Potential and Challenges of Yourvotematter.eu in the 2019 European Elections

Evaluation and Recommendations

ECAS, Brussels, July 2019

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the European Elections recorded the lowest level of participation with 57,39 percent of eligible voters abstaining. Major challenges were seen in certain countries, e.g. Poland's number of abstainers was more than 75%, and the participation of young people between the ages of 18 - 24 was particularly concerning, as only 7% voted. Of the eligible citizens who voted, several political analysts argue that voters did not see the 2014 election as an opportunity to shape EU policies for the next five years, but as a protest vote against national politics. In fact, large part of voters casted their vote based on national or local issues and preferences. The problem in 2014 was mainly twofold: 1) the level of participation was too low, especially among young people; and 2) the majority of voters in the last election did not vote to express their views on a European topic or policy.

After 5 years, in May 2019 European voters were called once again to go the polls to elect a new European Parliament. The YouVoteEU project was created with the objective to tackle the two challenges of the previous elections - mainly by stimulating and increasing the participation of EU citizens in the 2019 European Parliament elections and to foster their knowledge and understanding of current and future EU policies. To address these needs, the consortium partners built an innovative web platform – Yourvotematters.eu – with the following functionalities:

- **Connect**: To allow EU citizens and organisations to create a public profile where they can include their opinions on the EP political and legislative process. The platform also includes profiles of MEPs (incumbent or running as candidates for the first time) created by collecting information on their latest publicly available political stances.
- **Share**: To promote debates and discussions on the EP political and legislative process, by giving the opportunity to policy-makers to post their initiatives and to EU citizens/stakeholders to propose changes.
- **Vote**: To allow the EU citizens to compare their views with those of individual MEPs that they have elected and find which MEP have represented their interests best during their mandate. This was done in the form of a quiz, with 25 questions, each question corresponding to a vote in the European Parliament.

Evaluation purpose and objectives

The purpose of the following report is to understand if the Yourvotematters.eu platform managed to reach its objectives and how to replicate the YouVoteEU project in the future. The report will state the achievements and challenges of the project and includes recommendations on how to use the platform to increase voter participation in European Elections.

Evaluation model

The platform's structure and features were included the initial Terms of Reference (ToR) - set by the partner VoteWatch Europe to define the overall strategy of the platform and its functionalities. The evaluation plan takes into consideration the ToR and includes qualitative and quantitative data which will be collected through questionnaires, surveys and online analyses. The evaluation will include all the partners, citizens and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) taking part in the project activities.

Evaluation elements and methods

The report will assess the outcomes of the project, mainly the Youvotematters.eu platform in terms of:

- Functionalities;
- Outputs;
- Satisfying and fulfilling participation experience;
- Potential for long-term;
- Further development.

Evaluation methods and sources used are briefly presented below:

- Terms of Reference document – developed by VoteWatch Europe;
- Users statistics - recorded on the Yourvotematters.eu platform;
- Usability testing event – during the European Academy 2018 in Belgium;
- Usability testing event – during the European Day in Collegium Civitas in Poland;
- Communications report – developed by Riparte il Futuro.

In the following chapters, we will first outline all the technical features of the Yourvotematters.eu platform and the possibilities users have by using its functions. The starting point will be the ToR presented by VoteWatch Europe and we will assess whether the final platform included all the characteristics mentioned in both the ToR and the initial project proposal.

Subsequently, we will analyse the outputs of the project and assess if the platform managed to reach all the quantitative indicators it proposed as objectives for the project – this will include the number of MEPs included in the platform, the number of direct and indirect outreach and the number of organisations registered to the platform.

The following section on the Communication Strategy will highlight the project goals for communication and dissemination activities and assess whether the consortium managed to reach its objectives. This part will include the material created and their specific messages in order to reach out to citizens, EP candidates and EU citizens.

The last section will discuss the challenges of the platform throughout the project duration and the possibilities for improvement in light of the next European Elections. The report will end with the conclusions and recommendations on using the Yourvotematters.eu platform for raising awareness on EU policies and enhancing citizens' engagement and participation in European Elections.

2. YOURVOTEMATTERS.EU PLATFORM EVALUATION

This chapter presents findings from the evaluation of the following aspects of the Yourvotematters.eu platform: 1 Functionalities, 2 Outputs, 3 Participation experience, 4 Potential for long term use, 5 Innovativeness and 6 Further development. Recommendations for modifications and improvements of the Youvotematters.eu platform are presented in Chapter 3.

2.1 Functionalities

Yourvotematters.eu (or YouVote2019.eu) represents the main technological output of the project and its objective is to "raise the participation of voters in the 2019 elections and to connect voters with current and future EU policies". In order to reach this goal, the functionalities in Yourvotematters.eu should:

1. Enable citizens, stakeholders and MEPs to connect through common access to the platform functions;

2. Promote debates and discussions on the EP political and legislative process, by giving the opportunity to policy-makers to publicise their initiatives and to EU citizens/stakeholders to propose modifications and integrations; and

3. Allow EU citizens to compare their views against those of individual EU Parliamentarians that they have elected and find which MEP best represents their views.

The main principle behind the project is that "more knowledge leads to more participation and more participation leads to an increase in the voter turnout". The website includes three aspects: *1) personalising EU politics (find your MEP); 2) building bridges, creating (cross-country) socio-political communities; and 3) improving accessibility: making the most of new web and mobile technology"*.

1) personalising EU politics (find your MEP);

- To personalise EU politics by allowing the citizens to compare their views with those of individual MEPs to find which MEP best represents their views.
- Quiz with 15-25 questions, each question corresponding to a vote in the European Parliament.

2) building bridges, creating (cross-country) socio-political communities;

- Interactive sections of the website that are directly accessible to social media;
- Option of connecting with others with similar political views from their country – thus creating new national and cross-national networks of active citizens.

3) improving accessibility: making the most of new web and mobile technology.

- Special apps for mobile devices;
- Widgets created for news media.

Terms of Reference on the Functionalities:

The Yourvotematters.eu was created with the aim of enhancing the dialogue between all the actors involved in the next round of European elections (politicians, political parties, citizens, organizations, stakeholders), and was scheduled for May 2019. Following YouVoteEU's mission and objectives, the *Terms of Reference* (ToR) set by VoteWatch Europe described a platform that would include the following components:

1) The Blog - This section consists of a series of policy debriefings referring to the latest political developments in the European Parliament electoral campaign. It also keeps citizens informed about the phases of this special online project.

2) Match Your Vote - By voting on 20-25 key issues that Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) had also voted over the last five years, the citizens can find out which sitting MEP or new candidate most closely matches their views. We selected high-profile votes from topics which have been in the list of priorities of the European Commission and/or on the agenda of the meetings of the Council Summit and/or have been highly disputed in the European Parliament.

The positions of the new candidates were included once they completed an online questionnaire containing the same topics.

3) Where Do They Stand - This section allows a quick search to find out how the MEPs voted on the same list of key votes. The section also includes the positions of civil society organisations on the same topics.

4) What if…? - This section shows what the outcome of the votes would have been if they were decided by citizens' votes, as well as what the outcome can be in the case the balance of power between political groups would be different.

The ToR included the website's Privacy policy to clarify how the platform collects, uses, maintains and discloses Personal Data collected from users of Yourvotematters.eu. It outlines the details of: What data we collect, Why we collect data, How we keep data secure, Who has access to our data, Retention of personal data and Cookies.

Furthermore, the ToR outlined the working methods and ways of producing content on the website – mainly divided into 3 phases:

1. Early phase - defining project management tools and the structure of the platform;
2. Launch of the platform - design the platform and its content;
3. From the launch until the elections - promotion, monitoring and maintenance.

The Risk Management strategy was to identify since the beginning the potential risks and probability of occurrence along with appropriate solutions. The project would ensure constant monitoring of the platform and readiness to adopt fast reactions to unpredicted situations and to adapt its strategy and tools to users' feedback.

The platform is available online www.yourvotematters.eu or www.youvote2019.eu Home page - Picture 1
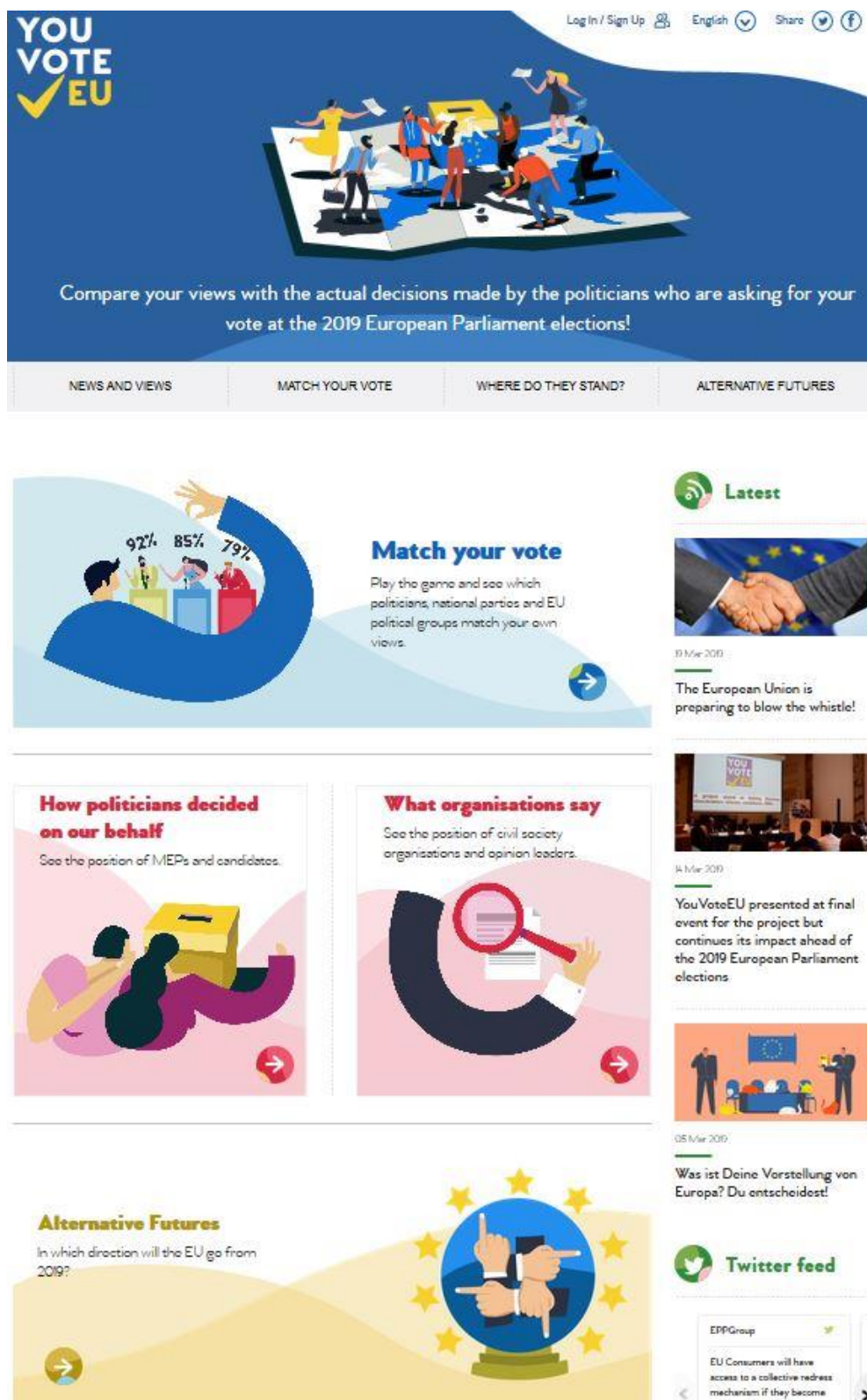
The platform is available in the Following EU Languages: English, Bulgarian, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Spanish and Swedish. At the beginning of the project, it was envisaged to translate the platform only in the languages of the project's partners. The Consortium managed to find additional resources and external partners such as NGOs that provided the translation in additional languages.

2.1.1 News and Views

The 'Blog', initially stated in the ToR, was transformed into a section on News and Views thus to enlarge the scope of what could be published and benefit the public. This space was created in order to communicate about the project, update citizens on what was happening in the run-up to the European elections and publish the Twitter feed of the European Parliament Groups.

By June 2019, the News and Views section contained 42 articles in multiples languages: English (17), Polish (9), Greek (6), Italian (4), French (2), Spanish (1), German (1), Hungarian (1) and Slovak (1).

The articles were written by the consortium partners, aside for a couple of blogs by guest contributors. The posts can be divided in 5 main categories:

- Political analysis – Mainly blog posts with analyses of the European political situation in the run-up to the European Elections of May 2019;
- Events – Articles related to the project's events, such as the launch events in Belgium, Poland and Greece, and other ones where the YouVoteEU project was being presented or referred to;
- Communication of promotional material – Posts showcasing YouVoteEU's dissemination material such as visuals and videos;
- Call to sign up on the platform – Articles calling for citizens and CSOs to sign up to the platform and match their vote - also calls for MEP candidates to join the platform and present their positions on the same topics;
- Updates on the platform- Posts related to updates to the Yourvotematters.eu platform or notifying users of technical issues when necessary.

Facebook and Twitter buttons are available on each article page for users to directly share the content to social media.

2.1.2 Match your Vote

'Match your Vote' is the central piece of the Yourvotematter.eu platform. It contains a quiz with 25 questions which allows citizens to identify which politicians, national parties and EU political groups match their views. The quiz records MEPs actions and formal votes in the European Parliament in the past five years and it allows users to vote on the same questions on different EU policy issues- such as migration, environment, defence, digitalisation etc.

The 25 EU issues and questions in the quiz were selected by the project partners. VoteWatch Europe initiated the selection process by identifying the most important issues voted in the EU Parliament (2014 - 2019) for partners to choose from. The starting point was research on the most important issues voted in the EU Parliament - based on VoteWatch Europe's own digital platform, which displays the collection of all the roll-call votes cast in the EP plenary. In order to make a selection of the most relevant policy issues to be featured in the Yourvotematters.eu platform, VoteWatch drew a list of criteria that are based upon sound methodological practice:

1. The issues should encompass topics on which the political forces have proposed different approaches, as to highlight the differences in the alternative proposals and to show to the citizens the plurality of views expressed in the EP.
2. The issues should have featured high on the political agenda over the last 5 years, such as being included in the list of 10 political priorities of the Juncker Commission or the agenda of European Council summits.
3. The issues should be different from one another, as to take into account the different concerns of the heterogeneous population of EU citizens.
4. The issues should be relevant for the broader EU population (rather than just a specialised audience of policy experts).
5. The issues should refer to policy areas that fall under the competencies of the EU. However, this criterion should not be interpreted in a very strict way, as the competencies of the EU have been changing over time. On the basis of the above criteria, we built our list of 40 key votes from the current Parliamentary term.[1]

By following this methodology, VoteWatch Europe proposed 40 key votes and asked partners to select which 25 questions should be included in the Yourvotematters.eu platform trying in the best way possible to have a balance of different topics.

The goal of the quiz is for citizens to not only identify the MEPs or parties that match their preferences, but also to acquire more knowledge about EU competences and policies.

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[1] Note: at each of the votes in the list, a number of MEPs abstained, which indicates why the percentage 'for' plus the percentage 'against' will not add up to exactly 100%. As the abstentions are not taken into account when there is a counting of whether a proposal has received the support of 50% +1 of the votes, only the votes in favour and those against are mentioned.

While taking the quiz, a user can also indicate how important the EU topic is before casting the vote so that the results are weighted according to personal priorities. Each question contains a few informative details (Pros and Cons) on the EU policy issue so that users can read the arguments for and against it before casting the vote. The titles of the votes have been edited for clarity and to make them less technical to citizens.
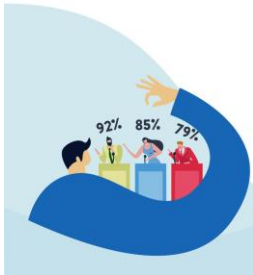
Once the quiz is over, the platform will showcase the results to the users by ranking individual MEPs with the highest percentage of votes matched. Citizens can compare their views against three entities:

- Individual MEPs;
- National parties;
- European political groups.

Before starting the quiz, users will be asked to provide their country, age group and gender for statistically purposes and to provide more accurate results. This is also how the results regarding individual MEPs and national parties will be based on the country selected before starting the quiz. Citizens do not need to provide further data in order to participate in the quiz, meaning their identity is anonymous and all answers remain strictly confidential.

Match your vote

See which politicians, national parties and EU political groups match your views based on their true actions.

Vote on 25 real decisions that Members of the European Parliament have actually made in the last five years, and see at the end which politicians, national parties and European political groups match your views based on facts (rather than promises/manifestos).

For each topic, you can indicate how important it is to you before casting your vote so that the results are weighted according to your own priorities. You can also read more details of what the vote is about, and arguments for and against before making up your mind. The titles of the votes have been edited for clarity. All decisions were made during the current parliamentary term (2014 – 2019).

Help us provide more accurate statistics

(your answers remain strictly confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only)

| Belgium ⌄ | Select age group ⌄ |

○ Male　　○ Female　　○ Other

START →

2.1.3 Where do they stand – Politicians and Organisations

The 'Where do they stand' page on the platform includes two sections: 'How politicians decided on our behalf' and 'What organisations say'.
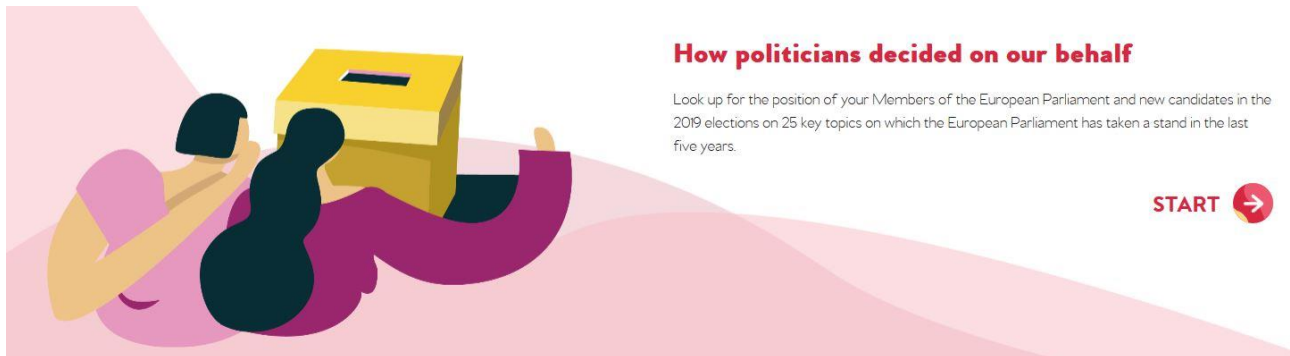
Users of the platform can use this section to check the position of Members of the European Parliament and new candidates in the 2019 elections on 25 key topics on which the European Parliament has taken a stand upon the last five years. 'How politicians decided on our behalf' includes three different parts:

- **Individual politicians** – The individual politicians include two categories of MEPs:
  - MEPs holding a mandate for the period 2014-2019. Users can see their position on 25 key votes taken in the European Parliament on several policy issues.
  - New candidates at elections to the European Parliament in 2019 who do not currently have a seat in the hemicycle. When registering to the platform, they are asked to complete a questionnaire stating their position on 25 key dossiers regarding several policy areas.

  Each MEP's pages includes a profile description, their website (if they have one), their national party, their European political group, votes on the 25 policy issues and policy proposals if they want to add more.

A color code is used to allow users to easily identify if the politicians are current MEPs, candidates or MEPs who are running again for the European Elections 2019.

Current MEPs ⬤: MEPs currently holding a mandate for the period 2014-2019. You can see their position on 25 key votes taken in the European Parliament on several policy areas.

New candidates ⬤: Candidates at elections to the European Parliament in 2019 who don't currently have a seat in the hemicycle. When registering on our platform, they are asked to complete a questionnaire stating their position on 25 key dossiers regarding several policy areas.

This MEP runs for a new mandate in 2019 EU elections. ⬤

- **National parties** – Users can use the tab to filter out national parties according to EU groups or by country. The pages will show the individual party votes on the 25 policy issues.
- **EU groups** – The tab EU groups lists the following political groups of the European Parliament: EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE, Greens/EFA, GUE-NGL, EFDD, ENF. The page shows the full name of the political groups, their social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) and their logo.

What organisations say

Need trusted advice? Look up for the views and proposals of civil society organisations.

START →

'What organisations say' is a section created specifically to allow organisations to post their views and proposals on EU policy issues. Organisations here can:

1. Describe their organisations' mission and vision and post a direct link to their website;
2. Vote on the same 25 questions of the Match your Vote section to give their answers to the quiz and list their priorities;
3. Post a policy vision or proposal which citizens can 'vote' on by putting a thumbs up or a thumbs down.

Individuals can register too in this section if they wish to showcase their 25 answers to the quiz and posting their policy ideas for other citizens to vote on.

- Civil Society Organizations
- Business Organizations
- Media
- Higher Educations Institutions

Any organisation can sign up to the platform but their profile is published only when approved by the consortium, as the partners reserve the right to approve only the organisations' profiles which meet the project's scope and criteria (e.g. be based in the EU, have a European focus, recognised as a legal entity, have a good reputability, etc.). In the beginning of the project, all types of organisations were listed in the same way on the platform. However, the consortium agreed on the importance to distinguish NGOs from other kinds of organisations such as business groups, media and higher education institutions. For this reason, the consortium decided to implement a colour code to differentiate the various types of organisations and facilitate citizens' understanding of what positions these organisations are representing.

2.1.4 Alternative Futures (What if…?)

Members of the European Parliament adopt EU legislation on behalf of citizens. However, 'Alternative Futures' was created on the Yourvotematters.eu platform to allow citizens to simulate how the European Parliament would look like if they themselves were to decide on the outcome of each vote.

This section allows users to see what the result of 25 key votes, which took place in the European Parliament in the last five years, would have been, if the users of this website had voted on them directly.

Users can also create their own EP scenario, by predicting how many seats each European political group will win in the European elections and see how this would impact EU's decisions. They can start their prediction by allocating the seats of the different political groups and see what impact the changes might have on EU's decisions.

Each of the 25 policy issues shows how MEPs voted in the past five years and how users voted, based on the answers to the Match your Vote quiz.

The main goal of this section is to allow users to see how they can affect European policy when they vote for the MEPs at the European Elections. It raises awareness on the functioning of the European Parliament and shows citizens how different this institution could look like and what type of policies would result from it according to the diverse composition of the political groups.

2.1.5 Interconnection of different functionalities:

The 4 sections (News and Views, Match Your Vote, Where do they Stand and Alternative Futures) of the Yourvotematters.eu platform are mainly stand-alone sections -as their functions can be used independently at any time. However, they all relate to and complement each other by sharing the common goal of raising citizens' awareness on different aspects of the European Elections 2019. 'News and Views' and 'Where do They Stand' are informative sections that allows users to discover both current European affairs and the positions of MEPs, parties, European groups and organisations. 'Match your Vote' and 'Alternative Futures' are the more interactives sections which foster citizens' understanding of EU polices and how the European Parliament works.

On the technical side, most of the functions of the platform are interlinked. The 25 questions/answers on the EU policy issues are the common thread, as they appear in all the sections except for 'News and Views'. In 'Match your Vote', it is up to users to answer the quiz with the 25 questions on EU policies. In 'Where do They Stand', there are two parts showcasing how politicians, national parties and organisations have voted or would vote on the same 25 EU policy issues. 'Alternative Futures' shows how the European Parliament would look like according to how users answered on the platform on the 25 policy issues and how this would impact EU decision-making. This continuity of finding the 25 EU policy issues in almost all parts of the platform guides the user throughout the different functions and allows for more in-depth understanding of how the European Parliament is composed, votes on policies, and which stakeholders play a role in the EU.

Conclusions

Yourvotematters.eu is a multilingual digital platform, designed as an innovative tool to enhance citizens' awareness of the 2019 European Elections and connect MEPs, candidates and their electorate. The creation of this platform started off with the partner VoteWatch Europe who set the *Terms of Reference* (ToR) that described a platform that would include the following components: the Blog ('News and Views'), 'Match Your Vote', 'Where do They Stand' and What if... ('Alternative Futures'). All of the features included in the ToR where implemented on Yourvotematters.eu with only minor changes e.g. names of the sections and 'Where do They Stand' includes different types of organisations and not only CSOs.

In essence, the possibilities and features of the Yourvotematter.eu platform followed the objectives of the YouVoteEU project – mainly to *connect*, *share* and *vote*. Users can use the platform to *connect*, as the 'Where do they stand' section allows MEPs, parties, EU citizens and organisations to create a public profile to include their opinions on EU policy issues. Policy-makers can also use the section to *share* their policy initiatives and to EU citizens/stakeholders to propose changes. Last but not least, the 'Match Your Vote' section was created to allow the EU citizens to *vote* on 25 key policy issues and compare their views with those of individual MEPs that they have elected and find out which MEP have represented their interests best during their mandate. 'Alternative Futures' also recorded the total votes of users of the platform and compares them to the total votes of European Parliament. Therefore, all the functionalities proposed in the YouVoteEU project were implemented in the creation of the Yourvotematters.eu platform.

2.2 Outputs

The YouVoteEU project included the **quantitative indicators of the platform and the communication activities to be achieved before the end of the project.**

2.2.1 Outputs of the Platform:

The objectives of Yourvotematters.eu was to have:

- 751 MEPs included in the platform;
- 1.000.000 EU voters outreached directly with our tool;
- 10.000.000 EU citizens outreached through multipliers (media, national organisations, etc.);
- 100 organisations registered to the platform;

In the following sections, we will describe if these outputs were achieved during the lifespan of the project.

751 MEPs included in the platform: The Yourvotematters.eu platform was launched on Tuesday 25th of September 2018 at ECAS' State of the Union Citizens' Rights event in Brussels. The consortium presented the platform to the audience highlighting the importance to connect MEPs and citizens in the next European elections. Since the day of the launch, participants could immediately check the details of 751 MEPs under 'How politicians decided on our behalf' and use the 'Match your vote' and 'Alternative Futures' sections. The 'News and Views' and 'What organisations say' sections were populated systematically during the timeframe of the project.

Insight to the Yourvotematters.eu activity from 25 September 2018 to 31 May 2019:
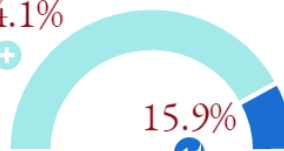
1.000.000 EU voters outreached directly with our tool: The platform recorded <u>more than 1.6 million users</u> in the 8 months running up to the European Elections. The Match Your Vote section was the most popular on the platform. More than 870 000 people from different countries in Europe and beyond took the quiz of 25 questions to discover the MEPs with votes most similar to their own. The top five countries with the most users taking the quiz were: Italy, Germany, Great Britain, Greece and Portugal.

Number of respondents to the 'Match your vote' quiz from 25 September 2018 to 31 May 2019 according to country:

10.000.000 EU citizens outreached through multipliers (media, national organisations, etc.)

The Yourvotematters.eu platform had a huge number of indirect outreach not only through the individual channels of the consortium partners but also through European and national organisations. In total, 18 organisations embedded the widget on their websites to increase outreach to citizens.

Yourvotematters.eu widget embedded on 18 websites:			
Politico.eu	EUObserver	Euractiv.com	Euronews.com
Naturemwelt.lu	Iped.bg	Europolitics.ro	Eldiario.es
Norfolk4europe.org	Initiative-qvorum.org	Oeurope.sk	Lse.ac.uk
Politicsmeanspolitics.com	Ilsole24ore.com	Anticorruptionintl.org	Touteleurope.eu
Kurierrzeszowski.pl		Todelta.gr	

Number of organisations and MEP candidates registered on the platform

Statistics at a glance...

What organisations say
See the position of civil society organisations and opinion leaders
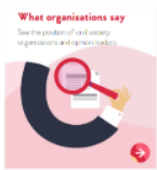
92 Civil Society Organisations
signed up to the platform

How politicians decided on our behalf
See the position of MEPs and candidates

1283 running MEPs
shared their positions

The top parties of candidates who signed up

273 — epp
258 — S&D
141 — alde
135 — The Greens - EFA
112 — (blank)
102 — ECR
95 — GUE/NGL

Followed by...

EFD — 49
ENF — 44
EUROPEAN SPRING — 29
Volt — 18
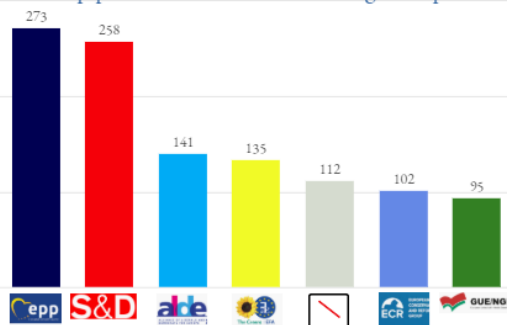
100 organisations registered to the platform

The project aimed at having 100 organisations registered to Yourvotematters.eu. In addition, the consortium partners did an outreach campaign for a few months before the European Elections to convince new MEP candidates to sign up to the platform and share their political ideas and positions through the 'Match your vote' quiz.

92 organisations in total signed up to the Yourvotematters.eu platform in 8 months.

Outreach events

Project partners actively participated and presented the platform in many events since the launch of the YouVoteEU project in order to increase the outreach of the Yourvotematters.eu platform. This included partners' participation in conferences in the run up to the European Elections, interviews to local and national radio and televisions, and actively reaching out to possible multipliers (NGOs, media outlets etc.).

A complete outreach tracking file, with the full lists of events and the consortium's outreach activities was delivered to the European Commission as a project outcome.

2.2.2 Outputs of the Communication Strategy[2]

The YouVoteEU project proposal outlined the communication objectives and the material the consortium had to create for dissemination purposes:

- 3 videos to promote the platform;
- 1 multilanguage Infographic to share ideas that provides an innovative and user-friendly way of sharing ideas and uses of the platform;
- 1 Interactive questionnaire;
- Quantitative and qualitative online promotion;
- Participation to events/conferences, and organising of a street stall or at a political fair/event where we will inform the public about the platform and encourage voters to sign up and use the platform.

All the above contents and activities were aimed at reaching the outputs listed in the previous paragraph.

Videos

The consortium, led by Riparte il Futuro, produced and distributed three videos to promote the benefits of the Yourvotematters.eu platform - mainly for the launch of the website and prior to the European 2019 elections. While one video was targeted towards EU voters and civil society organisations, another video targeted towards MEPs and policy-makers. The final video, completed a few months prior to the elections, specifically targeted EU voters.

Riparte il Futuro invited several communication agencies to tender for the production of each video, in order to select the proposals with the best value for money:

- The videos targeting MEPs and CSOs had 3 communication agencies participating to the tender. Although it was not required by the grant agreement, the consortium decided to add subtitles to these two videos in several European languages (English, Italian, Polish, Greek) with the aim to facilitate its understanding by national audiences.

- Video targeting EU voters had 5 agencies participating to the tender. The video was not only subtitled but also dubbed in English, Polish, Greek, Italian, French, Spanish, German.

All videos were disseminated through multiple communications channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, email subscription lists and websites of the partner organisations.

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[2] This section is the Communication report developed by Riparte il Futuro.

Video targeting MEPs

Message of the video - Through to the Yourvotematters.eu independent platform, EP candidates in the 2019 EU Elections have many ways to communicate and reach out to potential voters and opinion leaders. Candidates strongly need to establish a dialogue and involve citizens in the EU policy debate in order to increase the turnout at the next EU elections. Yourvotematters.eu empowers EP candidates by connecting them with millions of citizens throughout Europe who will use the platform to inform their vote and promote their content through interactive tools.

Reason for the video – EP Candidates running for the first time will have the opportunity to inform potential voters of their positions on policy issues by registering to the platform and setting up a profile. Candidates who are former MEPs will see their past votes in the current European Parliament on issues such as the environment, EU economy, human rights and other relevant topics. Yourvotematters.eu will allow millions of citizens to discover which candidates, national parties and European groups represent them best with an interactive quiz. Furthermore, all candidates will also have the opportunity to make concrete policy proposals and receive feedback from citizens and CSOs. One more reason to build a dialogue with voters and civil society on Yourvotematters.eu.

Tone used - Persuasive, compelling, stimulating, optimistic.

Video targeting CSOs

While the consortium initially meant to target both CSOs and citizens with this video, the partners then realised it would have been more effective to concentrate the narrative solely on CSOs' advantages in using the platform. Thus, the focus of this video is only on CSOs - a decision made in order to communicate more consistently with organisations who can have different goals from citizens in the EU elections debate and may benefit from the platform in a distinct way. To compensate for this choice, the video for EU voters was launched several months prior to the elections, instead of several weeks as planned according to the project proposal.

Message of the video - Through the platform, CSOs can advocate their policy concerns to candidates and ask for the the support of citizens on the platform in order to fulfill their mission and objectives. They can communicate their positions on relevant EU issues to a large audience of voters.

Reason for the video - Every CSO can set up a profile on the YouVoteEU platform and communicate to citizens/voters their view on 20 important topics for the public. They can also publish proposals that citizens can vote and comment on. These proposals will also be highlighted in Homepage and in the news/blog section. In addition to that, organisations can also vote and comment the candidates' proposals

Tone used: emotional, compelling, warm.

Video targeting EU Voters

Message of the video - YourVoteMatters.eu allows you discover through a quiz which EP candidates and political parties in the next EU elections match your views in a fun and interactive. It gives you the opportunity to vote for the politicians who best represent your vision and opinions and shape the future of the European Union.

Reason for the video - The 2019 EU Elections will be a crucial moment for the future of the European Union. There are different threats to democracy and to the survival of the EU which the project aims at mitigating such as, low turnout or protest votes, based on local and national issues and disinformation on the EU policies. In fact, many European citizens perceive the EU elections and the European Union in general as something very distant: they are often not familiar with EU political groups and candidates' and national parties' positions on EU policies. Through the YourVoteMatters.eu platform, citizens can easily discover where they stand and how politicians decided on our behalf. Moreover, by taking the interactive quiz, they can vote on 25 real decisions that MEPs have actually made in the last five years and find out which national parties and European political groups match their own views on relevant EU issues such as migration, equal rights, democracy, environmental protection, privacy, trade etc. Thus, they can decide to vote for candidates and political parties that represent their vision and opinions, relying on trustworthy and extended information.

Tone of voice: Funny, casual, compelling

Multi-language infographics

The project created a series of multilanguage infographics, posted singularly on social media and with dedicated blog posts in 7 European languages (English, Polish, Greek, Italian, French, Spanish, German). The objective of the infographics was to at enhance citizens' interest in the EU elections and lead them to visit the platform to get information on the candidates/parties. The infographics were based on the data on the perception and the expectations of EU citizens towards the main issues Europe is confronted with, according to the 'Democracy on the Move' Eurobarometer.

The infographics asked 'What issues do Voters want the EU to prioritize in the 2019 elections' and the topics were: Immigration, Economy and job growth, Social protection, Consumer protection and food safety, Climate change and protecting the environment, Protecting human rights and democracy, Fight against terrorism, How the EU should work in the future, Youth employment, Security and defense, Protection of external borders and Protection of personal data. All these topics were perceived as sensitive and overriding and should, according to respondents, have been at the core of the electoral campaign for 2019.

English blogpost (with the complete infographic)
Italian blogpost, French blogpost, Polish blogpost, Greek blogpost, German blogpost, Spanish blogpost

Examples of infographics:
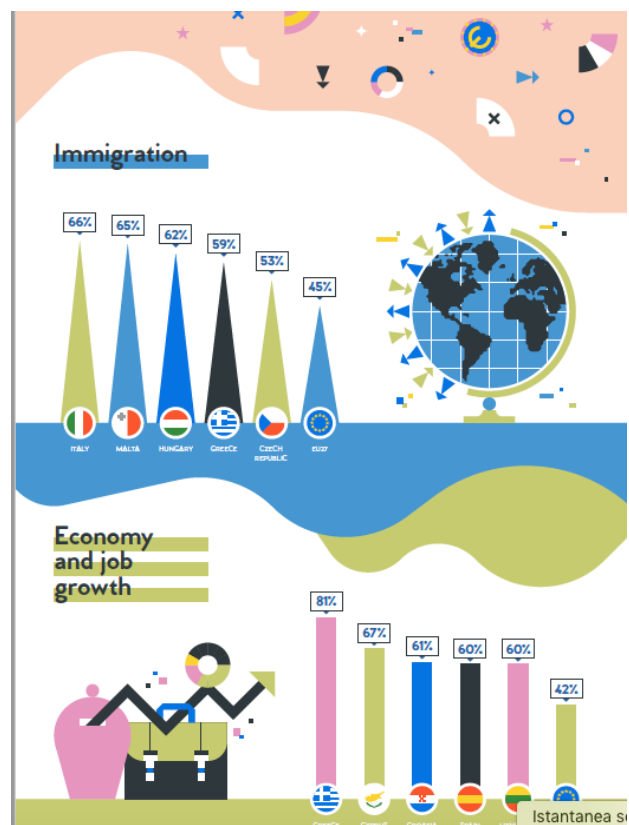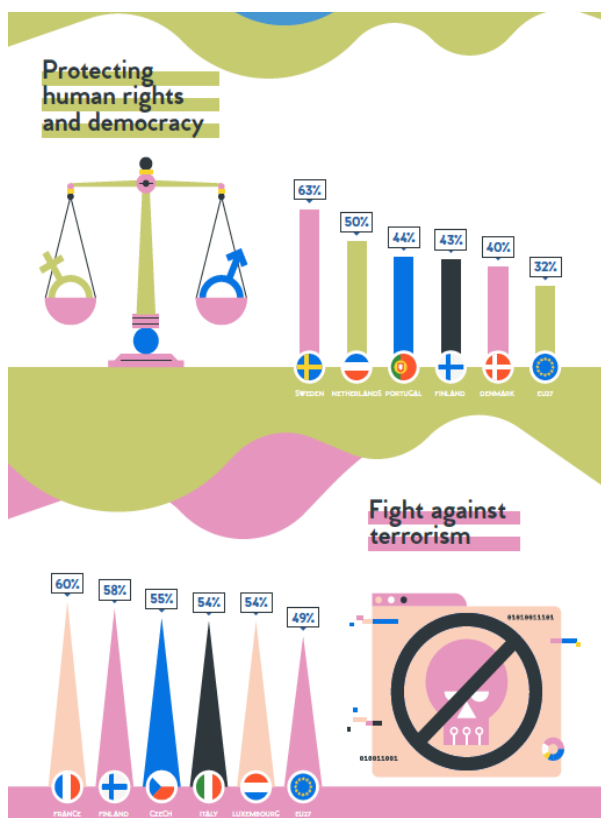
Interactive questionnaire

As described in the project proposal, the aim of this user-friendly interactive questionnaire was to encourage voters in a fun way to join the Yourvotematters.eu platform. The questionnaire was meant not only to get voters interested in the platform, but also in EU policies and the 2019 EU Election. The project decided to use Facebook (the most used social media platform) to host the questionnaire and reach new potential users. At the end of the Facebook interactive questionnaire, voters were triggered to take the complete quiz within the Yourvotematters.eu platform.

The questionnaire was produced in 4 languages (Italian, Greek, Polish, English), even though only English was officially required in the grant agreement.

Creative concept and message – Before taking the quiz to match your views with specific MEPs or parties on the Yourvotematters.eu platform, the Facebook questionnaire helps citizens using a simple game to get them acquainted with the positions of each party on relevant topics. For example, the start of the questionnaire goes "Most people do not recognise MEPs or know about EU political groups. Can you name at least 5?" To make the game fun, it includes ridiculous or absurd choice answers.

Quiz format - https://apps.facebook.com/your-vote-matters-eu

Examples of questionnaire:

Online quantitative and quality promotion

The project partners developed and implemented several communications plans targeting different stakeholders, organically (social media, email, websites) or with paid advertising.

Meps and CSOs dissemination: organisations and EP candidates have been reached out in many ways, including direct phone calls and messages. All partners took part in the outreach activities in order to cover different European countries and reach the project's dissemination goals. Over 400 candidates and 91 organisations from different EU countries have signed up to the platform thanks to this outreach activity.

Citizens dissemination: several creative formats were designed and tested. On average, one post for Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn dissemination was created per week and published by all the partner organizations. Our objectives were the following

1.
Awareness
- Why the European Parliament Elections matter?
- What is the YouVoteEU project e why is it important?

2.
Engagement
Promote debates and discussions

3.
Join
Encourage voters to join the platform

4.
Vote

Cards in favor of/against – The project created a series of cards teasing the Yourvotematters.eu quiz, as shown in the project website. For each topic, we asked citizens if they are in favor or against a proposal/position. The goal of the cards was to engage citizens and encourage them to complete the whole quiz on the Yourvotematters.eu.

Topics covered were: privacy of online communication, asylum seekers regulation, whistleblower protection, homophobic hate crime, border control, animal welfare measures, phase-ot of fossil fuels subsidies, global warming, plasting and single use items tax, corporate rate tax, renegotiations of government debt, minimum income, temporary work contracts, rule of law, European armed forces, international trade agreements, sanctions against Russia, China's export, Eu budget tax, Eu Budget 21-27, tax on companies employing robots, Palestine statehood.

Example of Card

Amongst all the topics, 'migration' proved to be the most controversial one, provoking extreme reactions and polarisation between two opposite groups, to the point of forcing the project partners to stop the paid promotion given the impossibility to moderate the huge volume of comments.

Euro myths - The dissemination of fake news on the European Union is not a new phenomenon, but social media platforms have made this challenge bigger. Disinformation on the EU has become a very worrying issue, most of the time with a common goal: to make people believe that 'evil' comes from Brussels. This series of social media cards is aimed at clarifying some false commonplaces thanks to irony.

Quotes: A series of social media card quotes highlighting the importance of voting and of the European Union. The goal of this format is to promote engagement.

Examples of Euro myths and Quotes:

The details of the media hits and Facebook advertising campaign were all sent to the European Commission as a project deliverable. It includes additional activities partners have participated in, such as: an interview by an Italian public radio channel (Radio3), national TV shows in Greece, private radio in Poland and German television channel.

Summary of the YouVoteEU communication strategy:

Format	Channel	Features	Best Practices
Card In Favor of / Against Euro Myths Blog Post Quote Match your vote! Quiz teaser Infographic	Facebook	The most mainstream platform: the main goal here is to raise awareness and engage with the audiences.	Using engaging images and native tools like the quiz; encouraging the engagement through native features such as reactions.
Card In Favor of / Against Euro Myths Blog Post Quote Match your vote! Quiz teaser Infographic	Twitter	Information and data-centered platform: the goal here is mainly to inform and start the debate.	Using the project hashtags #EUelections2019 #YouVoteEU and mentioning stakeholders [@], when possible.
Card In Favor of / Against Euro Myths Blog Post Match your vote! Infographic	LinkedIn	The platform for professional networking.	Using the project hashtags : #EUelections2019 #YouVoteEU
Blog Post	Blog	The section for in-depth information.	Focussing on some of the most important issues for European citizens; sharing the blog post on social media with an engaging thumbnail.
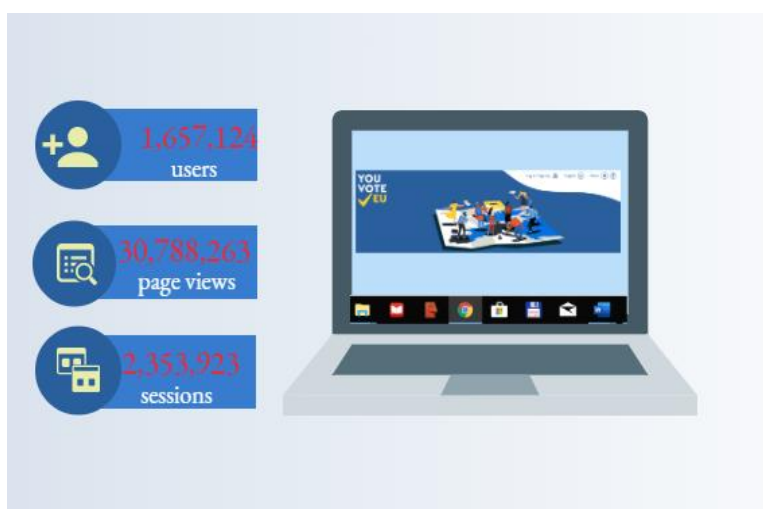
Thanks to the communication and dissemination strategy implemented by the partners, the Yourvotematters.eu platform recorded more than 1.6 million users since its launch in September 2018 to the European Elections in the end of May 2019. The high numbers regarding page views and sessions[3] show that the strategy managed to contribute to the important amount of people outreached.

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[3] **Users** represent individuals that visit your site. If that same *User* leaves your site and comes back later, Google Analytics will remember therm, and their second visit won't increase the number of *Users* (since they have already been accounted for in the past).
Sessions represent a single visit to your website. Whether a *User* lands on one of your web pages and leaves a few seconds later, or spends an hour reading every blog post on your site, it still counts as a single *Session*. If that *User* leaves and then comes back later, it wouldn't count as a new *User* (see above), but it would count as a new *Session*.
Pageviews represent each individual time a page on your website is loaded by a **User**. A single *Session* can include many *Pageviews*, if a *User* navigates to any other web pages on your website without leaving.

2.4 Participation experience

In order to verify if the Yourvotematter.eu platform satisfies and fulfils users' participation experience, partners organised two usability testing workshops and asked participants to answer a survey during two different moments of the project duration:

1. On 10 November 2018, a couple of months after the platform launch, a participatory workshop in the framework of the We Are Europe Training Academy was held by ECAS in Brussels. The interactive workshop *Going digital to engage citizens with Europe* focused on e-democracy and e-participation tools aimed at fostering citizens' engagement in political processes. Participants tested the Yourvotematters.eu platform, responded to the survey and discussed the various sections.

2. On 9 April 2019, the event *European Day in Collegium Civitas: Values, Technology, Democracy* was held by Collegium Civitas, in Warsaw. The Yourvotematters.eu Platform was presented in the panel: *To act, to look, to get involved* - the role of citizens in European Union. Students responded to the questionnaire after listening to the presentation and testing out the Yourvotematters.eu Platform.

The first usability test for the YourVoteMatters.eu online platform was held on 10 November 2018 in Brussels. 13 participants, from various backgrounds, tested the online platform during two consecutive one-hour workshops. The users tested the website individually and no inputs were provided to them before the testing regarding the platform and its features.

The second time on 9 April 2019, 27 participants, mainly students, received a presentation on participatory democracy in the EU, including the description of the Yourvotematters.eu platform, and then were asked to test the Yourvotematters.eu platform on their own to discover the different functions and sections.

In both cases, participants expressed their views and opinions on the platform highlighting the pros and cons of the usability of YourVoteMatters website. Subsequently, they were asked to answer a questionnaire made up of multiple choice and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire covered the following elements of the YourVoteMatters.eu online platform:

1. Clarity of the platform's content and features
2. Most and least useful content or feature to get informed approaching the next European elections
3. Feature or content currently missing on the platform that would be useful
4. First impressions of website's design and navigation and easiness to find the content
5. Particular aspects of the design or navigation that were surprising or unclear
6. Additional comments

1. CLARITY OF THE PLATFORM'S CONTENT AND FEATURES

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 means *unclear content* and 5 states *very clear content*), respondents in both Brussels and Warsaw found the content and the features of the YourVoteMatters.eu online platform *fairly clear (four)*, despite a few suggestions for improvement.

Some users thought the platform's scope not entirely clear. Additional comments and suggestions included:
- To add an introductory sentence on the homepage would help users' first understanding of the platform;
- The platforms' features are visually attractive and considered interactive when taken individually, but the menu is a bit confusing;
- One user considered that in the homepage, news articles are displayed in too many languages.

2. MOST AND LEAST USEFUL CONTENT OR FEATURE TO GET INFORMED APPROACHING THE NEXT EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

Users had the possibility to choose one or more features of the platform they considered the *most* and the *least useful* to get informed approaching the next European elections.

Most of the participant of the workshop in Brussels considered two sections as the most useful 'Match your Vote' (6 votes) and 'Where do they Stand' (6 votes). The *least useful* section was 'News and Views' (6 votes) while 'Alternative Futures' received mixed feedback as 3 users considered it the *most useful* and 3 other users the *least useful*.

When we ran the workshop in Warsaw six months later, the results changed. Students in Warsaw considered the 'Match your Vote' the *most useful* section on the platform (20 votes) followed by 'News and Views' (12 votes). They considered the 'Where do they Stand' as the *least useful* feature of the platform (12 votes) followed by 'Alternative Futures' (7 votes)

In both cases the 'Match Your Vote' section was the *most useful* for the participants, who also make a couple of suggestions to improve it by:
- Making the arguments for and against policies more readable, e.g. by using bullet points;
- Redirecting users to the 'Alternative Futures' section after they've completed the questionnaire, in order to boost their will to participate in the electoral process.

A possible reason why the first group did not find the 'News and Views' section useful is because the section was not as populated as the second group had found it. In fact, one user of the first group noted that the 'News and Views' was a duplication of other news websites and that it fails to take into account the broader context of the European elections.

3. FEATURE OR CONTENT CURRENTLY MISSING ON THE PLATFORM THAT WOULD BE USEFUL

In both groups, participants considered the features offered by the platform *quite useful*, understandable and informative. They also found the features and the content of the platform quite clear and sufficiently in line with its scope.

Some suggestions for improvement included:

- In the section 'Alternative Futures', one respondent suggested that the number of users who voted on the 25 questions should be provided;
- In the section 'How Politicians Decide', one user suggested that the possibility to search by topic and country should be included;
- One respondent noted that on mobile phone the different sections of the homepage do not appear clearly structured;
- In terms of educational content, three respondents suggested that the website should include more informative content on the European election process and on the composition and the functioning of the European Parliament.

4. FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF WEBSITE'S DESIGN AND NAVIGATION AND EASINESS TO FIND THE CONTENT

Users from both groups found it *fairly easy* to find what they needed on the platform (the average answer was above 4). Although at first impact it could be confusing to people who do not use platforms of this type, respondents stated they found the website user-friendly and easy to understand.

In the first group, one comment was about making the section 'Match your Vote' the landing page of the platform as it was considered its main feature. This suggestion was immediately taken into consideration by the consortium, as the 'Match your Vote' is considered to be the strongest section of the platform.

Other improvements were also proposed, for example, users suggested to improve the section 'Where do they Stand', to make the platform even more informative and the importance to reach a broader public.

5. EXPRESS IF THERE WERE PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF THE DESIGN OR NAVIGATION THAT WERE SURPRISING OR UNCLEAR

Most respondents found all aspects pretty clear – the design and navigation were easy and the content was understandable and not hard to find on the site.

Some uses commented:

- The chosen topics of the sections 'Match you Vote' and 'Where do they Stand' are slightly unclear;
- The 'Alternative Futures' section is not very clear at first;
- The content of the section Organisation is not very clear;
- The Pros and Cons arguments are displayed too low on the screen;
- The articles in the homepage presented in different languages make the platform a bit confusing at first;
- The political groups could be better explained in Polish;
- The contact form is difficult to find.

6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A few additional comments were made:

- One respondent considered the platform very intuitive and useful to "question ourselves as citizens before next European elections";
- One user suggested that the three features 'Match your Vote', 'Where do they Stand' and 'Alternatives Futures' should be connected to each other;
- One respondent considered that all the necessary information is in place to create a new visually effective section with a diagram placing the MEPs the candidates, the organisations, and the users in the related political spectrum.

Conclusions

The participatory events were useful for gathering users' impressions and opinions on the YourVoteMatters.eu online platform. Overall, respondents found the platform's content fairly clear and the 'Match Your Vote' section was the most useful one according to both groups.

The platform was often considered as user-friendly, although some respondents suggested that a short introduction on the homepage would help first-time visitors. Furthermore, few users considered the platform user-friendly for a public already familiar with this kind of platforms. Only a few respondents were slightly confused by the platform at first, but eventually understood its scope and the features offered thanks to the user-friendliness of the tool as a whole.

Generally, respondents considered the platform as a good platform ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections. Furthermore, several comments suggested to add more informative and educational content regarding the European electoral process, to foster citizens' understanding on the topic.

3. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL FOR LONG TERM USE

The section presents the potential of the Yourvotematters.eu platform for further development and for its long-term use. The section analyses the main challenges encountered by the YouVoteEU project in order to populate the platform with EP candidates, organisations and the implementation of its communication strategy on the road to the 2019 European elections. Finally, the chapter presents some suggestions for possible modifications and improvements of the Yourvotematters.eu platform for a potential use in the next European elections of 2024.

3.1 Main challenges

The Yourvotematters.eu platform was launched on Tuesday 25th of September 2018 during ECAS' event State of the Union Citizens' Rights, well ahead the 2019 European elections. This gave project partners enough time to adopt and implement a comprehensive communication strategy for the project.

In the run-up to the 2019 European Elections, the project's objectives included:

- Having 100 Civil Society Organisations registered to the platform;
- Reaching the highest number of new candidates running for the European Parliament elections 2019 registered to the platform;
- Promoting the platform in all EU countries.

3.1.1 New EP Candidates

The new European Parliament candidates are asked to complete a questionnaire stating their position on 25 key EU policy issues when they register to the platform. The new candidates are added to the 751 MEPs (2014-2019) already included in the platform and are a central element for both the 'Match your vote' and the 'Where do they stand' pages.

The consortium started the process of mapping the candidates in the beginning of the year 2019 in the Member States where they are based. Furthermore, additional EU countries have been assigned to each project partner to map and contact the candidates running for the European Elections. The process of contacting new candidates, mainly to encourage them to register on the platform, lasted until the European Elections 2019. The most common methods used to contact the candidates were emails and follow-up calls (when the information was publicly available). Project partners contacted candidates individually but reached out also the Secretariats of the political parties at national and European level.

Three sets of challenges emerged in this process:

1. The differences in terms of dates for the publication of the electoral lists in the different Member States;
2. The differences in terms of public information available to contact the candidates in the different Member States;
3. The lack of resources to cover all the EU Member States by project partners.

1. During the process, the first and main challenge encountered was the great **difference in terms of dates for the publication of the electoral lists** by the political parties in the different Member States. In fact, as the publication of the electoral lists are subject to national legislations, these are published in very different times and in some cases (e.g. France) quite late in the process. As the nature of the electoral systems allows the political parties and the national authorities to draw the lists of candidates in different timeframes, it would be necessary to include more partners from different Member States in the project. In fact, there is a great added value of local partners when contacting the candidates in their own countries due to their knowledge of the local political scenario and their established network of contacts. Furthermore, another important element is the easiness to reach out candidates in their native language. The shorter timeframe between the date of the publication of the electoral lists and the European Elections, the more difficult it is to convince candidates to register to the platform.

2. The second challenge in the process was the **difference in terms of public information available** for contacting the candidates. In some countries, (e.g. Belgium) political party websites published more information about their candidates (emails, phone numbers, personal contact forms, etc.), thus it was easier to approach them. The lack of the public information to directly contact the candidates made difficult to engage with them and consequently encourage the candidates to register on the platform. Once again, the presence of more partners in more EU Member States would help for the easiness to find and access information. Another option would be for the project partners to research, earlier in the process, ways to create stronger relations with national political parties or organisations. Partners could inform these actors about the platform and possibly stipulate agreements in which these political parties would inform the project partners of the list of candidates as soon as they know them.

3. The last challenge in the process was the **lack of financial and human resources to cover all the EU countries**. For few countries the Consortium members needed to contact hundreds of candidates and it was therefore impossible -due to the lack of resources - to cover all the EU Member States.

Considering the challenges highlighted above, it is clear that more resources are needed to scale up the potential of the platform and to ensure a larger number of candidates registers to Yourvotematters.eu. Furthermore, for the reasons previously outlined, it was impossible to ensure a balanced representation in terms of different EU countries and political parties/groups covered among the candidates registered on the platform. Finally, the interests among candidates for the Yourvotematters.eu platform varies significantly among different countries.

3.1.2 Organisations

Since the launch of the Yourvotematters.eu platform, project partners started contacting Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and other kinds of organisations to encourage them to register on the platform and publish their policy positions. ECAS developed *ad hoc* stakeholders mapping and used it to contact the different organisations in the run-up to the European Elections 2019. The main method used to contact the organisations was via emails. Naturally, the closer the European Elections were, the higher the interest of the different organisations to register on Yourvotematters.eu. As described in the previous section of this report, a total of 92 different organisations registered to the platform.

When creating a profile on the Yourvotematters.eu platform, the organisations could choose whether to answer or not the 25 identified questions and publish their policy proposals for the 2019 European Elections. CSOs were sometimes uncertain about the benefits of the platform, as they did not understand completely what the main purpose of creating a profile was. Partners would follow-up with emails or calls to put an additional effort in explaining the purpose of the platform and how CSOs can use it to reach out to both candidates and citizens.

Regarding the process of contacting organisations to encourage them to register on the platform, the consortium encountered the following challenges:

- Some organisations did not want to appear 'political' by registering on the platform;
- The 25 identified questions do not concern the organisations' areas of expertise/interest;
- Some organisations do not have any policy proposal to be uploaded in the platform;
- Almost no think tanks registered on the platform, as during the electoral period many of them chose to adopt a policy of non-direct engagement in the electoral debate.

A described in the previous sections, project partners decided to implement a color code to differentiate the various types of organisations registered on the platform. The differentiation allowed users to have a clearer idea of the type of the organisation before entering the organisation's profile.

When contacted, a few organisations affirmed to not see a real added value to have their profiles on the platform. This refers particularly to CSOs that chose to not directly engage in the European Elections 2019. On the other hand, many organisations created a profile, but did not upload their policy proposals. Finally, many CSOs decided to upload their policy proposals when a project partner provided further information on the Yourvotematters.eu platform. This could suggest the need to better describe the functionalities of the page 'Where do they stand' or to slightly integrate the page with further possibilities to enhance the organisations' visibility in the light of the next European elections.

3.1.3 Communication

The communication challenges experienced during the project matched the challenges described in the previous sections regarding the need for more resources to reach out candidates and organisations to register on the platform. In order to further improve the communication of the project for a possible long term use, it would be important to increase the number of partners and their resources. The need for more partners will be crucial to further reach out citizens, candidates and organisations in other EU countries, as communicating in various languages is a key element of success.

Another important aspect emerged during the implementation of the communication campaign targeting candidates, citizens and organisations and it relates to the new rules for political advertisements on the online platforms. In this regard, Facebook, Twitter and Google introduced new rules for the transparency of political advertising on their platforms just few weeks before the elections, when almost all the candidates' lists were finalised. Regarding Facebook, the new rules were implemented in the end of March 2019 and

made it almost impossible to have cross countries political campaigns. This limited the possibilities for the consortium to place ads related to the Yourvotematters.eu platform in multiples countries in a key moment ahead of the European elections.

After the implementation of the new rules for political advertisement on online platforms (Twitter, Facebook), once again, it is crucial to have more partner organisations in various countries to increase the communication outreach of the project. In fact, - regarding Facebook for example- in order to place political ads in a country, the organisation need to be registered in that Member States. For these reasons, having more organisations registered in various Member States will be pivotal to increase the outreach of the communication of the project.

3.2 Further development of the platform

The feedback gathered in various occasions (usability tests, emails, etc.) suggests that users, candidates, and organisations considered the Yourvotematters.eu a useful tool ahead of the 2019 European elections. Furthermore, the global outreach numbers underlined the great potential of the Yourvotematters.eu platform in reaching out EU citizens ahead of the European Elections. When considering its potential for long term users, it is however necessary to examine both challenges and suggestions for further development. In this regard, three main recommendations for further developments have been noted:

- More informative and educational material on the European Electoral process;
- A mobile application for taking the interactive quiz;
- Further development in terms of interactive features offered.

When looking at the next European Elections, stakeholders and users suggested that it would be important to have more informative material on the electoral process on the Yourvotematters.eu platform. The need of educational material has been underlined several times and it is something to take into account when considering the long-term use of the platform.

Regarding other possible improvements, even if the Yourvotematter.eu platform performed well in other types of devices such as mobile phones and tablets, further suggestions included the possibility of creating a mobile application where to take the interactive quiz. Finally, users suggested to further develop the interactive features of the Yourvotematters.eu platform thus to offer an experience that would not just be limited to the interactive quiz.

Conclusions

The analysis of the main challenges shows common issues regarding the aims of the project that if properly addressed could increase the outreach of the Yourvotematters.eu platform and certainly amplify its potential for long term use.

Regarding the effort to make more candidates registered on the platform, more financial and human resources would be needed in terms of number of partners and resources allocation to each one of them to scale up the effort. The same solution could be applied to the communication activities of the project - particularly related to the ones carried out in the key weeks before the European elections. Furthermore, in terms of potential for long term use, an adequate monitoring of the rules that online platforms will implement in the coming period regarding the placement political advertisements is necessary. It would be important to take into consideration these rules, in order to adjust the communication strategy. Regarding the effort to encourage organisations to register, the feedback gathered during this process showed the need to further amplify the opportunities for the registered organisations on the platform. New possibilities need to be explored in this direction to make it much more attractive for organisations to register. Finally, the feedback gathered during the project pointed out some possible further developments in terms of functionalities such as the inclusion of more informative material on the electoral process and new interactive features.

In conclusion, the platform presents the potential for a possible long-term use with a view of the next European elections in 2024. Further developments need to take into consideration the challenges experienced and the various inputs received on the Yourvotematters.eu platform.

4. YOURVOTEMATTERS.EU CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of Yourvotematters.eu platform is to bring citizens and CSOs to the political discussion and empower them to take part in the European Elections 2019. The platform includes information on current MEPs and candidates of the European Elections 2019 in order to enhance the accountability and the transparency of our representatives in the electoral process - allowing citizens to vote on fully informed decisions. The aim of this report was to assess if the Yourvotematters.eu platform managed to reach its objectives and how to replicate and improve the project in the future, especially in light of the next European Elections.

The project partners developed the Yourvotematters.eu platform and launched it on Tuesday 25th of September 2018 at State of the Union Citizens' Rights event in Brussels. The multilingual digital platform was designed as an innovative tool to enhance citizens' awareness of the 2019 European Elections and connect MEPs, candidates and their electorate. The different functionalities were developed following the initial Terms of References drafted in the beginning of the project and all the different components were successfully implemented. Amongst the different functionalities, the 'Match your vote' section constitutes the central part of the platform where citizens can vote on 25 key policy issues and see which MEPs and candidates match their views. The 'Where do they stand' page also provide citizens with MEPs, candidates and various organisation positions. During the project, the consortium worked to expand the Yourvotematters.eu platform's outreach and successfully managed to translate it in several languages – including some which were not initially envisaged in the project proposal.

With a total of 877.515 EU citizens that took the interactive quiz and more than 1.6 million users recorded in the 8 months running up to the European Elections, the Yourvotematters.eu platform proved to be a valuable tool for EU citizens ahead of the European Elections. The consortium met its ambitious goals set out in the beginning of the project and successfully had an indirect reach of 10.000.000 EU citizens through different multipliers such as media, national organisations, websites, etc. In fact, the consortium developed a widget that was embedded in 18 different websites of different organisations including European, national media and universities that contributed to scale up the outreach of the platform. 92 organisations registered on the platform and 1283 running MEPs shared their positions ahead of the 2019 European Elections showing the cross-edge interests among EU stakeholders for the Yourvotematters.eu platform.

The consortium implemented a comprehensive communication campaign during the project to reach out to European citizens, running MEP candidates at the 2019 European Elections and different stakeholders. The project partners created and distributed different communication material to increase the dissemination of the project which includes targeted videos, infographics and cards. The communication campaign aimed at raising awareness on the 2019 European Elections among EU citizens, to promote debates and discussions and to encourage voters, running MEPs and organisations to join the Yourvotematters.eu platform. Furthermore, in order to increase the outreach of the project, project partners presented the YourVoteMatters.eu platform in several events Europe-wide and were also invited by national and European media in several occasions to describe the project and its objectives to stimulate and increase the participation of EU citizens in the 2019 European Parliament Elections.

During the project, the consortium organised two different usability tests of the Yourvotematters.eu platform in order to verify its functionalities against the users' experience. The tests took place in two distinctive phases of the project (after the launch and in the weeks before the 2019 European elections) and gathered users' opinions and feedback on the usability of the Yourvotematters.eu platform. The main outcome was that the participants considered the platform as a useful tool ahead of the 2019 European Elections and provided ideas and inputs to further improve the platform for a possible long-term use.

The report also analysed the main challenges that were raised when the platform was to be populated with EP candidates and organisations. This section proposed recommendations on how these challenges should be addressed for a potential long-term use. The analysis highlighted how the Yourvotematters.eu platform certainly presents the potential for a long-term use in view of the next European Elections in 2024. However, in this respect, in order to further improve the tool, it will be important to take into account both the inputs gathered through the usability tests and the assessments of the challenges encountered during the project. If on the one hand more financial and human resources will be needed to scale up the efforts in terms of communication and population of the platform, on the other hand further developments in terms functionalities and possibilities need to be explored to improve the tool. Amongst the latter, the inclusion of educational and informative content about the European Elections and the functioning of the European Parliament had been considered particularly important to further expand the scope of the Yourvotematters.eu platform.

When considering the communication aspects of the project, the allocation of more human and financial resources, as well as the presence of more partners in EU countries should be considered to increase the outreach of the project. Furthermore, an adequate monitoring of the developments in terms of rules for online campaigns, especially on social media, should be undertaken to adjust the communication strategy for a long-term use of the Yourvotematters.eu platform.

In conclusion, the Yourvotemmaters.eu platforms, developed during the YouVoteEU project, achieved its objectives to contribute to stimulate and increase the participation of EU citizens in the 2019 European Parliament Elections and to foster their knowledge and understanding of current and future EU policies. When looking at the next European Elections, the platform presents the potential for a possible long-term use. However, the analysis of the challenges encountered suggests several improvements that should be taken into consideration, including further possible developments in terms features and an increase in resources.

Main recommendations

As highlighted in the report, the recommendations refer to the potential and challenges of e-participation and e-voting mechanisms for European Elections, specifically based on the experience with the Yourvotematters.eu platform. The following main recommendations were drawn up on the basis on the findings of the report:

- During electoral processes, EU institutions should consider the use of digital platforms, such as Yourvotematters.eu, as they can help reviving and stimulating the participation of EU citizens in European Elections;

- Project partners should consider further development and new interactive functionalities that could help attract more organisations and citizens to the online platform;

- More informative and educational material should be included in some of the sections of the platform to foster citizens' awareness of European electoral processes;

- It is necessary to allocate more human and financial resources and to increase the number of partners across EU countries to boost the effectiveness of the communication activities and increase the possibilities to reach out EP candidates, citizens and organisations;

- Future project partners should establish deeper partnerships at a national level with political parties in order to be more effective in engaging with them and have better access to useful information (e.g. list of candidates) in the context of European Elections.

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