

Improving the practical arrangements for the holding of the European elections in 2014

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PURPOSE: outline initiatives with a view to enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the next European elections in 2014.

BACKGROUND: **the 2014 European elections will be the first since the Lisbon Treaty entered into force.** The European Commission is committed to fully exploiting existing Lisbon provisions to further enhance transparency and the European dimension of the European elections, thereby reinforcing the democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process and bringing the system closer to Union citizens.

The Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the democratic foundations of the Union:

- the citizens' perspective is further affirmed in the new definition of members of the European Parliament as **'representatives of the Union's citizens'**;
- the **role of the European Parliament** as the representative democratic assembly of the Union has been underscored by the Lisbon Treaty. It also grants enhanced powers to the European Parliament, consolidating its role as full co-legislator alongside the Council;
- it introduces the **citizens' initiative** to enable EU citizens to participate more directly and fully in the democratic life of the Union.

In view of the reinforced role and powers of the European Parliament, it is essential to enhance and to give more prominence to the process for **electing its Members**. This is particularly relevant in view of the actions required at EU level to address the financial and sovereign debt crisis. The elections will be all the more important as the European Union is taking major steps towards **genuine Economic and Monetary Union**, of which democratic legitimacy is a cornerstone.

The Commission considers that integration and legitimacy have to advance in parallel. More **democracy is the corollary of the greater institutional integration** needed to enable the European Union to rise to current global challenges. In this respect, there is a pressing need to strengthen links between EU citizens and the democratic process of the Union.

CONTENT: this Communication outlines the Commission's **initiatives to facilitate citizens' participation in the 2014 European elections** and to safeguard the respect of the democratic principles of these elections. It is accompanied by a **Recommendation** intended to enhance the democratic and efficient conduct of the European elections.

In view of the European elections of 2014, the Commission believes that:

- voters should be informed of the affiliation between national parties and European political parties before and during elections to the European Parliament;
- Member States should agree on a **common day** for the elections of the European Parliament, with polling stations closing at the same time;
- **each European political party should nominate its candidate** for President of the European Commission, as requested for by the European Parliament in its [resolution](#) of 22 November 2012;

- **national parties** should ensure that their political broadcasts in view of European Parliament elections inform citizens about the candidate they support for President of the European Commission and the candidate's programme.

In addition, as a follow-up to the [2010 EU Citizenship report](#), the Commission highlights the following:

- **enforcing the electoral rights of EU citizens residing in a Member State other than their own:** the Commission contacted Member States to ensure that the voting rights of EU citizens residing in a Member State other than their own are fully enforced across the EU;
- **ensuring respect for the common principles of the European elections:** these principles set out in EU law prohibit *inter alia* the publication of results in one Member State before the polls close in all Member States;
- **enhancing participation of non-national EU candidates in the European elections:** following a relaunching of negotiations by the Commission, the Council adopted Directive 2013/1/EU, amending Directive 93/109/EC, which provides *inter alia* that candidates no longer have to provide proof that they have not been deprived of their electoral rights in their home Member State. Instead, they will have to make a formal declaration to that effect, to be verified by the electoral authorities in the Member State in which they reside. This simplified procedure will apply in the 2014 European elections.

The Commission believes that these practical recommendations, evolutionary but not revolutionary, can be implemented in time for the European Parliament elections of 2014.

The **European Year of Citizens** is an opportunity for citizens of the Union to make their voices heard. The prime occasion for this purpose are the European Parliament elections.