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Parliament calls for improved citizen participation and transparency in report on e-democracy

From the Greens/EFA Transparency and Democracy Campaign

The European Parliament recently adopted a report on e-democracy which makes a series of recommendations on digital tools, citizen participation, and internal party democracy. Since transparency and democracy is one of our key priorities, we tabled a number of amendments to give the report some teeth.

For example, thanks a Greens/EFA amendment, the European Parliament has officially called on political parties at both EU and national level to increase transparency in their management and financing and to ensure better participation of their members and supporters, as well as civil society, in their decision-making.

The e-democracy report also called for the creation of an online platform for the European Parliament to involve and consult citizens before MEPs take decisions; and it stressed the importance of embedding e-participation into the political process, not only to gather citizens' input but also to ensure proper follow-up. The report admits that a lack of responsiveness from decision-makers leads to disappointment and distrust from citizens, presenting e-democracy as a complement to representative democracy.

The importance and relevance of whistleblowers in the democratic system is also highlighted in the report, which *“recalls the essential role that whistleblowers play – generally through the internet – in exposing corruption, fraud, mismanagement and other forms of wrongdoing that threaten public health and safety, financial integrity, human rights, the environment and the rule of law, while at the same time ensuring the right of the public to information;”*

On e-voting, the report points out that there should be an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of e-voting for the Member States to take into consideration by the end of 2018. The benefits of e-voting are clear, but the report also calls for enhanced security measures in order to prevent electoral fraud or violations of voter confidentiality.

However, other amendments tabled by the Greens/EFA and other progressive groups were voted down: We called for Members of the European Parliament to make use of ICT tools to publish their meetings with lobbyists ([see here for our list of lobby meetings](#), produced using [LobbyCalendar](#)), and we also called

on them to publish the documents provided by stakeholders; but the majority of MEPs voted against these proposals.

We also called on the EU institutions “*to make Trilogues more transparent by way of the electronic publication of all relevant documents in dedicated and accessible databases*”, but this was also voted against by the majority of MEPs, so it didn't make it into the final text of the report.

All in all, the report makes some important recommendations on the need to respect minority language rights, to encourage the use of open data and ICT tools based on open-source and free software, to increase the accessibility and transparency of the decision-making process, to encourage meaningful follow-up of citizens' input and to improve the democratic functioning of European Political Parties themselves. Although we would have liked to see stronger wording in some places, the report definitely represents a step forward!

For more information:

- [Report on e-democracy](#)
- [Greens/EFA list of meetings with lobbyists](#)

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