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**Local Forums for Developing Participatory Democracy**

**First Transnational Workshop**

***Promoting Youth and EU Migrants Participation in the  
European Parliament Elections 2009***

**WORKSHOP  
RAPPORT**





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# CONTENTS

Project Objectives	3
The Scale of the Problem	4
The Causes of Low Turnout	5
Alienation	6
General Causes of Alienation	6
Particular Causes of Alienation Amongst Young People	8
Particular Causes of Alienation Amongst Migrants	10
Efficiency of Campaigns	11
Strategic Issues	12
Tactical Issues	13
New Media and Social Networking Tools	20
New Media - Techniques and Rules	24
Case Studies	25
Conclusions	33
Abbreviations	37
Bibliography	37





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# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This project, co-financed by the European Commission under the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme, aims to raise awareness of citizens' rights. Specifically it is aimed at 'promoting youth and EU migrants participation in the European Parliament Elections 2009'. The project is designed to support NGOs and local, regional and city authorities in their efforts to boost engagement in the democratic process in their areas, working through Local Forums for Developing Participatory Democracy.

The two target groups are young people and EU migrants. Young people are defined as being those aged between 18 and 30. The project also targets EU migrants – that is to say those citizens who reside in member states other than that in which they hold citizenship by right of birth or naturalisation. They have acquired migrant status either due to a desire to work or study in another member state, or to retire to another member state.

The project objectives can be summarised as being:

- To assess the scale of the problem, in terms of the level of abstention and disengagement amongst young people and EU migrants.
- To analyse the causes of the low level of participation in the democratic process and reluctance in particular to vote at EP elections.
- To identify methods of engaging young people and migrants in the democratic process and persuading them to vote.
- To share those methods and best practice in order to positively affect turnout in the June 2009 EP elections.
- To build on the lessons learned in the current EP elections, and take them forward to 2014. The Barcelona forum (which is hosting the next workshop) is already looking ahead to the 2014 elections.



## THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Before the solutions to any problem can be devised and implemented it is essential to work out the scale of the problem – and the causes of the problem.

Initially this project is geared towards maximising turnout at the EP elections to be held in June 2009 – so the timescale is short. These elections are to be held across all 27 member states, with 375 million voters qualified to vote – so the scale is very large. The rationale for this programme and this project is to try and arrest (and if possible reverse) the steady decline in voter turnout since the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 – so the task is substantial.

It is a statistical fact that turnout in EP elections has declined steadily since the first direct elections in 1979. Pan EU turnout figures are as follows:

- 1979 (first direct elections) 63%
- 1984 61%
- 1989 59%
- 1994 57%
- 1999 49%
- 2004 (last elections) 46%

The falls in turnout have been particularly marked in some countries. From when they joined the EU until the last elections in 2004 turnout in Portugal fell from 72% to 39%, and in Austria from 70% to 42%. In Poland and Slovakia in 2004 turnout was less than 25%. This is a particularly worrying trend as many of the recent accession states joined the EU in an effort to demonstrate their democratic credentials, having spent decades under one form of one-party government or another.

Research conducted by opinion polling company ComRes (of which LZ is a director) indicate that a further decline in turnout in the June 2009 EP elections is likely. A recent poll showed that whilst in Belgium 70% of the population were 'certain to vote', in Poland that figure fell dramatically to just 13%. At their last national government elections turnout in Belgium was 91%, whilst in Poland it was 54%.

Another survey by ComRes illustrates a strong differential between turnout in elections for national governments, and turnouts in local and EP elections. In the UK the turnout at the last general election was 61%, turnout at local elections was 41%, and turnout at the last EP elections was 39%. Figures in the Netherlands showed a



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similar trend. Turnout at the last general election was 80%, turnout at local elections was 47%, and turnout at the last EP elections was 39%.

Looking at the figures for the 2004 EP elections it is also highly noticeable that sizeable numbers of voters used the ballot for the EP elections as a protest vote – often voting for far-right or anti-EU parties. In the UK the United Kingdom Independence Party polled just 1% at the last general election – but a strong 16% at the last EP elections. In Poland the League of Families polled exactly the same – 1% in the last national government elections, but 16% in the last EP elections. In France the National Front polled 4% in the last national elections, but 10% in the last EP elections, whilst in Sweden the June List party polled just 1% in the national government elections and 13% in the last EP elections.

Although no firm statistics are available, it is strongly suspected that voting turnout amongst young people is lower than the average. This suspicion is borne out by research conducted by the European Youth Forum, which showed that whilst most young people are interested in politics, very few feel inclined to actively engage in the democratic process as currently constituted.

Migrants have 'only' been permitted to vote in their country of residence since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Again, no statistics are available but it is strongly suspected that turnout amongst this group is also lower than the average. All of the participants in this programme and workshop represent areas where intra-EU migration has occurred on a substantial scale.

## THE CAUSES OF LOW TURNOUT

Having analysed the scale of the problem, it is now possible to move to the next stage – which is to try and identify the causes of the problem. No solution can be devised and applied until the causes of the underlying problem have been identified.

There are a large number of possible explanations as to why turnout is so low in EP elections. These can be loosely grouped under three major headings – alienation from the political system, lack of efficiency in conducting campaigns, and failure to fully harness the potential of the internet and new media.





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# ALIENATION

Of all of the causes of low participation in EP elections the largest is alienation from the system. This is true across nearly all of the member states, across nearly all age groups, and across nearly all of the social demographics.

In this section of the report we will examine general causes of alienation, which inevitably leads to abstentionism. We will then examine causes of alienation which relate particularly to our two target groups – young people and migrants.

## GENERAL CAUSES OF ALIENATION

In this section we will look at general causes of the alienation which leads to a depressed level of engagement in the general democratic process, and lower turnout in elections.

### GENERAL DECLINE

It is important to recognise that it is not just EP elections which have seen a decline in turnout. Over the last thirty years there has been a general decline in turnout in all elections in western liberal democracies.

To some extent the decline in turnout in EP elections is simply a reflection of the general decline in turnout at all elections. Since this is the case, the problem cannot be tackled by the EU and by EU instigated programmes in isolation.

### LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

The EU is a highly complex supra-national organisation. It embraces 27 member states, and has 22 official languages. As well as the three main institutional bodies (the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament) there are a host of supplementary institutions, working groups and advisory bodies.

On top of this general ignorance about the EU, it is not generally understood by the general public that the EP plays a vital role, and that the EU has a strong and direct impact on their quality of life. The fact that the EP now has co-decision status with the European Commission and the Council of Ministers is not generally known or understood.





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### LACK OF IDENTIFIABLE FIGURES

Despite the growing powers of the EP the institution has largely failed to attract substantial or well-known political figures.

Politicians either use the EP as a stepping stone on the way to a national political career, or as a retirement job at the end of their careers. It was noticeable in the recent election leadership contest for the UK Lib Dem party the two front-runners (Nick Clegg and Chris Huhne) had both left the EP in order to pursue careers in domestic national politics.

As a result of the EP's failure to attract senior and identifiable political figures there is a disincentive for citizens to vote.

### LACK OF EMPATHY

Because of all of the reports about MEPs and their expenses, there is a distinct lack of empathy between the electorate and the EP.

Citizens may be unemployed, or struggling to hold on to their jobs. Therefore, when they read or hear about MEPs who not only receive a substantial salary, but also are entitled to generous expenses without producing receipts, they feel distinctly alienated.

As well as the issue of expenses, potential voters were also alienated by the 'constitutional crisis' when the EP forced the entire European Commission and its President Jacques Santer to resign in 1999.

### LOBBYING AND BIG BUSINESS

In her introduction KR identified the power of big business and lobbying as one of the reasons why people were disillusioned and alienated with the democratic process and as a result felt disinclined to vote.

BV of the European Youth Forum in particular stated that young people felt that they needed defending against big business.

### ELECTORAL PROCEDURE

For those electorates used to voting for individuals, the PR list system seems remote and impersonal – and this just compounds the issue of lack of identifiable and recognisable figures discussed above.





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There is also a lack of uniformity of voting systems across the EU. Although elections for the EP take place around the same time (early June), there is no uniform date or time. In the UK voters can only vote between 7.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m. on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June, whilst in some EU member states voting takes place throughout the following weekend.

### NATIONAL ISSUES

Voters do have a tendency to regard the EP as a 'secondary election', that is to say elections which do not directly affect their everyday lives. Turnout at 'secondary elections' (local elections, referendums, EP elections) are invariably lower than at national elections – where direct impact issues such as taxation are decided.

Because they regard them as 'secondary elections', voters often use the EP elections to send a message of dissatisfaction to their incumbent national governments. This means that even if they do actually bother to vote, they are often casting their votes for the negative rather than positive reasons.

## PARTICULAR CAUSES OF ALIENATION AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

### APATHY

It is an unfortunate fact that young people have a strong tendency to be apathetic towards the democratic process, and are strongly disinclined to vote. There is also a strong element of complacency to aggravate problems caused by apathy. Most western democracies have now been stable for so long that citizens – especially young people – do not remember what it was like to live under any other system, and therefore do not feel strongly motivated to vote.

This apathy amongst young people is not restricted to the EU and to EP elections – it is true across the all nations and all elections, supra-national, national and local. As people get older, and acquire more of a stake in society, this apathy naturally subsides, and is replaced by a feeling that it is a citizen's duty to engage in the democratic process – even if it is only to cast a vote from time to time.

### PRESSURES

Most observers would agree that it is the case that young people are now subject to far more pressure (and in particular demands on their time) than ever before.





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In a global competitive environment there is strong pressure for students to get good degrees in order to get good jobs, Once they have jobs there is pressure for them to hold on to them – and then to get promoted – in order to pay off debts run up whilst they were students. If they then start to have a family – which many people in their twenties and thirties still do – those pressures only get greater.

All of these pressures strongly mitigate against any time-consuming involvement in the democratic process, and that lack of involvement in turn leads to abstentionism.

### LACK OF IDENTIFICATION

We have seen above how there is a general lack of identification with the EU and its institutions across all ages and all demographics.

That lack of identification is particularly extreme amongst young people. Most politicians and candidates are middle-aged, and many of them are also male. This makes it much harder for young people – and in particular young females – to identify with them and to be enthused by them.

Young people are also resentful of the fact that although in most countries they can work, pay tax, and start a family at 16, they cannot vote. This issue was highlighted by BV of the European Youth Forum as an issue which disincentivises young people to vote, and is also a cause which has been taken up by the British Youth Council (one of the case studies covered later in this report).

### RISE OF SINGLE ISSUE GROUPS

One other phenomenon in recent years has been the rise of single issue pressure groups.

In the UK the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has more than one million members. This is more than all of the political parties put together. Other pressure groups are international. Environmental groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have members and activists in all EU countries.

If young people identify with these single issue pressure groups, and give them their support and possibly their money, they are potentially less likely to engage with mainstream political parties.





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# PARTICULAR CAUSES OF ALIENATION AMONGST MIGRANTS

## IGNORANCE

EU migrants have 'only' been allowed to vote in their country of residence since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. Many are still unaware of the fact that they are entitled to vote in EP elections, and therefore do not bother to register to vote.

Equally, many party workers are unaware that EU migrants are entitled to vote in their country of residence – so they do not bother to contact them to encourage them to register or to vote. This ignorance – on the part of the potential voters and the party workers – has a strong negative effect on turnout amongst migrants.

## POVERTY

Migrant workers often have a lower standard of living than the indigenous population. Although some are professional people (doctors, lawyers, accountants) many others are engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled manual labour.

Poverty itself is one of the major inhibiting factors on turnout. If all of an individual's attention is concentrated on finding and keeping work, they have less time and energy to engage in the democratic process. Therefore the fact that migrants generally have a lower standard of living than the indigenous population means that they are less likely to vote.

## IDENTIFICATION WITH ORIGINAL COUNTRY AND CULTURE

It is naturally the case that although migrants have chosen – for reasons of study, work or retirement – to settle in another EU country, they still strongly identify with their country of origin.

This means that they feel less engaged with their country of residence, and therefore less inclined to engage in the democratic process. This lack of engagement inevitably leads to a lower turnout to vote at elections – whether local or EP.





## EFFICIENCY OF CAMPAIGNS

Just as well thought out and well implemented campaigns increase levels of engagement and participation, so the reverse is true - poorly conceived and implemented campaigns inevitably have the opposite effect.

There are a wide range of factors which affect the overall efficiency of a campaign. Inevitably resources are a major factor, but the lack of a substantial budget should never be used as an excuse for failure in this regard. Once the resources available are identified, and the timescale is known, then a good campaign is all about getting the tactics and the strategy right and then implementing them energetically and efficiently.

In my book 'The Political Campaigning Handbook' I liken political campaigns to warfare. The terminology is very similar, and in some cases identical. The term 'campaign' itself is widely used in both politics and warfare. There are references in political circles to 'war chests', 'war books' and 'war rooms'. There are constant references in political campaigns to 'bombardments' and sometimes there are references to 'opening a second front', springing an 'ambush', and 'outflanking' and opponent.

In 'The Political Campaigning Handbook' I refer to the 'air war' and the 'ground war'. The 'air war' is where the campaign headquarters try to set the scenario by dominating the media and dictating the policy agenda. The 'ground war' is where the war is fought street by street and door by door – and where the 'foot soldiers' of the political parties can secure victory by sheer effort and determination.

Although the terminology of warfare is offensive to some, it is particularly apposite when discussing political campaigns. And, everyone would agree, it is better that differences of opinion in modern liberal western democracies are fought through the ballot box, rather than by using the bullet and the bomb.

So this section deals with what makes a good, successful campaign. Some aspects are more relevant to the 'air war', and can only be implemented by the EU institutions and national governments. Most of this section, however, deals with the 'ground war' – tactics and techniques which can be adopted and adapted by partners in the local democracy forums.





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## STRATEGIC ISSUES

This sub-section relates to those aspects of campaigning which largely fall under the remit of the EU institutions and national governments.

This is the 'air war', and deals with the strategic elements of the campaign. Their application is not exclusively strategic, however, and local forums need to be aware of them because they do impact upon local tactical campaigns.

### EDUCATION

To some extent this falls under the parameters of 'air war' – it is the responsibility of EU institutions and national governments.

It is undoubtedly the case that if the general public had a better idea about the vital role which the EU plays, and the key role which the EP plays within it, they would be much more likely to vote in EP elections. This process of education can begin in schools, but needs to be continued in to further and higher education.

### PUBLICITY

There should be much greater publicity about the EP elections – certainly during the actual election campaign and the run-up to the elections. This publicity should concentrate on factual information such as when the elections are happening, who is entitled to vote, and how people can go about the process of registering to vote and then actually voting.

### REFORM

There has been a considerable degree of reform within the EU and its institutions in recent years. This relates to the way in which the institutions go about their business, and the way in which MEPs are remunerated in terms of both pay and expenses. There have also been considerable efforts to address the 'democratic deficit' by giving the EP more legislative power and more powers of scrutiny.

However, all of these reforms are largely a waste of time unless EU citizens are aware of what reforms have already been implemented, and of the fact that reform is an ongoing process. If they were aware of the changes, that might go some way towards addressing alienation and lack of empathy discussed above, and might help to boost engagement.





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### ALTERNATIVES

Whilst it is always easier to do nothing than to take action, and whilst the abstentionism of some citizens is a deliberate conscious act, there ought to be awareness that low level of engagement does have political consequences. Low turnout at EP elections does give minority parties and fringe parties a greater chance of representation. Whilst this is no bad thing in itself, it could open the door to significant levels of representation by neo-nazi candidates.

### VOTING METHODS

People should be offered as wide a range of methods as possible with which to be able to cast their votes.

This should certainly include postal voting, which has been proven to boost turnout significantly when introduced in the UK. However, consideration should also be given to the introduction of internet voting and even SMS text message voting – subject to the application of suitable safeguards against vote-rigging. Either one of these would undoubtedly significantly boost turnout by young voters.

### TIMING

The timing of elections should be uniform across the EU. This would enable publicity resources to be maximised, and would add more immediacy to the electoral process and the declaration of the results.

The voting public should also be given the maximum practicable time in which to cast their vote – perhaps 48 hours (over a weekend) rather than a mere 15 hours (as is the case in the UK). If they can be held simultaneously with other elections or referendums, there is always a higher turnout across the board.

### TACTICAL ISSUES

This sub-section deals with those aspects of campaigning which are regional and local and therefore fall directly under the remit of the local forums – and their allies and partners.

These are the 'ground war' or tactical elements of the campaign. As such they are directly relevant to local forums, and can be implemented by them if time and budgets allow.





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### TRADITIONAL MEDIA

In the past traditional print and broadcast media have been the only way (other than through election literature) to inform the population about elections.

Newspapers, magazines, radio and television still have an important role to play in publicising elections, despite the advent of new media (which will be dealt with later in this report). It is possible to purchase advertisements in both the print and broadcast media. There are, however, problems relating to this. Firstly, advertisements tend to be expensive. Secondly, electoral law in some countries either bans advertisements relating to political campaigns completely, or restricts them to the print media.

There are, however, ways of using the traditional media without incurring any costs, and without risking breaking any rules relating to buying advertisements. A well drafted press release with a catchy title might get picked up by local papers if there is a lack of news. This is especially likely if an interesting high-resolution photograph is attached.

Alternatively, most local and national papers (and some magazines) carry letters from readers. Again, a well-drafted (and concise) letter about the elections might get carried. Local papers and magazines in particular often have trouble filling their letters pages, so the chances of success are high. A well written letter can inform readers that there is an election, and tell them why it is important for them to vote. Underneath the signature most newspapers and magazines will also carry the name of the organisation which the letter writer represents – so your forum would also get a name check. There is a strong body of research to show that the letters pages of local newspapers and magazines are amongst the most read sections. There is also much research to show that the general public trusts their local media more than national media.

There are also often opportunities to exploit the broadcast media – without incurring any costs. Current affairs programmes need people to appear on them, either to be interviewed, or to go on a panel, or simply to be in the audience. Most radio stations have phone-in programmes where listeners can air their views. During the course of an election campaign it should be possible to phone in to these programmes and emphasise why it is important to vote.

The Barcelona forum reports that the Spanish government actively encourages the use of the media in order to publicise elections, and it has already been allocated several 'spots'. The Ukrainian Youth Association in particular advocates the use of traditional media, due to the comparatively low level of internet usage in the Ukraine (see case study below).





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Some migrant communities also have their own print media outlets. The Nea Alikarnassos forum states that it reaches the migrant community through its own newspaper called 'The Khronicles'.

### ELECTION LITERATURE

Official bodies can put out literature informing the general public that an election is taking place, and advising them on how to go about registering and then casting their votes. These official bodies can be representatives of EU institutions, and national, local, regional and city bodies.

Whilst political parties concentrate on persuading the electorate to vote in a particular way, non-partisan literature sets out to inform citizens about the fact that elections are taking place. It can also give them all of the information they will need to register and then vote – and give telephone, email and website addresses for anyone who has queries or who wants to get involved in the campaigns or in forums.

Because official bodies tend to be well resourced, they have the ability to tailor their literature towards specific target audiences. Those target audiences could include young people, and also EU migrants. Forums should contact their local authorities and ask them if they have plans to produce such literature.

### EXPATRIATE GROUPS

Some cities and regions have substantial minority communities from other EU countries. Where this is the case these communities have often organised expatriate groups. These are usually formed for social and cultural reasons, but can be approached to ask if they will participate in a campaign or event designed to boost awareness about the elections.

It is also often the case that migrant communities maintain close links with the embassy or consulate of their state of origin. Again, it is worthwhile approaching these diplomatic bodies to enquire whether they are taking any measures to increase awareness about the forthcoming EP elections.

### EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Most educational establishments make an effort to educate their pupils about the democratic process, and the importance of participation.





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Whilst schools often have participation in democracy as part of their standard curriculum, further and higher education establishments would not tend to do so – other than for politics students. Generally the authorities in colleges and universities are happy to grant access to their campuses for groups who are promoting democratic participation. Young Rukh from the Ukraine states that it works very closely with the university authorities (see case study further on in this report). It is also generally possible to work through individual student or the student bodies – especially if they are members of your forums.

Both schools and higher education colleges and universities often hold ‘mock elections’ to run alongside the real thing. The idea is to find pupils or students who want to stand for ‘election’ for one of the political parties. They can then produce literature in support of their candidature, and canvass for support amongst other pupils and students. There can even be hustings meetings, when the issues are debated. Finally, on the day of the real elections (or the Friday before if they are held on a weekend), an actual ballot is held, and the winner declared. This process has the dual advantages of publicising the real elections, and engaging young people in the democratic process at an early age. The Larnaca forum is already working with local schools to put this in to effect, as is the Celje forum.

If it is not possible to get the agreement of the authorities to enter campuses, and there is no connection with student bodies, it is worth standing outside the gates to the campuses, handing out leaflets and discussing issues with students as they come and go.

The Modena forum has already organised an event in conjunction with one of its local higher education establishments – the University of Modena. The Torino forum has engaged with secondary school pupils and also with university students. The ‘Gong’ organisation in Croatia has held workshops which have been attended by 60,000 school pupils (details in the Croatia case study detailed later in this report).

## CHAMPIONS

Whilst it is the responsibility of the political parties to recruit and promote candidates for elections, other bodies can recruit ‘Champions’.

The role of these Champions is to energetically promote the cause of participation in the democratic process. Ideally these Champions should be appropriate and appealing to the target groups. That is to say they should be young men or women who can appeal to the young potential voters, or representatives of the migrant community who can appeal in a compelling way to their own communities.





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These Champions should have the time to devote to the campaign, to be highly motivated, and to be generally attractive and engaging. Ideally they should also have some experience or training which will enable them to deal effectively with the media.

The Torino forum has led the way in the use of Champions. They have appointed nine young people to be *Capitani Coraggiosi* (captains courageous), who have been specially trained to champion the cause of democratic participation.

### ALLIANCES

In any effective campaign alliances and accommodations need to be formed. These can either be permanent or semi-permanent alliances, or *ad hoc* alliances formed for the duration of specific campaigns.

These alliances can either be with official bodies, or with social, cultural or sporting groups. They can also be with youth clubs and groups, faith groups, and local trade and regeneration bodies. They can even be with the local political parties – provided the objective is to promote participation, rather than to promote a particular political party (see section below).

The European Youth Forum presentation made by BV showed that the Forum was made up of 90 separate youth groups. This goes beyond an *ad hoc* alliance, and represents a permanent and powerful grouping.

The Larnaca forum has forged links and set up an alliance with the Youth Board of Cyprus in order to publicise the EP elections. The Celje forum has forged links with its local youth group - JZ Socio – and also with the local EP and EC offices, as well as with local economic regeneration bodies. The Nea Alikarnassos forum shows that it has regular meetings with ten local cultural groups and local youth groups, as does the Larnaca forum. The Torino forum has engaged with local business and regeneration bodies.

### POLITICAL PARTIES

The role of political parties in boosting democratic participation and maintaining and increasing turnout at elections is crucial.

The political parties certainly have the motivation to boost turnout. Greater participation gives them enhanced credibility, and parties which encourage participation invariably benefit disproportionately from the higher turnout. The political parties also have the experience, the expertise, and the resources. They have identified their own supporters during previous campaigns, and during the current





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campaign – and they have developed techniques for ‘getting their vote out’. They also have sophisticated software for identifying potential supporters, and for informing and motivating confirmed supporters.

All political parties have youth wings. They aim to involve young people at an early age, and to harness their energy and exuberance. These youth wings also provide a ‘pipeline’ of suitable candidates to replace members or candidates who die or retire.

Many political parties also have units which target minority groups. They build bridges and form relationship with these groups in order to enlist their endorsement, raise money, and gain votes.

Where there are substantial migrant communities they will undoubtedly have been targeted by the political parties.

Most of all what the political parties have is manpower. Whether this is the highly-paid headquarters staff, or the less well paid local campaign staff, or the armies of volunteers which they raise for each election campaign, they have the bodies to deliver literature, and ‘knock up’ their supporters in order to get them to vote on polling day.

Whilst local forums should be very careful to avoid a situation arising whereby they are identified with one particular political party, they should contact all of the political parties and offer to work with them in order to raise awareness about the elections and to encourage voting.

The Larnaca forum says that political parties in Cyprus are very well organised, and it has established links with them.

## EVENTS

During the course of a three or four week election campaign there are plenty of opportunities to organise events – or stunts – which will grab the attention of the voting public and the media, and motivate the campaign workers.

Traditional political campaigning events consist of either speaker meetings (with one or more speakers from a single political party) or hustings meetings (with speakers from a range of different political parties). Of these local democracy forums would not be allowed to organise speaker meetings, because that would promote a single political party. They can, however, organise hustings meetings – providing they invite candidates from all of the parties fielding candidates. Forums would be





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particularly well placed to do so. That is because one of the conditions which most candidates attach to their attendance of a hustings meeting is that the venue and the chair should be neutral and non-partisan.

These meetings often attract a large audience, and a great deal of media attention. If possible a forum member should chair the meeting, and take the opportunity to highlight the work which the forums are doing. Having a backdrop or table cloth with the forums logo on it is a good idea, in case the press take photographs or shoot video. A press release should be issued after the event (with your own photographs) for those members of the press who were not able to attend the event. You can also shoot video footage yourself, and post it on YouTube or Flickr and your own website.

Street stalls are also widely used during election campaigns. These can be set up on busy shopping streets, in squares or at markets. They can be used to raise awareness by handing out leaflets, stickers (as advocated by the Barcelona forum), balloons or even T shirts – as resources allow. The Celje forum in particular said that ‘giveaways’ were a strong incentive towards participation.

An alternative to the static street stall is ‘circussing’. This technique involves gathering a significant number of supporters (at least six, hopefully twice that many) and parading up and down busy streets talking to people about the elections and handing out literature and giveaways. These are less expensive than street stalls, and can be good fun – provided there are enough volunteers to create a carnival atmosphere. In many respects ‘circussing’ is similar to student ‘rag’ weeks, when students take to the streets to raise money for charity.

Cultural events are very popular, whether they are held at regular venues or they are part of a carnival or fiesta. Street art and drama can also attract crowds. These types of events can be used to appeal to young people, but they can also be aimed directly at migrant groups, where they are already involved as participants or as an audience. The Nea Alikarnassos forum has linked up with the regular ‘Welcome Spring’ event in order to publicise its cause.

By far the biggest and most effective event to highlight an issue and engage young people is the rock concert. Usually these are organised to raise awareness of a specific political issue such as climate change or third world poverty. However, some rock concerts are aimed very specifically at encouraging awareness and participation amongst young people in the political process. Examples include ‘Rock the Vote’ (see case study below) in the USA, and ‘Red Wedge’ in the UK, as well as the ‘Can You Hear Me Europe – Shout!’ events. Events such as these attract big audiences, and they also generate significant media interest.





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The Modena forum has used its imagination to create and 'infobus' which is able to tour events and education establishments in order to heighten awareness about the EP elections. The Barcelona forum has set up a 'video box', which enables the public to make statements and ask questions of politicians. Both of these imaginative initiatives are worthy of a press release and some media coverage.

## NEW MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS

Having reviewed the strategies and tactics which can be used in order to mount an effective political campaign, it is now time to look at the channels of communication and tools which are categorised under the terms new media and social media.

Whilst there is undoubtedly still a role for traditional techniques and tools as outlined above, new media presents enormous opportunities to inform, engage and motivate – and all at comparatively little cost. The advantages of using new media tools to engage with young people are enormously enhanced by the fact that this is the first generation which has grown up with the internet, and uses it as its default medium for gathering and disseminating information.

The advantages of using new media tools as far as migrants are concerned are nearly as powerful. For very little cost, websites and e-newsletters can be built and sent which are targeted very accurately at specific minority communities. This level of engagement and targeting would probably not have been possible using traditional media as a channel of communication.

The recent US Presidential elections saw the internet come in to its own as a political campaigning tool. The eventual winner, Barack Obama, was the most effective user of the medium. Not only did he raise hundreds of millions of dollars for his campaign over the internet, but he also assembled whole armies of supporters who delivered traditional literature and physically knocked on doors. His MyBO (My Barack Obama) website also did a great deal to cultivate the fresh and energetic image which helped him become the first black President of the USA.

The advantages of using the internet to connect with the programmes two target groups were apparent from the start. The workshop therefore had presentations from Mel Herdon (MH) of NGO Action Aid, Andreas Mullerleile (AM) of 'Think About It',





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Ben Vanpeperstaret (BV) of the European Youth Forum, and from the European Parliament's official website team. During the 'Open Space Marketplace' session Jim Segers (JS) of CityMined was a powerful advocate of using new media, and brought much of his practical experience to bear.

The internet is, by its very nature, largely anarchic, ungoverned, and ungovernable. That is a substantial part of its attraction, especially to young people. Having said that, there are etiquettes and protocols relating to the use of new media, and there are also practical 'dos and don'ts'. Some of the tools, some of the 'rules' and some of the techniques as explained by our workshop presenters will now be examined.

## TOOLS

### SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

There are a wide range of social network sites, of which Facebook, Bebo, Flickr, Ning and MySpace are probably the best known. They are all free to access, and free to use.

The advantages of these sites – apart from the fact that they are free – is that they are widely used by young people. It is possible to use these sites to set up groups, and to advertise events. There is also a very strong viral effect to be gained from using these websites. Supporters contact their friends, acquaintances and other like-minded individuals – who in their turn leverage their contact lists.

If local forums are holding specific music or cultural events in order to encourage democratic participation then invitations can be sent out through the social network sites. Groups such as 'I can get one million young people to vote in the EP elections' could also be set up, and linked between forum members' websites and official websites.

The 'Think About It' website hosted by AM has set up a Facebook group, and finds it effective at driving traffic.

### YOUTUBE

If an event is held, then it should be recorded and posted on YouTube. If it is a standard event, it will gain some publicity. If it is a stunt it might attract a substantial number of hits. Events such as sponsored parachute jumps, or bungee jumping, or fun runs (with runners wearing costumes) can produce some amusing footage, which might attract a seriously large number of hits.





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For hosting still photographs Flickr is very easy (and also free) to use, and in her presentation MH recommended the site.

### WEBSITES

The advantages of websites are their cheapness, and their flexibility. They can be set up by volunteers almost without cost, and they can also be updated by volunteers. MH showed the workshop websites designed to increase awareness of and participation in the current Indian elections, and also the 'Power Vote' website on global warming.

Anna and Christian from the EP web team demonstrated to the workshop the website which they had built specifically to promote participation in the EP elections – and on which they hope to attract one million 'hits'. The Nea Alikarnassos forum has already built a website specifically geared to publicise the EP elections, as have Celje, Modena and Larnaca and most of the forums.

### MICROSITES

The main use of microsites is to build a bespoke area targeted at specific subsets. Therefore microsites could be built which are aimed at migrant minorities, in their own language. Having the ability to build microsites enables the personalisation of the communication process – which in turn boosts levels of engagement.

### RSS FEEDS

If websites are adapted to be able to host RSS feeds then supporters can be updated about breaking news or forthcoming events.

The main advantage of RSS is that it 'pushes' communication at recipients, and does not rely on them visiting the website. The Barcelona forum has set up RSS feeds from its website.

### TWITTER

This is a comparatively recent innovation which has nevertheless been very widely adopted.

The advantage of Twitter is that it gives immediacy to internet-based communications, as instantaneous updates can be uploaded via mobile phones. Twitter groups can also be formed. MH and HS both strongly advocated that local forums would utilise Twitter, for both communicating with their supporters, and for





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communicating with each other. The Barcelona forum is an 'early adopter', and has already set up a Twitter account which connects young people with local politicians.

### ONLINE POLLS

People love to take part in online polls. That is because they generally like to participate, especially where it is made fast and easy for them. People (especially young people) also like instant results. So, once they have taken part in an online poll, they can instantly see the results.

MH recommended the use of AddPoll, whilst LZ had had good experience using Survey Monkey. The EP website team had built online polling in to their elections website from the outset.

### ONLINE GAMES

Free online games are an excellent way to raise awareness and boost participation.

One example of an online game aimed specifically at the EP elections is a game invented by the Centre for Innovation in Education called 'Take Part Too' (details are in the Romania case study further on in this report).

Another online game was the 'time machine' which had been built by the EP website team, which aimed to show participants how dull life was before the EU opened up borders and increased prosperity.

### E-NEWSLETTERS

Online e-newsletters are easy to produce and free to circulate. One of the big advantages of e-newsletters is that they can be produced in different languages, so as to be relevant to migrant communities.

### BLOGS

Blogs are one of the principal new media tools. There are literally millions of blogs in the 'blogosphere', although some have very low audiences which can be counted on the fingers of one hand. One of the main deciding factors on audience of blogs is how interesting – and sometimes controversial – they are. AM in his presentation offered one quote which described blogs as 'a finger in the eye of the mainstream media'.





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However, a well constructed and frequently-updated blog can attract substantial traffic, and this is a medium which local forums should not ignore. Anna and Christian from the EP web team told the workshop that their unit blogs in 22 different languages, so as to have pan-EU appeal. AM said that his 'Think About It' aggregator site aimed to attract and retain bloggers from all 27 EU member states.

### TUMBLELOGS

These are to blogs what SMS is to email – short and hastily constructed messages which nevertheless have a strong element of immediacy.

## NEW MEDIA - TECHNIQUES AND RULES

As was stated earlier there are no 'rules' for the internet – but there is etiquette, and there is good and bad practice. There are also techniques for getting the best out of internet tools.

MH, BV, JS and AM all extolled the virtues of internet-based communications – but also warned against some of the pitfalls.

Here are some of the 'dos and don'ts' of the internet:

- *Language*: Always use language which is accessible and appropriate to your target audience. Wherever possible have young people writing where the target audience is other young people.
- *Interactivity*: Always allow for interactivity – communication is a two-way process. Allow responses, and only introduce moderation if you need to.
- *Freshness*. Keep websites updated regularly, and always blog frequently. The 'Think About It' website has to date hosted 351 posts with 1,334 comments
- *Rewards*: Give rewards for loyalty and activity. MH talked about the award of status such as 'badger' and 'super badger'. Also give away 'widgets' – the EP website team does this through its elections website.
- *Volume*: Go to where the eyeballs are. That means using the 'market leading' names such as Facebook and YouTube first, and then looking to newer websites – even if they are technically more advanced.
- *Data*: capture as much data as possible. Of course you must have and apply a privacy policy, but wherever possible capture data so that you can keep interested parties fully informed as to forum events and developments.





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- *Links:* Provide links to similar and like-minded websites. This is common practice, and does produce results. Link with other forums, and also with official websites aimed at increasing participatory democracy – including the QeC ERAN website and the EP elections website (which is aiming for one million hits). The Nea Alikarnassos forum has already linked its website with others.
- *Originality:* Everything is available on the internet for free – don't try re-invent the wheel. Don't try and build bespoke software or applications – just look around for what works best and adopt it.

## CASE STUDIES

It is noticeable how few projects there are internationally aimed at increasing democratic participation by either young people or migrants. As a general rule, these groups are largely ignored, and allowed to continue with their low level of participation and high level of abstentionism. Where particular efforts are made to galvanise these groups, it is often done by the political parties – who have a vested interest in encouraging high turnout, but obviously wish to direct it their own way.

As a general rule, the political party which encourages specific groups to gear up their involvement benefits from receiving a disproportionately high proportion of the extra votes generated. Political parties try to motivate particular groups by deploying campaigners of a similar demographic. That is to say, they try to send young party members to motivate other young people to vote, and where they approach a migrant community they generally try to do so through somebody from a similar or identical cultural background.

Just occasionally political parties come up with a leader who is young enough and charismatic enough to have wide general appeal. Most recently, and most obviously, this has been epitomised by Barack Obama.

Here is a review of other case studies and other projects which have been used to encourage youth participation in elections. Examples are taken from both EU countries and non-EU countries.





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## YOUTH DEMOCRACY PROJECTS (EU)

Youth Democracy Projects are funded by the European Commission (EC). They are aimed at encouraging participation by young people in the democratic process at European, national and local levels.

The Youth Democracy Projects work by providing young people with ideas, and the means to exchange best practice. They also help in the establishment of trans-national networks, which inspire young people and facilitate the exchange of those best practice ideas. By informing young people about how the systems work, it is hoped that they will be empowered to take an active role in the democratic process.

The Youth Democracy Projects are aimed at EU young people aged between 13 and 30. They focus on themes such as active citizenship, cultural diversity and social inclusion, they also emphasizes the benefits of European co-operation – particularly in the youth field.

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc78\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc78_en.htm)

## CAN YOU HEAR ME EUROPE – SHOUT!

This series of events was laid on in collaboration with global music TV channel MTV.

There were live music concerts in Milan, Berlin and Prague. The shows were recorded and broadcast on MTV – which is watched by millions of young people.

Described as ‘Europe’s biggest soundwave’, the events emphasised the benefits to young people of being members of the EU. Particular benefits emphasised included freedom to travel anywhere, freedom to study anywhere, and freedom to work anywhere – within the EU.

<http://www.caneuhear.me.eu>





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## EUROPEAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

The European Youth Parliament (EYP) has recently held its 60<sup>th</sup> international session.

A total of 220 people from all over the EU came together to discuss the issues – and benefits – of membership of the EU. The debates and findings of the EYP session were widely reported in EU media.

EYP sessions are held in the chambers of regular Parliaments, whilst they are not in use by elected members. The latest session was held in the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm, and was opened by HRH Crown Princess Victoria.

<http://www.eypej.org/>

## EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS

This is an initiative set up by the Council of Europe.

It is designed to “help young people and adults to play an active role in democratic life”. At the third summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe held in Warsaw in 2005 the organisation was given a strong sanction to broaden and gear up its activities.

In the third stage of this project emphasis is being placed on “social cohesion, social inclusion and respect for human rights”.

[http://www.coe.int/t/dc/files/themes/citoyennete/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dc/files/themes/citoyennete/default_en.asp)

## THE COMICS PROJECT – MODENA (IT)

The COMICS project (Children Of Migrants Inclusion Creative Systems), designed and managed by the City of Modena Department for Social policies, Housing and Integration- Foreigners Center and by a consortium of European partners, aims at fostering integration of Children of International Migrants (CIMs), helping them to become active citizens and to prevent their exclusion from political and social life.



*This project is co-financed by the European Commission  
under the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme*



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COMICS has been co-financed by the European Commission (DG Justice, Freedom and Security), through the 2004 INTI call for proposals, the UE programme which promotes the integration of third country nationals.

<http://comics.comune.modena.it/index.php?lang=EN>

## YOUTH CITIZENS – LEEDS (UK)

In the UK the national government has encouraged academic bodies and local authorities to investigate whether using new media and social media would encourage democratic participation by young people.

A joint exercise by Leeds Metropolitan University and the city council set out to find whether using digital media would raise the level of participation – particularly amongst young people. However, new media was used simply to raise awareness about elections – electronic voting was not an option. Participants were sent SMS text messages on their mobile phones informing them about elections.

The study concluded that using technology was helpful in raising awareness, but did not provide the ‘silver bullet’ needed to address the problem of low – and falling – turnout.

[http://www.ejeg.com/volume-4/vol4-iss2/griffin\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://www.ejeg.com/volume-4/vol4-iss2/griffin_et_al.pdf)

## ELECTORAL COMMISSION NEW INITIATIVES FUND (UK)

The Electoral Commission in the UK is a publicly funded body charged with overseeing all elections – supra-national, national and local. As well as ensuring that all elections are conducted properly and in accordance with the law, the Electoral Commission also has a brief to encourage participation in the democratic process. As part of that brief, the Electoral Commission specifically aims to increase awareness – and participation levels – amongst young people and members of ethnic minorities.

With young people specifically in mind the Commission invited groups and bodies to submit applications for grants, and of these 63 were approved for funding. One of the most successful campaigns which received a grant and was then put in to action was ‘It’s a girl thing’. This was conceived and put in to action by the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), specifically to encourage young women (aged 11 to 19) to become more active in public life. The YWCA got together with the UK Youth Parliament to stage a conference to make young women aware of how they could participate in the democratic process, and to encourage them to do so.





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Over 120 young women from throughout the UK attended the conference, which was addressed by a young female Lib Dem MP – Sandra Gidley. Over 90% of the participants said that they had enjoyed the conference, and felt empowered and more able to participate in the democratic process.

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/partnership-grants/new-initiatives-fund-media-campaigns/projects-working-with-young-people>

## HANSARD SOCIETY – CONNECTING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE (UK)

The Hansard Society is an industry-funded body which aims to encourage participation in the political and democratic processes. It runs a Citizenship Education programme specifically aimed at young people.

The primary aims of the 'Connecting With young People' programme were to raise awareness amongst young people as to how the Westminster Parliament was developing and modernising its procedures, and how young people could get more directly involved.

The project succeeded in facilitating meetings between young people and Parliamentarians, in circumstances where the former felt able to participate on equal terms. Semi-formal meetings were held with Select Committees, and with All-Party Parliamentary Groups.

[http://hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/Citizenship\\_Education/](http://hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/Citizenship_Education/)

## BRITISH YOUTH COUNCIL (UK)

The British Youth Council (BYC) is led by young people – all aged 26 or under. It works through a network of Local Youth Councils throughout the UK. It aims to empower young people, and to encourage them to actively participate in society.

The BYC's '*Inform and Influence*' programme aims to provide young people with "the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to participate in the democratic process". In practical terms this means offering training workshops throughout the UK showing young people how they can get involved in politics at EU, national, regional and local levels. It ensures that young people get a chance to meet active politicians, and it uses the internet to keep participants informed about developments through a website and e-newsletters.





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The BYC also runs an active 'Votes at 16' campaign. This argues strongly that as young people can work, pay tax, drive a car and have a family at 16 or 17, it is not logical that they only get to vote at the age of 18. The campaign also argues that young people have the knowledge to be able to make informed decisions at 16 and 17, as politics and democracy are taught as part of the National Curriculum in all schools. It also argues that young people have the required knowledge because either use the internet to gather facts and opinions.

<http://www.byc.org.uk/>

## TAKE PART TOO – ROMANIA, DENMARK, UK

The Centre for Innovation in Education has organised the 'Take Part Too' campaign, aimed at increasing participation in the democratic process by young people. The campaign is partly funded by the European Commission, and is mainly aimed at students in high schools and colleges.

The main aim of the project is to "empower young people from different European countries to play an active role as democratic European citizens in the rapidly changing context of our modern learning societies." The project relies heavily on an ICT platform which has been developed to facilitate the exchange of information, views and best practice. There is a 'Take Part Too' simulation game which can be played over the internet.

The 'Take Part Too' game used European scenarios based on the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. It was piloted in Romania, Denmark and the UK, and is to be made freely available and rolled out internationally. It will be actively promoted through UNESCO, the North-South Centre, ELIT-e Network, and Schoolnetglobal.com. It is hoped that international take-up could lay the groundwork for the formation of a World Youth Council.

<http://www.takeparttoo.org/>

## CAMPAIGN FOR YOUNG VOTERS (USA)

The Campaign for Young Voters (CYV) in the USA aims to "encourage youth participation in elections, encourage youth on elections, electoral systems, and the importance of voting".

The CYV is a project of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Council for Excellence in Government. It relies heavily of academic research to identify barriers to participation in the democratic process for young people.





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Based on that research the CYV has developed a number of tools which candidates representing the political parties can use to try and motivate young people to vote. However, the emphasis seems to be on getting young people to vote – rather than to encourage them to participate as activists, campaigners or candidates.

<http://www.campaignyoungvoters.org/>

### “I VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME” – GONG (CROATIA)

The Croatian organisation Gong has a project to promote civic education. A significant aspect of the project is aimed at persuading high school students to use their vote when they reach the age of 18, and also to encourage them to become involved in the political and democratic processes of Croatia.

In pursuit of these objectives Gong has designed an inter-active workshop which explains how the democratic and political systems function, election laws and procedures, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. To date nearly 60,000 students have participated in the workshops, which have been held in more than 70% of Croatia’s high schools.

[www.gong.hr](http://www.gong.hr)

### CENTER FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY (PALESTINE)

The Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy (PCDC) is an NGO dedicated to promoting democracy, social justice, human rights and civic education.

In pursuit of those objective the PCDC holds workshops in the West Bank area aimed specifically at 18-24 year-olds. Participants come from youth organisations and the political parties, and there is an emphasis on gender balance. The workshops discuss reforms of electoral law, and the principles of the separation of powers, transparency and accountability.

After each workshop a committee is elected to ensure that discussions and resolutions are taken forward. The PCDC tries to feed its findings and resolutions in to the mainstream political process.

<http://www.pcpd.org/>





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## UKRAINIAN YOUTH ASSOCIATION (UYA)

The UYA aims to encourage and facilitate the participation of young people in the country's democratic and political processes. It focuses in particular on young people in rural areas and small towns – where participation is much lower than in the cities.

The UYA provides training and organises workshops. It aims to encourage young people to participate as election observers, members of local election commissions, and exit pollsters. UYA also encourages young people to use the traditional media (radio, TV, magazines, newspapers) to write articles encouraging young people to join in and take part in the democratic processes.

In between elections the UYA trains young people so that they have the expertise and the qualifications needed to take a full part in the democratic process. They also encourage young people to set up branches of the UYA in areas where it is not currently established.

[www.cym.org/ua/](http://www.cym.org/ua/)

## YOUNG RUKH (UKRAINE)

Another Ukrainian body, Young Rukh was formerly the youth wing of a political party. It is now an independent, non-party political organisation.

The aims of Young Rukh are to encourage participation by young people in the democratic process – but also to encourage closer alignment and cultural integration with western Europe. The organisation works particularly closely with universities, often with the encouragement and collaboration of the university authorities (although it insists that the authorities sign an agreement saying they will not interfere in student politics).

As well as encouraging young people to vote, Young Rukh also campaigns to protect the rights of young people, and to stamp out corruption in the political system. Additionally, it encourages and trains young people to the point where they are able to operate as official election observers.

[www.mr.org.ua/Sait\\_MonruENG/about\\_as.html](http://www.mr.org.ua/Sait_MonruENG/about_as.html)





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## ROCK THE VOTE (USA)

Rock the Vote is probably the first organisation (or movement) anywhere in the world designed to increase participation by young people and ethnic minorities in the political and democratic processes.

It is a non-partisan organisation “dedicated to protecting freedom of expression and empowering young people to change their world.” It mainly works through the medium of music, but also uses actors, athletes and comedians to appeal to its target audience. As well as encouraging young people and ethnic minorities to register and then to vote, Rock the Vote also encourages them mobilise and organise locally in order to improve their lives and “make positive social and political changes in their lives”. With these objectives in mind Rock the Vote helps people to organise local ‘street teams’ in order to campaign for issues which concern them.

As well as concerts, Rock the vote organises education programmes in schools designed to boost civic participation, and campaigns vigorously in support of issues highlighted by its target audience as being their primary concerns.

[www.rockthevote.com](http://www.rockthevote.com)

## CONCLUSIONS BY THE WORKSHOP EXPERT

Having attended both days of the Workshop, having read the papers submitted by the participants, and having done extensive desk research, I have reached a number of conclusions as to the best way to proceed in order to fulfill the objectives of the programme.

I would suggest to QeC-ERAN, its partners and the European Commission and European Parliament authorities that there are a number of steps which can be taken to boost the turnout amongst young voters and migrant workers in the 2009 European Parliament elections – and in the elections to come.





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Some of these conclusions and recommendations are 'best practice' which has been identified in the two-day workshop. They can be adopted by participants now, in order to boost turnout in the June EP elections. Other conclusions and recommendations can only in practice be applied in time for the 2014 EP elections.

## PUBLICITY

Both the European Commission and the European Parliament have created budgets and invested resources in publicising the EP elections. Some of these funds have been invested internally (for example on the websites), and some externally (for example through the creation of Local Forums for Developing Participatory Democracy). The allocation of larger budgets in future elections would undoubtedly help to increase awareness.

## USE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

The role of the traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV) should not be ignored. They have a disproportionate effect on older voters, but they also have an impact on young voters and migrants. Traditional media is useful because it carries paid-for advertising – but there are also opportunities for free publicity through standard public relations techniques and through reader, listener and viewer input.

## USE OF NEW MEDIA

New media (or social media) is undoubtedly the best ways to reach young people and migrants. Young people rely on new media to gather news and information, but also to maintain contacts, exert influence, and to issue calls to action. New media can also be adopted by migrants, as the costs involved in creating websites and e-newsletters in minority languages is not prohibitive.

## POLITICAL PARTIES

The political parties have the expertise, the resources and the motivation to boost turnout at elections. Non-partisan bodies can work with them, without getting embroiled in party politics.





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## ROLE MODELS – POLITICAL

There are very few well-known political figures in the European Parliament. However, role models could be identified on a cross-party basis who could be used to appeal directly to young people and migrants due to their own similar profiles.

## ROLE MODELS – NON POLITICAL

The example of 'Rock the Vote' in the US and 'Can You Hear Me Europe – Shout!' are excellent examples of using what is important to young people (music) in order to reach out to them. Musicians, comedians, actors and athletes should be encouraged to attend events and urge people to vote.

## VOTING PROCEDURE

The voting procedure should be simplified and standardised across the EU. Citizens should be given more time to vote, and more opportunities to vote in different ways – including postal voting, online voting and text message voting.

## VOTING AGE

Young adults in most EU states are allowed to get jobs, to get married and to drive at 16. It is therefore illogical to deprive them of the right to vote at 16 and 17. Moving the voting age to 17 or even 16 would certainly encourage greater participation by young people.

## SIMULATION GAMES

Online multi-national games such as 'Take Part Too' are very appealing to young people, and should be encouraged in all member states.

## APPLICANT STATES

Some of the most enthusiastic advocates of democratic participation are in states which aspire to join the family of western European nations - such as the





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Ukraine and Croatia. Equally, participation amongst nations which have succeeded in joining the EU seems to fall away very rapidly. Participation by near-neighbour non-EU states should be encouraged, whilst the problem of falling participation of newly-acceded states needs to be addressed.

## NARRATIVE

The Workshop and many participants quite rightly wanted to concentrate on the best way to use the internet to encourage participation in the democratic process by young people and migrants.

However, whether we are talking about websites, e-newsletters, SMS or twitter, these are only channels of communication. They are very useful and highly relevant tools, but the key factor is the actual message which they are used to transmit – the narrative.

The City of Celje and the European Youth Forum both say that they use issues which concern many young people in order to engage with them. These issues are often environmental, but also include social justice issues as well.

The narrative which needs to be developed and disseminated to both of our target groups (young people and migrants) is that the EU represents freedom:

- Freedom from the threat of war
- Freedom to trade without barriers
- Freedom to travel anywhere within the EU
- Freedom to study anywhere within the EU
- Freedom to live anywhere within the EU

If a compelling narrative can be developed and communicated to the target audiences through appropriate channels of communication, then a significant and positive impact on turnout can be achieved.

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7th May 2009





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# ABBREVIATIONS

AM	Andreas Mullerleile, 'Think About It'
BV	Ben Vanpeperstraete, European Youth Forum
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
HS	Haroon Saad, QEC Director
JS	Jim Segers, CityMined
KR	Karolina Rachwal, Project Coordinator
MH	Mel Herdon, Action Aid
LZ	Lionel Zetter, Project Expert
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation

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