



BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS

EUROPEAN ELECTION 2014 TOOLKIT

The next European parliament elections will take place across the Europe Union from May 22nd to May 25th 2014 to elect the new members of the European Parliament for 2014-2019.

Eurodiaconia has prepared this toolkit to support members to engage in the forthcoming election campaign. It includes best practices examples of diaconal engagement, as well as information on where to find guidance on key policy challenges that you may want to raise during the election period.

We hope these inputs will be useful for your organisation in preparing the May 2014 European election, bringing information on issues relating to justice and solidarity in the EU and the place of the EU in the world.

Why are the European Elections relevant for diaconal organisations?

Since it was created, the powers of the European Parliament have been ever increasing whilst turnout has continued to decrease: from 61,99% in 1979, to 43% in 2009.

A low participation means that every vote has a strong weight. **Your vote matters.** The problem with low participation, however, is that people who have not voted don't feel any **ownership for the policies decided by the European Parliament.**

The key to face and overcome the economic, financial and social crisis that has struck Europe will be in how the European Union acts in the coming years, through the new mandate of the European Commission and European Parliament. While the European Commissioners are appointed by the heads of states and governments (the Council), and approved by the European Parliament, the European Parliament is directly elected by voters in Europe. The 2014 elections will therefore give a real opportunity to EU citizens to take control of the future of the EU, and consequently of their national policies orientations.

Eurodiaconia is encouraging its members to engage in the election, knowing members will have different perspectives on what the future political direction should be. **What matters is that people engage to decide and take ownership of the European Union and its policies which greatly influence national and local policies.**

EP elections in numbers

**Elections date:
22-25 May 2014**

**751 MEPs to be elected
for 5 years,**

**to represent 500 million
citizens in**

28 Member States

**13 European political
parties**





What is Eurodiaconia doing for the European election?

- “It’s about Europe, It’s about you” : providing tools to members through ecumenicalvoices2014.eu

Eurodiaconia is working in the framework of an ecumenical partnership on the election campaign together with the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC of CEC)¹, Aprodev² (the Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe) and the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)³, on a [joint website](http://ecumenicalvoices2014.eu) to support voters across Europe who wish to engage in the European election.

We believe the elections will be an opportunity for Churches, Christian organisations and Christians living in the EU to step into the conversation and discuss with candidates their vision of the Union and its future. The aim of the website is to inform members and encourage them to use their vote in May 2014.

The political majority that will come out the elections will shape European legislation over the next five years in very different areas from consumer protection to the internal market. [Ecumenicalvoices2014.eu](http://ecumenicalvoices2014.eu) has been prepared to **provide information on** what we have identified as **key issues in the perspective of the European elections 2014**.

We hope it will enable members to engage in the debate and challenge the candidates.

- **Reinforcing the voice of diaconal organisations in the European Parliament**

Eurodiaconia is taking the European elections campaign as an opportunity to develop and strengthen ties with current MEPs, and will be working after the elections to develop relationships with new MEPs.

Over the past years, Eurodiaconia’s members’ experience has been listened to and taken into account in key areas of policy shaping thanks to MEPs who have carried Eurodiaconia members voice on decisive debate such as public procurement, EU free movement and destitution, food aid, financial inclusion, etc.



¹ <http://csc.ceceurope.org/index.php?id=15>

² <http://www.aprodev.eu/>

³ <http://www.ccme.be/>



Concretely, what can a diaconal worker or a diaconal organisation do to engage in the European election?

- ✓ Participate in the election campaign meetings and challenge the candidates
- ✓ Organise private meetings with your local candidate or representatives of political parties to underline issues of concern to you,
- ✓ Develop and adopt an official position as a church or an organisation on certain issues,
- ✓ Organise a debate inviting local candidates to discuss these issues
- ✓ Share the discussion on the European election with your church and/or organization
- ✓ Translate the Eurodiaconia manifesto website (ecumenicalvoices2014.eu) and leaflet to bring the debate closer to the people in your context
- ✓ Write to candidates expressing how you want them to act on certain issues.
- ✓ Write letters to newspapers, use social media, to contact candidates and ask questions.
- ✓ Register on the voting list and vote!
- ✓ Start a debate within your organisation on what does Europe mean for your work and the people you help, what would the future be like with or without the European Union?

Further information and links

Eurodiaconia, Aprovev, Church and Society Commission, CCME website <http://ecumenicalvoices2014.eu/>

You can find more detailed information on the procedure of the election, the role and mission of the European Parliament on the European Parliament official election website: www.elections2014.eu





Examples of how will diaconal organisations be engaging in the May 2014 European Election?

Eurodiaconia secretariat has started to collect some examples of diaconal engagements on the European Election. Whether it is to inform voters, challenge the candidates, take an official policy stance on some issues or influence the political parties, the European Election offer a great opportunity for advocacy and engagement.

Diakonie Österreich will use the ecumenicalvoices2014 website and its leaflet brochure.

The brochure will be sent to all protestant parishes in Austria together with an accompanying letter explaining the importance of the European Parliament and its impact right up to peoples lives in rural areas.

The brochure and the website will also be advertised on the Austrian Diaconia website and newsletter encouraging people to ask questions to the candidates by themselves.

The Fédération de l'entraide Protestante (FEP) in France has co-organised a seminar with Eurodiaconia on the European dimension of advocacy and European elections.

The FEP will also participate to official election campaign meetings in order to challenge candidates on the place of the social agenda, and launch together with the French national alliance of non profit organisations (UNIOPSS) a political manifesto and questions to candidates on the theme of "Europe of solidarity"

The Church of Finland is involved in a special working group on the European election, involving the Archbishop. It aims is to develop a communication strategy to be used with Finish candidates to the European Parliament elections.

Diakonie Deutschland has prepared a leaflet to be circulated through the German Diaconie in 15 000 copies. It presents five keys social issues of competence for the European Parliament. It encourages voters to take action and challenge candidates in areas of interest.

Beside the leaflets, **Diakonie Deutschland** has disseminated via its regional associations a questionnaire to candidates with positions and questions regarding diaconal or social policies.

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Europa wählt: Werte, Vielfalt, Zukunft
Diakonie Deutschland
für ein soziales Europa

