
Editorial

European Elections

The forthcoming elections to the European Parliament will undoubtedly be seen in many countries as a opportunity for voters to express their distinguished sentiments about their national governments and other parties; this is very likely to be the case in the United Kingdom; in Italy and the Netherlands, which have just had national elections, it may be an opportunity for an initial reaction to the horse-trading which has taken place as a result of the elections. Very few voters will be pleased to address their minds to the issue of the future direction of the European Union or to the performance of existing MEPs seeking re-election. This is regrettable, but appears at the moment almost inevitable. Whilst there have been some attempts to formulate cross-frontier manifestoes, particularly reflecting the important role accorded to political parties at the European level (Art. 138a EC), those manifestoes have not resulted in coherent debate in a framework separate from national mudslinging.

Indeed, national politicians and voters alike still appear dismissive of the importance of the European Parliament and therefore of the significance of the elections. Such an attitude in fact simply serves to prolong the democratic deficit in the Union, as a body which is not taken seriously by the electors is a body with no real mandate to press the representatives of national governments for essential reform. Accordingly, a high turnout is essential in order to lend greater legitimacy to claims for greater participation by the Parliament in the legislative process and for greater accountability of the Council for its actions. It will also be particularly interesting to see how many people resident in another Member State take advantage of the right to vote there. Whatever the motives, participation is important for improved democratic procedures in the Community and in the Union as whole. Take up your pens and vote.

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