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2019 Elections: A Battle for Europe

EP-EUI Policy Dialogue on “European Parliament Elections - Challenges And Opportunities Of New Digital Technologies”

Thursday 18 October 2018

Every five years European citizens go to the polls to elect their representatives to the European Parliament, the only directly elected Institution of the European Union.

The next European Parliament’s elections will take place in seven months, between 23 and 26 of May next year, just two months after Brexit. We, European citizens will elect 705 members of the Parliament, who will play a decisive role in shaping Europe, both its anatomy and physiology, for the next decade, also its place in globalised world and its commitment to the common values.

Every elections are important. This is how democracy starts, even if democracy is much more than election. We can see democratically elected governments who practice democracy while bending the rule of law. What matters as well are institutions and democratic political culture.

But the 2019 elections will be a battle for Europe. The electoral campaign will be not only about what to do and why. We will have to respond to the big question of how the change in Europe can happen. So the debate will be about democracy, rule of law and citizens participation in shaping European decision making process. We know that no change is not an option. But the necessary change cannot be imposed, the vision of change will be coming from below, from our dialogues with and among citizens.

My thanks go to the EP Policy Department for Citizens Rights and Constitutional Affairs and DG ITEC for bringing us here to discuss the role of digital technologies and challenges and opportunities arising from their use. We know that state of the art digital technology can be an opportunity for elections; the world of internet has

brought a promise of better access to information and can enhance dialogue. Nevertheless, there are risks as well, misuse and abuse of information and data take place. Over the last years we have witnessed a significant number of cyber incidents, cyber-attacks targeting electoral processes, campaigns, political party infrastructure. And we do want free and fair elections. We have started to develop legal framework to protect us against these risks. However, awareness of both opportunities and risks is crucial.

That is why I am grateful for your involvement and organizing this event.

I would like to welcome particularly warmly our experts joining us from Florence over the visiolink from beautiful Teatro room in the European University Institute:

- Prof. Dr Giovanni Sartor, professor in legal informatics at the University of Bologna and the professor in Legal informatics and Legal Theory at the European University Institute of Florence;

- Prof. Dr Pier Luigi Parcu, Director of the Communications & Media Area of the FSR, Director of the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom and Director of the Florence Competition Programme;

- Prof Dr Dino Pedreschi, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Pisa, and a co-leader of the Pisa KDD Lab - Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining Laboratory;

- Prof. Dr Andrea Calderaro, Director of the Centre for Internet and Global Politics, and a Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the Department of Politics and International Relations/School of Law and Politics at Cardiff University,

- and Dr Diego Garzia, a Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the University of Lucerne, currently serving as a founding convenor of the ECPR Research Network on Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) and a member of the Scientific Committee of the Italian National Election Study (ITANES).

I would like to welcome Mr Giancarlo Vilella, Director-General for Innovation and Technological Support (DG ITEC) providing the European Parliament with information and communications technology (ICT) services. Giancarlo is currently an EP-EUI Visiting Fellow and will participate in the meeting from Florence.

Mr Miguel Tell Cremades, Head of the Policy Department for Citizens Rights and Constitutional Affairs, will moderate discussion after the presentations of the panellists.

Today's meeting is possible because of a special link between European Parliament and European University Institute, which allows us to discuss important topics in a scientific context linking European legislator, academia and society.