissioners and policy discussions. If you miss the live show everything is being recorded in an archive on the programme's webpage and subtitled in 22 languages, including Bulgarian.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/eplive/public/default_en.htm

Europarl TV offers several thematic channels. "yourParliament" is similar to the Bulgarian "Parliamentary Overview" and covers all current debates and speeches of the MEPs. "yourVoice" is the place where the European public opinion on many issues, such as the importance of the directive on working time, could be seen. "youngEurope" is aiming at young voters and it presents draft bills that are of direct concern to them, such as the one on free access to education and the eco-label requirement throughout Europe.

Another way to follow the parliamentary activity directly is the TV agency of the European Union – Europe by Satellite (EbS). It broadcasts sequences from all central events at the main EU institutions – the Parliament, the Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Court of Justice, the European Central Bank and others from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. The service exists since 1995 and presents audiovisual material on European topics through satellite. The broadcasts are a mixture of direct receiving, news and key sequences from the archive. It's freely accessible to watch on the internet at the website of the [European Commission](#).

EU Debate 2009

Between 4-7 June 2009, 375 million European citizens will be called upon to give their vote on who will represent them in the EP for the next 5 years. In this regard, the priorities in Brussels are increasingly revolving around two words - "youth" and "elections". Having duly realized that young voters can not be attracted with pre-election promises and complex platforms, the MEPs are yet again a step ahead of the national deputies and rely on more modern methods. Internet is the place where people aged 18-25 spend most of their free time, communicate with friends and inform themselves. It's also the place where a considerable part of the EP election campaign is happening.

However, being active in the web space does not suffice – you have to be interesting, entertaining and modern in order to be noticed by the young user. Apart from the official EP site, there are many others created especially for the elections in the summer. Their goal is

not only to inform and guide their voters' way through the complicated European political system, but also to engage directly in the debate be it via an opinion, a picture, a complaint or a personal initiative.



[Eudebate2009.eu](#) is a project to analyze and debate the European elections run by the European internet magazine [Cafebabel.com](#). The online portal has no affiliation to any of the political groups and its main goal is to encourage citizens to freely express their opinions on European issues. All contributions are translated into 6 languages – English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Polish. "We were sluggish voters in 2004. That was the worst case in the EP history so far. Only 45% of Europeans made the effort to the polls despite of the fact that this institution is deciding on issues concerning our everyday life. That's a shame!", reads the project's manifesto, where preventing the Eurobarometer prognosis for an even lower election turnout to come true is stated as an aim.

A real undisputed hit among the internet info projects created to encourage the European voter is the site that helps profiling your personal standing in the political space. Upon completion of a short test on the priorities of the EU policies, everyone is able to identify which European political group they are closest to on the electronic map. For instance, if you think that social programmes should be taken further, even at the price of higher taxes, then most probably it will turn out you belong to the group of European socialists. The page is available in all EU languages and allows you to create a personal profile and compare it with other European citizens who took the test. [Euprofiler.eu](#) is an initiative of the

[European University Institute](#) with the technical assistance of one Danish and one Swiss company for sociological research.

Social networks on the internet are the place where young people spend most of their free time not only for entertainment, but ever more often for information as well. Nearly every MEP has a public profile, the so called fan page on facebook, where so they say "the distance to the voters is minimal and the communication is direct and constant".

A special team is taking care of the personal profile of the Euro Parliament on "My Space", which very much recalls a fan page of a musical artist with its typical video clips, banners and posts. The blue background and the European elections logo, however, are clearly pointing at the star in this case – the legislative body of the EU. Stickers with the words "European elections – It's Your Choice!" can be downloaded from the webpage and added to your personal profile or to a picture. Apart from the count back timer of the remaining days to the elections, there's also a lot of useful information and clips on current EP directives.

It's not all yellow stars on blue background

The ex-parliamentary assistant of an Italian MEP, the Belgian Flavien Deltort created the portal [Parlorama.eu](#) that classifies the Euro MPs according to their plenary sessions and parliamentary commission attendance. The point system varies from 1-10 and ranks the deputies "The Best" (with the most points) and "The Worst" (least points). On the 24th April the webpage was temporarily shut down due to "the overwhelming volume of complaints". Only a week later though, on the 5th May, Parlorama.eu re-opened online with an improved version in French, English, Italian and Spanish and will continue rating the politicians before the elections in June.

The revolutionary internet initiative received a lot of criticism for subjectivity from Euro MPs in "The Worst" column. On the new homepage, the author Flavien Deltort will publish the files of the original statistics from the plenary sessions in Strasbourg on which he bases his study. "The more transparent politics is, the more interest it generates amongst citizens", says in an interview the creator of Parlorama.eu whose research started year and a half ago.

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