

**TE DÖNTHETSZ!**  
**SET!** A ESCOLHA É SUA  
**CHOICE!** A VOUS DE CHOISIR!  
 DEINE ENTSCHEIDUNG  
**ODLOČAŠ!** JE TO NA VÁS.  
**ÜTLE OMA SÕNA**  
 AS  
 USA IL TUO VOTO!  
 AGHŻEL INT  
**EXEIS TO LOGO-ΨΗΦΙΣΕ**



Did you know ...?

- The European Parliament is the only multinational democratic assembly in the world.
- The European Parliament, together with the Council of the European Union, adopts legislation on the basis of proposals from the Commission.
- The European Parliament represents the people of Europe and defends their interests.
- The European Parliament has its seat in Strasbourg, but works in three places: Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg.
- The European Parliament works in all the official languages of the European Union – 23 languages in all, with three alphabets.
- After the elections in June 2009 the European Parliament will have 736 members.
- Each Member of the European Parliament (MEP) represents an average of 715,000 citizens.
- MEPs are grouped in the Chamber by political affinity, not by country.
- There are currently seven political groups in the European Parliament.
- The smallest Member States are represented by a minimum of five MEPs, the largest by 99.
- The European Parliament (at that time the Common Assembly) held its constitutive session in March 1958.
- For the past 30 years MEPs have been elected by direct universal suffrage.
- In 2004, 352 million electors were eligible to vote; in June 2009 it will be 375 million.
- MEPs are elected for a five-year term.
- The elections will take place from 4 to 7 June. The results will be announced on the evening of Sunday 7 June.

Number of MEPs after 2009 and election dates

4 June:		6 June:		7 June:	
Netherlands	25	Cyprus	6	Belgium	22
United Kingdom	72	Latvia	8	Luxembourg	6
		Malta	5	Bulgaria*	17
		Slovakia	13	Hungary	22
				Austria	17
5 June:		6-7 June:		Denmark	13
Ireland	12	Italy	72	Austria	17
				Poland*	50
5-6 June:				Germany	99
Czech Republic	22			Estonia	6
				Portugal	22
				Greece	22
				Romania	33
				Slovenia	7
				France	72
				Finland	13
				Lithuania	12
				Sweden	18

\*The election date has not been confirmed at the time of printing.

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# European elections: so what?



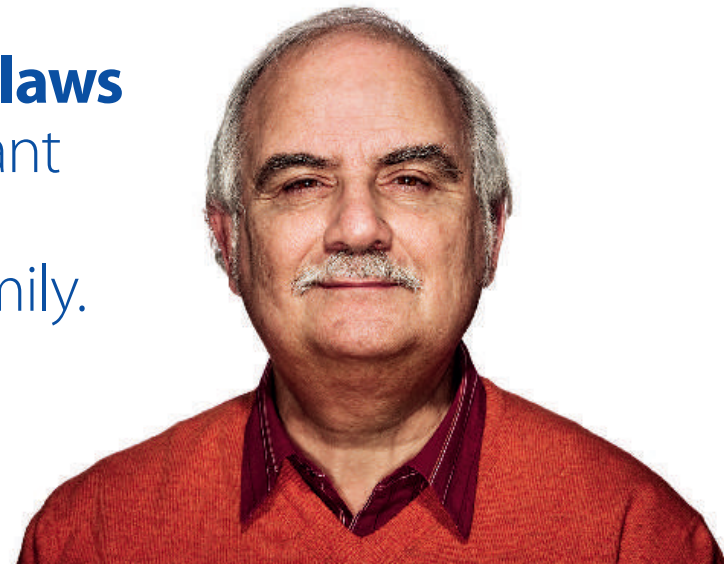
**DU VÄLJER!**  
**ТИ РЕШАВАШ!** **SINÄ VALIT**  
**TU DECIZI** TÚ ELIGES  
**IT'S YOUR**  
**TY DECYDUJESZ!** AAN JOU DE KEUZE!  
**VY ROZHODNETE** TI  
**USE YOUR VOTE!**  
**BRUG DIN STEMME**  
**TEV IR IZVĚLE!** TÁ VÓTA AGAT, BAIN ÚSÁID  
**AAN JOU DE KEUS!**





It's about **laws**  
you want  
**for you,**  
your family.

John, Malta



IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

## European elections: so what?

You know the European election is coming up? Between 4 and 7 June 2009, **375 million electors across 27 countries will elect the European Parliament.** There's no other election like it; no one else makes parliamentary democracy work at this level, let alone can show thirty years' history of making it a reality.

For a continent where not so long ago people were shooting at each other, glaring at each other across an iron curtain or, for all too many, living under totalitarian or authoritarian oppression, it's a fair achievement.

But what does this all mean for real people? Why should people go out on election day to cast their votes? Many Europeans still feel unfamiliar with their parliament, and unclear about what

difference it makes to them who sits there.

## European Parliament: it's the real thing!

The first thing to know about the Parliament is that that's what it is: a parliament. The media often talk about "Europe" if it moves and thinks as one, as if the collective wisdom of Brussels descends from on high. **Well, it isn't like that.**

Parliament, which passes most of Europe's laws, is a place where people come to disagree, **a place where political ideas and ideals meet,** sometimes to clash, sometimes to be reconciled. Alliances are formed, deals are struck, compromises made, but in the end there are winners and losers: majorities prevail, while minorities must work to get what they can.

In other words, it's the usual, sometimes glorious, sometimes inglorious, business of democratic politics.

Ultimately of course, what determines how those democratic politics pan out is who the voters have put there to do the job.

## Big issues, local impact.

Alice, Czech Republic



IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

## It's about laws you want for you, your family

MEPs matter. These people make decisions which affect you directly. **The car you drive, the air you breathe, the mobile phone in your pocket, the food you eat, the water you drink, the worker you employ, the bank you borrow from, the flights you book, the toys you buy, the fuel you burn, the waste you discard...** Standards, costs, safety of all these things (and many more besides) are set

or regulated by European laws passed by your MEPs in the European Parliament. How are they doing?

So what the Parliament does is often quite practical; **the laws it passes end up impacting directly on your daily life.** Travelled abroad with your mobile phone recently? Notice how your calls cost less this time? European Parliament. Bought a fridge, cooker or any domestic appliance lately? Notice the energy consumption label? European Parliament. Been the victim of airline

overbooking or flight cancellations? Notice how you are entitled to compensation? European Parliament.

## Big issues, local impact

Nitty gritty stuff, perhaps. But these things make a difference, and besides, often they are only **the tip of the iceberg of what the Parliament is doing.** The big issues we face, and can face only at the European or global level are what the Parliament is all about. Global warming, security of energy supply, the pressures of migration and immigration, economic globalisation, financial stability (or not!), the threat of terrorism, competitiveness in a changing world, the social model we live by and the cultural, artistic and linguistic heritage that are ours are all subjects with which the Parliament must wrestle and on which it must set the direction.

Politicians do not agree on these things, the differences are often sharp and outcomes hotly contested. What do you think? Who do you want deciding on these things for you?

## Be an insider. Infiltrate the system!

OK, it's true. The European system is a bit daunting. Regulations, directives, summits, the Commission, the Council, procedures, jargon, an alphabet soup of abbreviations, flags and faceless office blocks. It is complicated, let's face it, it couldn't really be anything else. It is even all done in twenty-three languages!

But don't forget, **at the heart of the system is one body which is fundamentally very simple.** The Parliament is the place where people sent by the

voters of Europe – people who share their beliefs (whatever they are ...), people who are put there to represent their interests – accept, amend or reject the proposals put forward by that daunting machine. **The Parliament is your way in, your way to the heart of the system,** the way to control it.

## Something's going on – don't miss out

**Something's definitely up in Europe.** You only need to set foot in Strasbourg or Brussels, where the European Parliament sits in plenary session, to feel the buzz. Motorcades whisk foreign leaders and EU heads of government through the streets; ministers from across the continent are in town daily cutting deals; governments, regions, public authorities from across 27 countries have permanent staff in town looking out for national and local interests. Business barons, boffins and bureaucrats rub shoulders with experts, campaigners, trade unionists, journalists, PR gurus and lobbyists. Avid idealists vie with nay-sayers. Old hands survey the antics of pushy youngsters. It's a political town to rival Washington DC.

So far so good, **that's how modern democracy works.** Experts, campaigners and lobbies, properly regulated, are a normal part of the system. But they cannot be the whole story. Like all political towns, Strasbourg and Brussels need a reality check, a fly in the ointment. And that's you ...

The European Parliament brings the real world into the bubble. It puts you in charge and gives you a part of the action. MEPs are there to filter the good from the bad, to make sure real world concerns – your concerns – are what drive the

decisions taken in this place. When it comes down to it, the number one lobbyist in town is you, the voter. Never forget: MEPs owe their allegiance and their jobs to the people who elect them – it's you they must answer to.

## If you don't decide, someone else will!

So there it is. **Parliament matters to you.** It makes decisions that affect you directly and which matter hugely to your future. But those decisions don't come from nowhere, they result from the people you put there: people who are ready to fight their corner, to protect the interests of their

electorate. When the elections come round, Parliament is an empty box for the voters to fill with MEPs who do their bidding. If you don't send the people you want, remember that someone else will!

## You care? Then vote!

But maybe, still, you're wondering whether it's worth voting? Well, just ask yourself a question. Do you care about what politicians decide to do about global warming, globalisation, economic stability, your food and water, your kids' toys, the safety of vehicles, immigration, social protection, the threat of terrorism and all the rest ...? Come on, it's a no-brainer.

**You care, so vote!**

If you  
don't **decide,**  
someone  
else will!

Ana Isabel, Portugal



IT'S YOUR CHOICE!