

**EPRI-WORKSHOP REPORT**

**CONNECTING PARLIAMENTS AND CITIZENS:  
STRATEGIES & ACTIVITES OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS  
AND PARLIAMENTARIANS**

**APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup> 2006**

**AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT, VIENNA**

## Contents

### I. Executive Summary

### II. Introduction

#### 1 Background

### III. Workshop report

#### 1 Summary of country reports

##### 1.1 Existence of “connections” strategies

##### 1.2 Target audiences

##### 1.3 Main focus of activities

##### 1.4 Overview of tools used by Parliaments

##### 1.5 Assessment of activities

#### 2 EC/EU debates

##### 2.1 National parliaments main focus of activities

#### 3 Main areas of discussion

##### 3.1 Media

##### 3.2 Role of parliament to sex up politics?

##### 3.3 Reaching the unreachable

##### 3.4 Ready for engagement?

#### 4 SWOT analysis of parliamentary world

### IV. Conclusions

#### 1 Challenges

#### 2 Concluding thoughts

### V. Suggested further reading

References: [www.epri.org](http://www.epri.org)

## I. Executive summary

On April 24<sup>th</sup> 2006 representatives from 14 different parliaments around Europe<sup>1</sup> met in the Austrian Parliament at the second EPRI workshop.

- The aim of this workshop was to stimulate discussion and exchange experiences among countries in their efforts to re-connect with citizens.
- The starting point was the obvious evidence – from statistics – that citizen engagement in both national and European politics has been decreasing in the last years.
- A number of activities and strategies to re-connect with citizens were reported by participants but as the discussion session showed, parliaments still have a number of questions they need to address in their pursue to reconnect with citizens and make parliamentary work attractive to them.

From the content of participating country reports the following points emerge:

- Issues regarding citizens' disengagement are being addressed by all parliaments but only few have an explicit strategy for engaging citizens in political affairs
- The key objectives and focus of parliaments activities, in an attempt to 'connect' with their citizens are: Transparency & openness - Raising awareness of, and interest in, parliament - Listening and consulting with citizens.
- Despite an obvious transition from traditional to "wired" parliaments, virtual tools do not replace the physical ones, as there is a need to keep them both
- Assessment of activities is not systematically done Only a few indicators and/or measurement tools for assessment of activities exist (e.g. number of visits to parliaments, number of petitions, webpage hits), thus.
- EU dimension is being addressed by all participating countries parliaments, but tends to be a low priority. The main challenge for parliaments, seems to be the lack of knowledge and understanding but also and to a certain extent, interest in EU affairs both inside and outside national parliaments as well as trust issues amongst citizens.

From the presentations and discussions held among participants during the workshop, a number of barriers to effectively providing information to and with engaging citizens, clearly emerge. These barriers are:

- the nature of the information
- the role of the institution
- the management of media

---

<sup>1</sup> Austria, Belgium, Czech republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Romania, The Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom,

## II. Introduction

On April 24<sup>th</sup> 2006 the second EPRI workshop was held in the Austrian Parliament, where 19 people representing 14 countries as well as the European Parliament were gathered around the table to discuss their parliaments activities to “connect” with citizens

The day’s proceedings can be divided into three areas:

1. The national parliaments’ response to perceived challenges in relation to their efforts to (re-)engage with citizens
2. Discussions on the role played by European level issues in the national parliaments’ communication plans, activities and reflections (and their proposals for action in the context of the post-EU constitution debate).
3. How and in which forum parliaments can assist each other in connecting with citizens

The objectives of the workshop were to draw together expertise and exchange experiences on these questions, with the expectation of generating a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing parliaments today.

Due to the extended first session, a short presentation by each participant of their parliament’s socio-political environment, the program was slightly changed at the expense of the time allocated to the subsequent sessions.

### 1. Background

Disengagement and distancing of the general public from political affairs is a problem common to all countries, although the severity of this varies among countries as well as at the different levels of government within each country (local, regional, and national). In addition to this, citizens don’t feel any special kind of bond towards the European Union. The referenda on a European Constitution have produced a set of mixed messages, to which the European Union now has to react.

Most parliaments have been reflecting on these two issues and are considering a variety of courses of action. Some countries have implemented procedures to resolve the situation and a few of them already have measurable results.

### III. Workshop Report

This paper gives an overview of what the various parliaments presented during their participation in the second EPRI workshop:

- key objectives and focus of their strategies and activities to “connect” with their citizens, as well as their commonalities and differences
- how Europe features in their communication plans and activities
- the main areas of concern their parliaments are facing

In addition, a brief SWOT analysis of the parliamentary world based on participants input will be given.

## 1. Summary of country reports

### 1.1 Existence of 'connection' strategies

Although issues regarding citizens' disengagement are being addressed by all parliaments around Europe, not all of them have an explicit strategy for engaging citizens in political affairs.

A few countries have formalized an approach to modernized parliament – or are in the process of doing so. They have opted for a 'business plan' approach in which one of the issues being dealt with is citizens' engagement. This plan implies a long-term commitment for the parliament, and has financial consequences (i.e. the support from all parties in parliament). In most cases, the plan is developed with the assistance of external consultants and overseen by an internal steering group.

Amongst these parliaments' strategies, they are dealing with several issues at the same time:

- transparency
- accessibility
- awareness and understanding of parliament
- re-engagement
- (two-way) communications
- media management

Embedded in all of this is an overall attempt to better profit the opportunities new technologies offer to address these matters.

### 1.2 Target audiences

In terms of target groups, the majority of Europe's parliaments have not identified particular target groups for their activities.

Of those countries that have defined their audience priorities the most prevalent are:

<i>Target group</i>	<i>Countries</i>
Youth	UK, NL, BE, CZ, PT, RO, SI, SE
NGO's & intermediaries	Mainly new EU member states
Internal Parliament audiences: - Members of Parliament - Parliamentary staff	NL, UK, ES, IE, European parliament
Media	UK, IE, European parliament
Educators (Teachers, librarians, researchers, etc.)	SE, ES
Physically challenged	SE, PT
Minority groups, immigrants	SE

Of particular note, the UK has a very clearly identified set of target groups<sup>2</sup> with specific activities defined for each group. Some countries have a particular emphasis on addressing the media, with the objective of better informing journalists and generating more coverage of parliamentary affairs<sup>3</sup>.

All Parliaments undertake specific youth-oriented activities, although they may not have a clearly expressed commitment to prioritise this audience. Some parliaments have divided this group into sub-groups (e.g. Sweden and Portugal<sup>4</sup>). The Netherlands have gone one step further by selecting a very young target group – aged 11-12 years, for some of their activities, with the rationale that they are more receptive and interested in engagement activities (e.g. role playing, debates, parliamentary visits).

This said, the Dutch have in general, moved away from the idea of targeting specific socio-demographic groups (which they had previously defined according to political activity levels), in favour of a more general approach – which is issue based. The Dutch representatives explained this change of approach as the consequence of research which revealed that their audiences ‘change every 5 minutes’.

In terms of ‘educators’, a few countries have decided to prepare activities specifically for librarians, teachers, journalists etc. In Sweden, they have developed a set of 1-day courses for these groups, to provide the basic information as well as to update them on the latest developments in parliament.

A few countries<sup>5</sup> have identified ‘democratic outsiders’ as another target area. This varies from a general description of those ‘currently uninvolved and excluded from the democratic process’, to more clearly identified socio-economic groups – i.e. farmers and women (IE)<sup>6</sup>.

Otherwise, the “one size fits all” approach is adopted by most parliaments, in their initiatives to inform and interest the public in their work.

### 1.3 Main focus of activities

The parliaments participating in the EPRI workshop listed several key objectives and focus of their activities, in an attempt to ‘connect’ with their citizens – namely transparency, accessibility, awareness and interest raising, as well as listening and consulting with citizens.

---

<sup>2</sup> These groups are: internal, Westminster Village (individuals and organizations professionally engaged with the work of parliaments), democratically active, democratic outsiders, young people, teachers, media. For more information please refer to the background reading document on [www.epri.org](http://www.epri.org)

<sup>3</sup> E.g. United Kingdom and Ireland.

<sup>4</sup> Sweden: The “youth parliament” targets students age 16 to 18 and the “democracy workshop” students age 14 to 16. Portugal: “young peoples parliament” sessions for students age 10 to 15 and for students age 16 to 18.

<sup>5</sup> United Kingdom, Ireland, Portugal; For more information please refer to the countries presentations on [www.epri.org](http://www.epri.org)

<sup>6</sup> Activities to be defined

## *Transparency & openness*

Increasing transparency and openness seem to have been early objectives cited by parliaments and are still very much on their agendas. This generally translates into opening up parliamentary meetings and processes to the public, through both physical and virtual means.

- Attendance at parliamentary meetings

In most parliaments, plenary sessions and committee meetings (amongst fewer) are open to the public. Virtual attendance of plenary sessions is now possible across all parliaments, through webcasting/IPTV or traditional (TV/Radio) broadcasting, and committee meetings are following the same road in most parliaments.

- Availability of documents

In all parliaments, most documents are publicly accessible via the internet – although this is generally for documents already approved beyond the committee stage (committee and plenary agendas, calendars and minutes, ad verbatim reports, voting records...).

In some parliaments documents at earlier stages of parliamentary decision-making are publicly accessible (e.g. In Austria, all documents produced during the pre-parliamentary consultation procedure are available on the web).

- Faster access to documents

As a result of the increased use of ICTs and the will to promote transparency, parliamentary documents are more quickly made available to the public.

## *Raising awareness of, and interest in, parliament*

Many parliaments are now directing efforts to the provision of information to the wider public, as opposed to what was previously a more professional/civil society/expert approach. In doing so, parliaments are using both physical and virtual means.

- Web focus

Most parliamentary websites are undergoing their third or fourth generation makeover – moving from an information delivery point to include more interactive features as well as enhancing user friendliness through a more clear or intuitive way of presenting the information<sup>7</sup>.

**NL:** CRM – Customer Relation Manager software

This information management system helps streamlining the answers to citizens request, and it also works on re-organizing the back offices having information digitalized more quickly. They rely on an editing information group and a centralized department of communication to support this system.

---

<sup>7</sup> Feedback received from parliamentary webmasters still show that a large majority of site traffic is professionals rather than citizens.

- Citizen service or information office

In addition to the website, all parliaments have an information office that provides an alternative to the website when accessing information, and (in most cases) a physical place for citizens to address their requests and enquiries (- a consumer service department).

- Back to the physical

In parallel to the surge of activity in developing virtual tools as means of information and communication, there appears to be renewed interest in investing in physical spaces inside parliament, but with a more proactive approach: creation of “visitor centers”, organizing visitor groups, holding of specific events (e.g. workshop and seminars, exhibitions, consulting hours)

**UK:** The House of Commons have developed a team of visitor assistants who have knowledge and access to information that enables them to answer questions and welcome visitors in a more pro-active way

Another version of this theme is holding non-parliament activities in parliament, to attract new audiences. For example non-parliament related exhibitions have been held in Portugal with great success.

- Outside parliament

Although most activities invite citizens (virtually or physically) to the parliament, some parliaments have (or are in the process of) introduced ‘non-parliament located’ activities. Most common activities are “info-centers” or “info-spots” located in regions outside the capital (e.g. United Kingdom and Sweden<sup>8</sup>); Less conventional approaches are being used in Estonia where the Chancellery of the Riigikogu organizes traditionally outward information and discussion sessions in different counties and institutions; likewise, in Portugal, where the parliament is present at book fairs all over the country.

**EE:** Chancellery of the Riigikogu organizes outward information and discussion sessions: The agenda is set in cooperation with the host and the most substantial problems related to the institution or county are discussed during these sessions. Members of all fractions are present as well as citizens and representatives of civil society.

- Materials

Creating better source information is another priority for all parliaments, whether destined for the general public, the ‘professional sector’ (i.e. associations), or journalists. Activities include providing executive summaries of official documents in layman terms, glossaries, press department. Many countries are moving towards using professional writers to prepare press releases or other documents of potential interest to the non-professional public.

On balance, however, most parliamentary attempts to inform, interest and engage their audiences are necessitating people to go to the parliament, rather than really reaching out to the citizens.

---

<sup>8</sup> For more information please refer to the background reading material on [www.epri.org](http://www.epri.org)

**EE:** The Journal of the Estonian Parliament allows for citizens to work for the magazine part-time. In the journal the opinion of civil society is valued. There is a special section published: “Civil Society and State Authority”.

### *Listening and consulting with citizens*

In general there is an obvious lack of emphasis on ‘two-way’ rather than simply ‘outbound’ communication between parliament and citizens.

In many of the new EU member states, their focus is on engaging with civil society (rather than directly with citizens) and developing ways of including them in the formal decision-making processes.

In terms of formal engagement in the legislative process, some countries are conducting initiatives mostly done through legislative provisions, e.g. the pre-parliamentary consultation procedure in Austria, the custom of inviting NGOs or other actors to special committee meetings, the creation of a specific committee for petitions (Spain, Slovenia, Austria)<sup>9</sup>. However, among the activities adopted by some parliaments to consult the public, the most common tool is still opinion polling.

**AU:** The pre-parliamentary consultation procedure allows everyone to react to a draft bill before it is dealt with by parliament. Since 1999 all documents produced during pre-parliamentary stage are published on the website.

On the less formal level, parliaments cannot be said to be actively encouraging and supporting inputs from citizens – but all we observe are weak attempts to ‘enable’ contact – i.e. through publishing MP (and staff) contact details, i.e. publishing email addresses, giving opportunities for citizens or organizations to express their views on an issue via the parliamentary website or email, as well as virtual and physical discussion forums.

## 1.4 Overview of Tools used by Parliaments

The growth of ICT has seen a transition from traditional to “wired” parliaments, however, participants strongly hold the opinion that the many different virtual tools do not replace the physical ones, and that there is a need to keep them both.

Parliaments are still using first generation internet tools (e.g. websites, email, e-newsletters), and only a few (e.g. NL) have evolved to a second generation (e.g. blogging, more sophisticated/customized use of email, collaborative knowledge management, disaggregated content strategies)

---

<sup>9 9</sup> For more information please refer to the background reading material on [www.epri.org](http://www.epri.org)

1 <sup>st</sup> generation	2 <sup>nd</sup> generation (more innovative) activities
Websites	Blogs
Multi-media (simulation games, virtual visits, e-forums...)	TV edutainment - soap opera re: parliament/politics
Webcasting of parliamentary meetings/plenary sessions	e-chambers
Youth parliaments	Citizen's virtual gates
Email	Customized email (CMR)
e-voting	
Parliamentary movies	

### 1.5 Assessment of activities

Only a few indicators and/or measurement tools for assessment of activities exist (e.g. number of visits to parliaments, number of petitions, webpage hits), thus assessment is not systematically done.

The lack of evaluation indicators on parliaments' activities was widely acknowledged among most of the countries present at the workshop. The impression was that parliaments are undertaking a whole range of new activities to engage with citizens but have not necessarily developed a strategy to measure the results of these activities. However assessment of activities seems to be more regular and formalized amongst parliaments with a written modernization plan<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. EC/EU debates

Although the EU dimension is being addressed by all participating countries parliaments, it tends to be a low priority. The same tendency has been observed amongst parliaments who have more advanced public engagement and communication strategies and plans.

Countries that have reported most activities in this area tend to be new EU member states or future members of EU.

The main challenge for parliaments, seems to be the lack of knowledge and understanding but also and to a certain extent, interest in EU affairs both inside and outside national parliaments as well as trust issues amongst citizens.

### 2.1. National parliaments main focus of activities

The main focus of activities relating to the EU, is the aim to improve parliamentarians knowledge of EU affairs and procedures through increased

<sup>10</sup> E.g. the House of Commons has defined success measures and milestones for achievement of its plan, the Dutch and Swedish parliament collect regularly feedback from users and visitors etc.

internal information flows. This seems to take place mainly through the parliaments' EU Affairs Committee, and internal procedures aiming at setting EU affairs on the parliamentary agenda. It is interesting to note that a large proportion of the reported activities result from trans-European initiatives and networks such as COSAC or IPEX.

With regards to activities aiming at raising citizen's awareness and understanding of EU affairs the typical activities undertaken by most countries are the production of information leaflets, the creation of information sections or entire websites<sup>11</sup> about the EU, as well as the organisation of information campaigns and "EU days".

### 3. Main areas of discussion

#### 3.1 Media

Of common concern to all countries participating in the workshop was the question of how to handle the media. Parliaments face two main problems in relation to this:

- a. The large amounts of information available to the media have to be searched, plucked and made more reader-friendly
- b. There is not much cooperation between media and parliament in their day to day work

Another issue linked to the media is the difficulty of getting the media interested in parliamentary affairs. Participating countries reported a tangible lack of interest (e.g. by sending junior staff to cover parliamentary issues) and a tendency to cover only controversial topics or politicians.

From the discussions it seems that by applying a proactive media management and communication policy, the (quantitative and qualitative) coverage of parliament by the media can be significantly improved.

Finally there is the question of letting the media have 'unrestricted access around the building'. Some countries apply a policy of unrestricted access to the media (e.g. The Netherlands), but most European countries still have rules forbidding media (or any non-nominated person) to access certain meetings, archives, or other restricted spaces in parliament. That said, the policy applied does not seem to have any significant impact on neither the quantity nor the quality of media coverage of parliamentary affairs.

#### 3.2 Role of parliament to sex up politics?

It is interesting to note that the activities used to promote parliament tend to be very similar across participating countries and that overall they reflect a rather a conservative PR strategy in comparison to the private sector<sup>12</sup>. From

---

<sup>11</sup> E.g. the Swedish parliament has created a website to provide complete and all round-information about the EU and Swedish membership.

<sup>12</sup> With some exceptions mainly to be found in new and future EU member states. For more information please refer to the countries individual presentations on [www.epri.org](http://www.epri.org)

the discussion it appears that the main reasons for their approaches – both the physical and virtual – are to be found in the role and procedures of parliaments across the countries.

#### *The long and winding road of the legislative process*

The main difficulty expressed that parliaments seem to encounter is to explain in a clear and interesting way, the workings of parliament. Since in many cases a lot of the work happens behind closed doors and over a long period of time, and since there is a need for specific knowledge to understand or assess the implications of a law, some parliaments find it difficult to standardize the message and attract the interest of a larger public.

**ROMANIA:** In 1999 a public information campaign was run to make public aware of the possibilities for them to get involved in the legislative process. The message “*The law is being made under your eyes: wake up! You can’t say that the things go wrong unless you get involved*” appeared on posters, in newspapers, in public spaces, on buses, as well as in information brochures and leaflets.

#### *The entertainment value of parliaments*

Some countries parliamentary traditions are more colourful than others and hence more likely to get the interest of the public. But this seems to be more the exception than the rule and raises the issue of whether or not parliaments should aim to be more entertaining in promoting their work.

Although the concept of “celebrity chairman”<sup>13</sup> as a mean to promote committee work was appealing to all, many believe in maintaining the traditional “neutral, faceless, institutional” role of parliament.

**GE:** In Germany a “legislative” TV-series (soap opera) starring well known German actors will be aired during prime-time. Each episode will be dealing with different aspects of political affairs and/or legislative procedure<sup>14</sup>.

#### *Parliament versus Government*

Another weakness of parliaments’ promotional capacity, is that it is often deemed to be in the shadow of government. Its role is in many cases unknown to the public, to the advantage of the government, and accordingly it can be difficult to attract public (or the media’s) interest, who would rather focus on government developments.

In order to address this, some countries are actively trying to make clear to citizens the difference between parliament and government (e.g. United Kingdom<sup>15</sup>).

#### *Who should promote parliament*

Finally some participants brought up the issue of whether or not it is the role of parliament as an institution to actively inform and engage citizens, or whether parliaments should restrict themselves to providing the tools to promote parliamentary affairs.

<sup>13</sup> In reference to the chairman of one committee in the UK House of Commons, who through his many appearances on talk shows, has increased awareness of his committee’s work.

<sup>14</sup> Information by German participant.

<sup>15</sup> It appears to be one of the primary objectives relating to public information.

Although no clear answer was given to this question it could be argued that parliament should not pursue PR activities but focus on promoting transparency, awareness and understanding of parliament and hence leave the PR activities to politicians - with the risk that parliamentary affairs become secondary/overshadowed by persona or partisan issues.

### 3.3 Reaching the unreachable

The easiest task in the endeavor of parliaments re-connecting with citizens is to promote communication between parliament and the people who already are politically active since it is this group who seek parliament and not the other way around. The main problem for parliaments, we have seen, is how to get to the “unreachable”: the democratic outsiders, the un-empowered and particularly the young.

Among these, young people are at least a definable group and can be (and are) accessed through schools, high schools, universities and youth clubs - , even if they still are not an easy target to get through to.

On the other hand, where do the democratic outsiders meet? Not being politically involved is the norm in most countries, rather than the exception. In trying to involve these democratic outsiders, some parliaments have decided to focus on well-defined social groups (e.g. Ireland’s focus on farmers and women), but these countries are in a minority. In a society where communication tends to be tailored to specific groups, parliaments seem to favor a “one size fits all” communications approach to the democratic outsiders aged 20+.

### 34 Ready for engagement?

Finally the question of parliamentarians’ real desire to hear every citizen’s point of view was raised. How much engagement is enough?

A more directly involved public implies a lot of additional work for parliament, as even more information needs to be assessed and made available. Will active and innovative uses of new technology, as well as a constant re-organization of internal procedures be enough to avoid the quality of work of parliament in general, (and parliamentarians more specifically) deteriorate, because of the increased time and efforts spent in “communicating” with citizens?

#### 4. SWOT of the Parliamentary World<sup>16</sup>

##### Strengths: (internal)

- Most of the transparency activities are well developed and can already deliver benefits (better & faster access to information by both MPs, staff and outsiders)
- Re-design of website, and introduction of press departments: civil office, CRM software etc, has made basic information more easily accessible
- Most countries have included civil society in legislative process

##### Weaknesses: (internal)

- Parliaments tend to promote information policy but not active involvement: they work under assumption that more information will create more engagement
- There is no measure/indicator of engagement activities
- No definition of how much engagement is wanted
- Lack of finance
- Lack of political consensus for future development
- Need to reorganize the way of working inside parliament
- Information management: internally and externally
- Lack of clear communication strategy
- In some countries the behavior of MPs can weaken citizens trust in the institution and political affairs

##### Opportunities (external)

- People say they are interested in knowing more
- Possibility of customizing communication through ICT tools (e.g. blogs, emails) but also through civil society initiatives and intermediaries<sup>17</sup>
- As more and more countries are dealing with these issues, there are more opportunities to learn from other countries experiences
- Youth has been targeted for a while, could have positive effects on the future

##### Threats (external)

- Media
- Unclear role of parliament in general and federal parliament in particular
- The role and workings of parliament (hard to make it interesting and difficult to separate its role from the role of government)
- Citizens' disengagement
- Trust issues
- Increasing complexity of the political affairs (e.g. EU versus national competency, issues of globalization, etc)

---

<sup>16</sup> Please note that this brief SWOT analysis is based on participants input.

<sup>17</sup> E.g, MySociety, ([www.mysociety.org](http://www.mysociety.org)), BBC Action Network (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/>)

## IV. Conclusions

### 1. Challenges

From the presentations and discussions held among participants during the workshop, a number of barriers to effectively providing information to and with engaging citizens, clearly emerge. These barriers are:

- the nature of the information
- the role of the institution
- the management of media

The role of the parliament and its daily work doesn't seem to "appeal" to neither the great majority of citizens nor the media. The current policy adopted by most countries of making accessible the information to the public in laymen terms is viewed as insufficient to convey an interesting message.

Countries who have a communication strategy targeting media, point out positive results such as better and wider coverage of parliamentary work. However greater media coverage doesn't necessarily mean increased interest. At present time, the countries with media communication strategies are unable to present evidence that there exists a link between higher quality and quantity of information given to the public and an increase in their interest/engagement in political affairs.

One thing that does seem to increase interest in political affairs is when a certain entertainment element has been added (voluntarily or not) to parliamentary affairs. This raises the question of whether or not the role of the institution allows parliament to pursue an active communication strategy of infotainment.

Finally, on the question of assessment as a necessary tool to be included in the communication activities, most countries don't see this as a priority issue, most likely as evidence of the lack of overall planning of parliaments' missions and goals in the fields related to communication and engagement with citizens.

### 2. Closing Thoughts

Traditional political engagement indicators (e.g. voter turn out, party membership, affiliation to unions etc.) all show a general fall in citizens' engagement in formal political activities. However, there are some things that need to be redefined in order to acquire an adequate picture of the levels of interest and engagement in political affairs.

There is a need to redefine what engagement means today: is it NGO's membership, charitable donations, voluntary work, or making politically informed consumer choices? Also, there is a need to define what type of public engagement parliaments and parliamentarians actually want and how much. Is parliament really ready to listen to and take account of every citizen's view, who might want to take part?

## SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

### I. THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

« **The DUFF / VOGGENHUBER » REPORT** on the period of reflection: the structure, subjects and context for an assessment of the debate on the European Union (Committee on Constitutional Affairs, 16 December 2005)  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/omk/sipade3?L=EN&OBJID=106023&LEVEL=3&MODE=SIP&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N>

**Procedure file : 19/01/2006 - EP: non-legislative resolution**  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/FindByProcnum.do?lang=2&procnum=INI/2005/2146>

**MEPs call for a Constitution by 2009**  
Article about The DUFF / VOGGENHUBER report (January 16<sup>th</sup> 2006)  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story\\_page/005-4526-16-1-3-901-20060119STO04525-2006-16-01-2006/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/005-4526-16-1-3-901-20060119STO04525-2006-16-01-2006/default_en.htm)

**Citizens Forums**  
(initiative following DUFF / VOGGENHUBER report's proposition to organise parliamentary and citizens' forums in order to ensure a broad public debate about the future of Europe, and the active participation of all stakeholders in the current "period of reflection".)

**“European Parliament goes local”**, (about Citizens Forums)  
Article (March 16<sup>th</sup>)  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story\\_page/002-6100-075-03-11-901-20060313STO06099-2006-16-03-2006/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/002-6100-075-03-11-901-20060313STO06099-2006-16-03-2006/default_en.htm)

**The Parliamentary Forum on the Future of Europe (8-9 May 2006)**  
<http://www.futurdeleurope.europarl.europa.eu>

**MEPs plan citizen 'agoras' to boost EU debate**  
Article (May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2006)  
<http://euobserver.com/9/21676>

### II. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**White Paper on a European Communication Policy**  
[http://ec.europa.eu/communication\\_white\\_paper/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/communication_white_paper/index_en.htm)

**Debate Europe**  
(The European Commissions website for the wide debate on the future of the European Union)  
[http://europa.eu/debateeurope/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/debateeurope/index_en.htm)

### III. SELECTED LINKS TO OECD PUBLICATIONS ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND POLICY-MAKING

**Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-making** (2001) (report)

<http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4201131E.PDF>

**Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-making** (2001) (report)

<http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4201141E.PDF>

**Open Government: Fostering Dialogue with Civil Society** (2003) (report)

<http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4203011E.PDF>

**Problems and Promise of E-Democracy: Challenges of Online Citizen Engagement** (2003) (report)

<http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4204011E.PDF>

**Evaluating Public Participation in Policy Making** (2005) (report)

<http://213.253.134.29/oecd/pdfs/browseit/4205101E.PDF>

**Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation** (2001) (Policy Brief)

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/24/34/2384040.pdf>

**Engaging Citizens Online for Better Policy-making** (2003) (Policy Brief)

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/62/23/2501856.pdf>

**The e-government imperative: main findings** (Policy Brief)

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/60/2502539.pdf>

**Public Sector Modernisation: Open Government** (2005) (Policy Brief)

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/1/35/34455306.pdf>

**OECD E-Government Project website**

<http://webdomino1.oecd.org/COMNET/PUM/egovproweb.nsf>

### IV. PARLIAMENT AND MEDIA

**The “Puttnam” Commissions’ report :Members only? Parliament in the public eye** (May 2005)

Report recommendations

[http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/programmes/puttnam\\_commission/launch](http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/programmes/puttnam_commission/launch)

**Parliament and the media: building an effective relationship** (February 2000)

[www.cpahq.org/uploadstore/docs/summary.pdf](http://www.cpahq.org/uploadstore/docs/summary.pdf)

**Media Coverage Parliament: A cause for concern?** by Ralph Negrine (July 1998)

<http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/riia/ner01.html>

### **Building a media relationship**

Tips on how to manage the media by  
[www.iccsafe.org/safety/pdf/MediaRelations.pdf](http://www.iccsafe.org/safety/pdf/MediaRelations.pdf)

## V. OTHER

### **Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: a guide to good practice** (2006)

<http://www.ipu.org/english/handbks.htm#democracy>

## VI. ABOUT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

### **Bowling Together: Online Public Engagement in Policy Deliberation** by Stephen Coleman & John Gøtze (December 2001) (report)

<http://www.bowlingtogether.net/>

### **eStrategies for government, Prisma Strategic Guideline 9** by Millard, J. (2003) (report)

Chapter 2: e-democracy- concept, tools and applications (pp.2-18)

[www.prisma-eu.org/deliverables/sq9democracy.pdf](http://www.prisma-eu.org/deliverables/sq9democracy.pdf)

### **OFMDFM Review of Public Administration Research Briefing Paper** by John Morison (September 2002)

Chapter 4: Consultation: Models and Best practice (pp.21-29)

## VII. CANADIAN POLICY RESEARCH NETWORKS

### **Transparency, Trust and Citizen Engagement - What Canadians Are Saying About Accountability**, by Julia Abelson, François-Pierre Gauvin (December 2004)

<http://www.cprn.com/en/doc.cfm?doc=1141>

### **Revitalizing Democratic Participation: Engaging Citizens for Change**, by Mary Pat MacKinnon (April 2005)

<http://www.cprn.com/en/doc.cfm?doc=1213>

### **Fostering a Culture of Engagement in Canada** (News Release, March 2006)

<http://www.cprn.com/en/doc.cfm?doc=1407>

### **Connecting Young People, Policy and Active Citizenship**, by Mary Pat MacKinnon, Judy Watling (May 2006)

<http://www.cprn.com/en/doc.cfm?doc=1439>

## VIII. INTERMEDIARIES

### **MySociety, ([www.mysociety.org](http://www.mysociety.org)),**

mySociety builds websites which give people simple, tangible benefits in the civic and community aspects of their lives. It has two missions. The first is to be a charitable project, which builds websites that give people simple, tangible benefits in the civic and community aspects of their lives. The second is to teach the public and voluntary sectors, through demonstration, how to most efficiently use the internet to improve lives.

### **BBC Action Network (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/>)**

The Formerly "iCan", helped citizens connect with each other through public forums and a "democracy database" packed with information on tips for grassroots campaigning and the legislative process. The new Action Network makes it even easier for users to find and connect with other like-minded people in their community. New additions include alerts, syndication, and a revised user interface. BBC Action Network's aim is to enhance the overwhelming feeling of empowerment users report in using the site to take responsibility for issues they care about.