

Manifesto and pledge-signing efforts intensify as elections approach

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News

NGOs, lobby groups and others are stepping up their efforts to enlist the support of would-be MEPs ahead of the European elections next month.



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They have launched a raft of manifestos and appealed to election candidates to sign “pledges” committing to their particular cause in the final run-up to the eagerly-awaited 23-26 May poll.

The groups are as diverse as the people standing in the election, ranging from animal welfare campaigners and faith organisations to business and consumer groups.

They include the Fair Trade Advocacy Office in Brussels, whose director Eduardo Cuoco believes the

elections are an “important moment” to raise awareness to incoming MEPs about the “urgency” of promoting sustainable agro-ecological and organic production.

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His organisation has produced a “special issue” of the (fictitious) newspaper “The Fair Times” that focuses on “all the sustainable consumption and production” achievements it has set the EU to achieve by the time of the next elections in 2024.

Medicines for Europe, meantime, has also launched a manifesto with its director general, Adrian van den Hoven, saying the elections are “an opportunity to improve healthcare in Europe.”

The EU office of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has penned a “Dear Candidate” letter which opens, “In the next 5 years, MEPs will have a say on the direction the EU takes in protecting the environment and fighting climate change.”

A relatively new development in the 2019 election is the use of a pledge form which would-be MEPs are being asked to sign.

Autism-Europe is among those that have asked candidates to put their name to a “pledge”, committing to a range of objectives including supporting autistic people and their families in their future parliamentary work.

“The business community has a strong responsibility to speak up and say very clearly that the EU is the solution and not the problem” **Pierre Gattaz, BusinessEurope**

Elsewhere, the Faith and Freedom Summit, a coalition of faith-based NGOs, has a pledge asking candidates to “uphold and defend the freedom and conscience and religion of all individuals.”

This has already been signed by several sitting MEPs, including Finnish EPP deputy Sirpa Pietikainen, German ECR member Bernd Kolmel, Igor Soltes, a Greens MEP from Slovenia and Czech Republic MEP Jan Zahradil, who is the ECR candidate for the European Commission presidency.

Meanwhile, BusinessEurope President Pierre Gattaz told this website that it is “encouraging the business community and citizens to go and vote because this is a crucial election for the future of Europe.”

It has organised a number of initiatives, including debates, awareness raising via the press and social media, and videos with testimonies about “what can be achieved thanks to Europe.”

Gattaz said, “Euroscepticism is the expression of different fears. These fears are exploited by

populists who propose simplistic solutions that do not work.”

“The business community has a strong responsibility to speak up and says very clearly that the EU is the solution and not the problem.”

“More than 40 percent of our citizens are still undecided on whether to go and vote. We believe that casting a vote is the first step to be part of the solution. Hence our slogan - Europe is voting: make it your business.”

“This time is crucial: selecting the right strategy usually means successfully conveying messages to new and remaining politicians and officials” **Eugenio Quintieri, European Builders Confederation**

Recent studies, he notes, have shown that 70 Percent of people see the company they work for as the most trusted entity.

“This is another reason for business to speak up,” he added.

The European Builders Confederation (EBC) is also taking a similarly proactive approach to the election, with Secretary General Eugenio Quintieri saying, “European elections often mean major changes, but also new opportunities.”

“During this period, manifestos are a common and almost ceremonial proceeding in the work of policy-oriented European organisations, including the EBC.”

He said, “It is a time to take stock of past results, draw lessons and build the future policy strategies. This time is crucial: selecting the right strategy usually means successfully conveying messages to new and remaining politicians and officials.”

“Europe is changing and we are changing with it. It is, therefore, fundamental to adapt to this new political context in order to represent our construction SMEs’ interests in the best way,” he added.

The EBC’s manifesto has six recommendations for the 2019-2024 European legislative term: an inclusive economic growth, fair internal market, sustainable buildings, digital single market, more, better and safer jobs and suitable standards.

Quintieri went on, “By debating then applying our ideas, we will obtain a higher political visibility and ensure that the economic relevance of the sector will be better reflected at EU level. “

About the author

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