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Invitation to the Open Estonia Foundation's debate

“How to Make MEPs Talk to Citizens?”

Tallinn, [Nordic Hotel Forum](#)

April 15, 2014

In a modern European democracy, voting at elections is only one of the many ways to participate in politics – it is equally important for citizens to have a say in public decisions between election days. Whereas national parliaments are under our close scrutiny every day, we sometimes lose sight of Members of the European Parliament once they've taken their cozy seats in Brussels and Strasbourg. What could be done to make sure this doesn't happen after the elections this May?

At the debate on April 15 we will take a quick look into the theory and practice of the European Parliament's work, present cases and examples from different European countries and seek to answer the following questions:

- What are our rights and opportunities as citizens to influence the decisions made in the European Parliament?
- What communication channels and methods are available for Members of the European Parliament for involving citizens? Are they citizen-friendly, functional and easy to use?
- How successful has the European Parliament been in engaging citizens and what concrete steps should the new MEPs take to make citizen participation a working reality?

Based on the discussion, a set of recommendations will be made to new MEPs and citizens to facilitate mutual communication and citizen participation.

Working languages: English and Estonian. Translation available.

Join the debate in Tallinn or follow us live on <http://joieu.net>!

The discussion is part of the project “Joint Citizen Action for a Stronger, Citizen-Friendly Union” (JoiEU), coordinating debate and action in 13 European countries on a set of issues focused on citizen participation and strengthening the citizen base of a deeper European integration. The project is funded by the European Union and implemented by a group of international partners led by ProInfo (Bulgaria).



Partners Albania, Center for Change and Conflict Management; European Citizen Action Service, Belgium; Cenzura Plus, Croatia; NGO Support Centre, Cyprus; Neziskovky.cz, o.p.s., Czech Republic; Global Citizen, Denmark; Avatud Eesti Fond, Estonia; Cittadinanzattiva Onlus, Italy; Atria, Netherlands; Asociația Națională a Birourilor de Consiliere pentru Cetățeni, Romania; Center for Development of Non-Profit Sector, Serbia; Plataforma de ONG de Accion Social, Spain; ProInfo, Bulgaria

AGENDA

- 09.30-10.00 Registration, welcome coffee
- 10.00-10.10 **Introductions**
- About the topic and JoiEU initiative – **Mall Hellam** (Open Estonia Foundation)
Goals and agenda of the discussion – moderator **Anna Karolin** (Estonian Debating Society/FutureLab Europe)
- 10.10-11.00 **How does the European Parliament work and how can citizens influence its decisions? Framework and opportunities.**
Stefano Braghioli (University of Tartu)
- 11.00-12.00 **Pictures from Europe. How does citizen involvement work in practice?**
How are citizens of different EU member states involved in the political life of the EU? How active have MEPs of different member states been in informing and consulting with citizens? Which participation tools and methods are working well, which ones are not? Why? What could be done to improve citizen participation?
- Case studies, examples and good practices by JoiEU partners:
- **Italy:** [Cittadinanzattiva](#)
 - **Germany:** [Democracy International](#) / [Democratic Europe Now](#)
 - **The Netherlands:** [Atria: Institute on gender equality and women's history](#)
 - **Romania:** [National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux](#)
 - **Croatia:** [Cenzura Plus](#)
- 12.00-12.30 Coffee break
- 12.30-13.30 **Discussion: Let's talk! Recommendations to new MEPs and citizens for citizen-friendly participation**
Based on the existing framework and practical experience, what should be done and by whom to make citizen participation in the political life of the EU a working reality, instead of rocket science?
- 13.30-14.30 Wrap-up, light lunch

