

May 2014

Editorial

We would have been better off with a remark like "a 43.09% electoral turnout in EU elections is slightly higher than in 2009, but still shows the distance between a large majority of citizens and European institutions". But European elections are more than a participation check we go through every five years to learn a bit more about people's perceptions on a distant Europe. And unfortunately this time, we witnessed the worrying raise of electoral forces whose political discourse is based on exclusion and retreat to nationalism. Here they are targeting migrants, the unemployed people or Roma's right to mobility. They all seem to find in Europe the perfect scapegoat when appealing to victims of the economic crisis or, even more worrying, to those citizens of rather rich countries, and not hardest hit by the crisis, who fear being the next victims of exclusion.

Growing inequalities in the access to fundamental rights is the central issue in the present political scene. It poses some major questions to all those, still holding a very large majority, whose discourse on our society are grounded on human rights values claimed by the European project. Can the EU stick to the present policy framework and still count to reverse such a regressive trend? Or do we need to reshape together the entire institutional and political framework to insure a common future which includes all?

We hope the current right wing extremist and xenophobic breakthrough in voting turnout that many qualify as "earthquake", will awaken all forces that claim the European project is about shared wealth, equality, access to fundamental rights. We hope they will understand we are entering a new stage in the European development when "business as usual" is not an option anymore.

As far as we are concerned, we ask for European policies that give real substance to collective objectives of solidarity, equality and democracy. For this to happen, Europe must rebalance finance and economy with social justice. Europe should make equality, solidarity and democracy rule over the market. Europe should reintroduce a virtuous circle linking cohesive policies and active citizenship.

Election Results

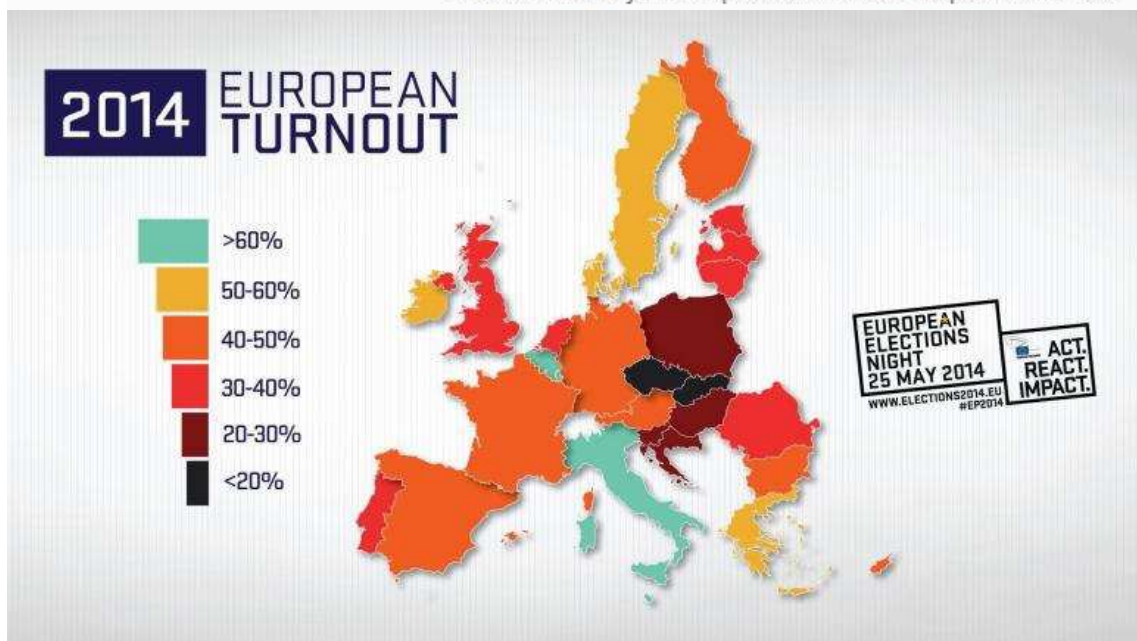
		EPP Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	214  28.50 %
		S&D Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	191  25.43 %
		ALDE Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	64  8.52 %
		Greens/EFA The Greens/European Free Alliance	52  6.92 %
		ECR European Conservatives and Reformists	46  6.13 %
		GUE/NGL European United Left/Nordic Green Left	45  5.70 %

		European United Left–Nordic Green Left	5.99 %
		NI Non-attached Members – Members not belonging to any political group	41  5.46 %
		EFD Europe of freedom and democracy Group	38  5.06 %
		Others Newly elected Members not allied to any of the political groups set up in the outgoing Parliament	60  7.99 %

Every political group must be made up of 25 MEPs from at least 7 Member States.

Without prejudice to the composition of the EP at the opening session on 1 July 2014

Source: TNS/Scyt in cooperation with the European Parliament



News from the European Civic Forum



“**Equality, Solidarity, Democracy for Europe**”, three words which are making their way around European circles. Since February, the Manifesto has travelled from France to Italy, via the UK and all the way to Bulgaria, and gained support from the associative as well as the political sphere. In Romania, it was presented to EU candidates for discussion prior to the elections; in France, it has been at the heart of La Ligue des droits de l’Homme’s daily actions all along this first term, in their monthly review as well as during conferences.

The Manifesto was also subject of [debate with MEP’s Marie-Christine Vergiat, Catherine Trautmann and candidate Quintin Dickinson](#) the European Civic Forum organised during the European Parliament’s Open Doors Day in Strasbourg, preceding the elections.

Tool for reflection and action, contributions are welcome: whether for or against, they will only enrich the debate on the fundamental values which must be at the core of any discussion on the future we are commonly engaging in. [The Manifesto is now available in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Bulgarian](#). We welcome other spontaneous translations!



Save the date for ECF Civic Days in Athens. The ECF will host its annual conference “European Civic Days” this year in Athens, from 25th to 27th of June. The



destination was chosen according to the traditional approach of the civic days, in the country holding the Presidency of the EU Council. The Greek economic and social situation have contributed to knit a program of reflection with a starting point on civil society's response to the failure of State action in insuring welfare and access to commons. [Get registered!](#)

News from the Network



Network Democratie / Counterpoint / We need to talk about Europe. The research led by London based think tank [Counterpoint](#) on innovative reaction to rising populism aimed at recapturing Europe's reluctant radicals, coordinated in the Netherlands by ECF member [Network Democratie](#), recently released its short film "We need to talk about Europe". Drawing consequences from the past, and lessons for the future.



Populist parties have been creeping in the political scene since the 80's, and are now growing at the seams of the European construct, breaking the myth that their popularity finds its roots in the Euro crisis or "mass immigration". Following a comparative and multidisciplinary approach, the research proves they are the response to growing inequalities, poverty, or even the moral crisis many citizens feel our societies are the victims of. It calls for Europe's mainstream party leaders to react, giving solidarity a reality and striving for equality in actions, not over-promising discourses. Reminding us of the volatility of such populist discourses, Counterpoint underlines the inexhaustible virtues of education, which invariably seems to inoculate people against the far-right syndrome.

Watch the video online [here](#).



GONG. Collaborating with journalists and thinkers, [GONG](#), member of the ECF since last year, produced a series of articles on the elections and the substance of the EU debate, in line with the ideas on equality, solidarity and democracy, carried by our Manifesto. Access the content of the articles [here](#).



IPA. "Volunteering abroad in Poland and Germany, its implications on attitudes towards the respective neighbouring country, and its effects on images of Europe". The Warsaw based [Institute for Public Affairs](#) think-tank, in

collaboration with the German Centre for Developments in Civil Society, recently delivered its Report on "Volunteering abroad in Poland and Germany, its implications on attitudes towards the respective neighbouring country, and its effects on images of Europe". After analysing the effects of voluntary service in these two countries, it explores the way in which voluntary service contributes to shift, positively, our understanding of Europe and the EU. The outcome of this bi-national research is now in the hands of decision-makers, as well as practitioners or any other actor involved in setting up and implementing volunteer programmes. Download the report [here](#).



AEGEE. Ukraine. 21 AEGEE members, with the support of the OSCE, took part in the observation of Ukrainian elections this week-end, which took place in a calm atmosphere, maybe "the first step towards stabilisation of the situation in Ukraine".

One of the main problems, observers say, was overcrowding in polling stations, due to high participation. However, armed groups did surround in some areas the election process, and although confrontation was in most cases avoided, a journalist and his translator were killed at the eve of the elections, and their presence will remain a key issue for the newly elected President, Petro Poroshenko, who made the promise of guiding the country towards the long-awaited democratic functioning. Read the full Press Release [here](#).

Following the worrying news of the balkans' flood which have already destroyed many cities, infrastructures and houses, AEGEE has created an [online platform](#) in order to gather funds.

Institutions



European Economic and Social Committee. Action Plan for Europe. The economic crisis and predicted negative outcome of EU elections as starting point, the EESC wishes to make the best of a new Parliament and Commission to solidify the Union, injecting a high dose of solidarity to regain the trust of the people, who make



Europe, and urging institutions to fight anti-democratic attitudes by developing a positive discourse for Europe. Indeed, the rise of extreme scepticism is a sign of the economic and social concerns shared by many citizens, and the EU, having heard their call, must act.

Reforming the Economic and Monetary Union to gradually bring it to become an Economic and budgetary Union is the first step to restore the EU's economic sustainability. It includes a focus on investment, a common management of the Euro zone, the coordination of the budgetary policies or the establishment of a European unemployment-insurance for instance. The second fundamental step touches Europe's social policies. To boost growth and jobs, the EESC prioritises actions towards social cohesion, namely by opening discussion on standards for a minimum income or the improvement of prospects for young people. If these two goals are not met, the third pillar, on democracy, civic engagement and the emergence of a European public space, will have no chance of standing.

The ECF was auditioned during this process and we are proud to announce that many of our propositions, aiming at ensuring smooth articulation between the three pillars, are part of the Action Plan.

Read the Action Plan in [English](#) or [French](#).



EU Commission. Innovating in social policies and education for inclusion and youth. Two conferences took place last week at the Commission and the Council, which could, should be read hand in hand. Social business based on solidary economy have flourished these recent years, and rightfully proven their capacity to create growth and well-being in a variety of sectors, such as social services. The Commission wishing to see such initiatives continue to develop, reminded that the objectives set by Europe2020 require full partnership between public and private sector, civil society and businesses. Simultaneously, the Education, culture, youth and sports Council adopted a series of measures destined to improve teaching

methods, namely by an exchange of best practices and in direct link with the topic discussed by the Commission, encouraged young people to take active participation in developing social businesses.

See the winners of the Prize for social innovation [here](#)...

Last days to sign European Citizens Initiatives:



TEACHFOR YOUTH
UPGRADE TO ERASMUS 2.0



Teach for Youth -- Upgrade to Erasmus 2.0: Their aim: Eliminating educational inequity within the EU by enrolling highly motivated and high-achieving recent EU college graduates and postgraduates to teach for one to two years in urban and rural low-income communities throughout the EU. Employment, equitable educational opportunities and developing a real European sense of belonging are the objectives. See website [here](#)...

ACT 4 Growth : Their aim: Developing female entrepreneurship as a strategy for sustainable economic growth in Europe. How? By creating a European Women's Business Ownership, appointing a Women's Enterprise Director, collecting data and producing annual policy and research updates, and finally, enforcing current gender equality legislation. See their website [here](#)...

Agenda

16.06.2014 / Brussels / Economic and Social Committee / From active inclusion to social investment Conference. Read more [here](#).

18.06.2014 / Amsterdam / Netwerk Democratie / International Whistleblowers Conference.

What do International and European law have to offer in terms of protection? What role does media have to play in blowing the whistle? Learning from past experiences, assessing the Snowden impact, the Conference will focus on improving the position of whistle blowers in our technologically led societies. Find out more [here](#).

20.06.2014 / Athens / Commission DG Research and Innovation / Social Inequalities in Europe Conference. Read more [here](#). See the Policy Review 2013 [here](#).

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