

Dear all

Happy New Year to you all!
Regula

EU Civil Society Contact Group launches European election 2009 toolkit

30 years after EU citizens elected their representatives directly at European Union level for the first time, 2009 will see the European Parliament's seventh elections. They will take place from 4 to 7 June 2009. It will be the first time since the accession of Romania and Bulgaria that all 27 EU Member States vote on the same dates. In order to support NGOs/citizens groups at local level in raising awareness about the European elections and to engage in discussion with candidates, the Civil Society Contact Group has updated its election toolkit 2004.

The toolkit 2009 consists of four easy to use action and fact sheets. They can be downloaded separately according to your need:

Action sheet 1 – Why vote?

Action sheet 2 – How to engage?

Action sheet 3 – What we expect from future European parliamentarians?

Fact sheet 4 – What is the European Parliament?

The sheets are now only published in English. We plan to publish action sheet 1-3 in a wide range of languages during the coming weeks. We keep you posted. Information contained in fact sheet four is available in all official EU language [here](#).

Please disseminate the toolkit to your constituencies, colleagues and friend and start engaging in the debate: What Europe do we want? Who should therefore represent us in the European Parliament?

Find the toolkit [here](#).

EU Civil Society Contact Group website www.act4europe.org updated

The EU Civil Society Contact Group website www.act4europe.org was extensively updated. You can now find our strategic plan, annual work programs and more information about working methods and structures online.

Have a look at www.act4europe.org

First EU Civil Society Contact Group steering group meeting of 2009, January 15

The steering group of the EU Civil Society Contact Group will meet next week, January 15th, to discuss two of the 2009 priorities:

- Civil Dialogue: making it work better
- A cross-sector campaign

Find the agenda [here](#).

Find here the [work program 2009](#) and the [strategic plan 2009-2011](#).

Member State critique of the European Commission's lobby register

An UK parliamentary committee this week published a report that heavily criticises the European Commission lobby register as having "no real benefit". The committee looking into the creation of a lobbying register for the UK recommends a *mandatory* system *including* the names of individual lobbyists. The European Commission and the European Parliament are currently cooperating to develop a joint lobby register. The respective working group consists of commissioner Siim Kallas and European Parliamentarians Diana Wallis, Ingo Friedrich and Jo Leinen. The EU Civil Society Contact Group this week sent the guidelines on how to make a transparent registration developed jointly with ALTER-EU to working group members. Jo Leinen came back saying that the guidelines "will be very helpful for our debates in the working group".

Read more about the UK critique on <http://euobserver.com/?aid=27354>

Find here the EU Civil Society Contact Group [guidelines](#) on how to make a transparent registration.

Web forum for political discussions ahead of the European elections launched

Cafebabel (www.cafebabel.com), the European Online Magazine based on participative journalism, launched a discussion forum in the web "In order to provide citizens with information and open debate about EU elections (...). Its objective is to create a space where expression, information and multilingual debate can take place, in order to politicise and Europeanise the 2009 electoral campaign. (...) citizens can speak out, set questions to candidates, comment on the blogs of leaders of opinion and political activists, debate on multilingual forums, read and comment dossiers on the election issues and follow the progress of the electoral campaigns from their own homes. The entire site is available in French, English, German, Italian, Spanish and Polish."

Go to www.eudebate2009.eu

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The EU Civil Society Contact Group brings together eight large European NGO platforms in the following fields: culture (culture action europe), development (CONCORD), environment (Green 10), human rights (HRDN), lifelong learning (EUCIS-LLL), public health (EPHA), social (Social Platform) and women (EWL). Together we work to develop the dialogue between civil society organisations and the EU institutions as an essential part of strengthening participatory democracy.