



How do European elections work?

The European Parliament is the only directly elected institution of the EU and represents EU citizens. **Every EU citizen has the right to vote** and stand as a candidate for European elections, even if she/he resides in a different EU country than her/his own. The European elections happen every 5 years and the next will take place **from 22 to 25 May 2014** and new Members of Parliament will then vote for the European Commission's President in **July 2014**. Every Member State can have a different electoral system but the suffrage remains **direct, universal and proportional**. 751 seats will be allocated after the 2014 elections. MEPs are now sitting in groups formed on the basis of political affiliation rather than nationality. The number and repartition of seats is regularly adapted according to demographic and membership changes within the EU.

Why is it important to vote?

After a disastrous economic and social crisis and harsh austerity measures, many European citizens either consider the European Union as mother of all evils or the last bastion of hope to put our continent back on track. Whatever the way you look at Brussels, filling the ballot box in May 2014 is as important as any other election: as the past years have shown **how the EU influences your daily life**, it is now time to **choose the people that will be your voice** on the European political stage. It is even truer since the Lisbon Treaty that gives **more power to your Members of Parliament**, including selecting who will be the next President of the European Commission.

What is at stake for education and training?

The next five years will also be decisive when it comes to education and training. By the time new MEPs and Commissioners will all have taken office, **the Europe 2020 Strategy** will already be half way to its objectives and benchmarks (including the two headline targets on early-school leaving and tertiary attainment) and the **European Education and Training Strategic Framework (ET2020)** will be revised (2015). In summer 2014 will also be adopted new European Semester **Country-Specific Recommendations**. Besides, EU funding programmes such as **Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund 2014-2020** will have been launched. Parliament and Commission elections will therefore coincide with a number of important dates in the field of education and training and represent the perfect momentum to repeat how important it should be on the EU political agenda, as well as to debate **what vision of education we want** and **what role the new EU decision-makers can play** to deliver it.

How to make sure lifelong learning is discussed during the European campaign?

Lifelong Learning has been rightly put on the top of the EU political agenda on the way to growth and jobs and MEPs should not lose sight of this key priority, not only for recovery-friendly policies but also for individual well-being and societal welfare. To make sure lifelong learning is part of the electoral debates, EUCIS-LLL has built up a Manifesto called "[Building together the future of learning](#)" with 12 key priorities. Here are a few tips on how to spread it around:

- Include a link to the Manifesto in your **traditional communications channels** (website, newsletter, press releases, social media) and make sure candidate MEPs are in your mailing list
- Print copies of the Manifesto to be handed out during the **events** you organise and you attend

- **Contact candidates MEPs** and European political parties (emails, phone calls, meetings, letters) to raise their awareness about the importance of lifelong learning in the campaign and attach the Manifesto

How to make sure Members of Parliament discuss lifelong learning during their whole mandate?

To make sure that lifelong learning is a key priority of the next parliamentary term, EUCIS-LLL will advocate all along the elections campaign towards candidate MEPs and European parties to set up a **Lifelong Learning Intergroup** in the European Parliament. Intergroups are not official bodies of the Parliament but can be formed of MEPs from any political group and any committee. The goal is to exchange informally on particular subjects and promote contacts between MEPs and **civil society**. Intergroups usually monitor the legislative work related to their field of interest and coordinate their position. They try to include related elements in reports, resolutions and amendments, ask parliamentary questions, organise meetings and conferences, etc. They represent therefore a **perfect vector to raise more awareness** in the European Parliament on lifelong learning. Here is in 4 points how you can convince an MEP on the importance of setting up a LLL intergroup:

- *Why is it different from the work of the Committee on Education?* Lifelong learning is a much broader concept than education and encompasses, beyond the lifelong aspect, a lifewide scope that considers formal, non-formal and informal settings as equal learning pathways. It is a transectorial matter that concerns many different fields of work of the European Parliament (employment, social affairs, gender equality, human rights, development...).
- *Why are the 2014 elections a timely moment?* Over the past years lifelong learning has become an essential component of the Europe 2020 strategy and the EU has gained more and more influence in the field. The Parliament has also seen its role increased with the extended ordinary legislative procedure by the Treaty of Lisbon in the field of education and training in particular. Setting up a LLL intergroup would reflect the top-ranking of lifelong learning in the EU agenda but also establish the leadership of the Parliament on this topic.
- *Why MEPs should work better with civil society?* Civil society in the field of lifelong learning is very active and well organised at local, regional, national and EU level. Ambassadors and multipliers of EU action on the ground, civil society representatives have also a precious expertise and experience to offer to future MEPs in order to mainstream lifelong learning issues in several areas of the Parliament's everyday work. The Parliament and in particular a new intergroup are the privileged settings to foster a sustainable and fruitful cooperation between MEPs and civil society representatives from various backgrounds.
- *What could be the work priorities and topics of the LLL intergroup?* To recognise access to lifelong learning as a fundamental right, promote a holistic vision of lifelong learning, prioritise and defend investment in lifelong learning, foster a learner-centred approach... Topics: European civic education, the potential of ICT and learning (e-learning, OERs...), validation of non-formal and informal learning...