

**INTRODUCTION TO THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF THE
EP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE
2009 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS**

SPEECH BY

**ALEJO VIDAL-QUADRAS MEP
VICE-PRESIDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATION POLICY**

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen. I am very pleased to welcome you here this morning to a presentation of the European Parliament's communication strategy for the 2009 European elections.

My good friend and colleague Vice-President Mechtild Rothe will speak later on the implementation of this strategy in the individual Member States. She will be followed by Francesca Ratti, Director-General of DG Communication, who will talk about some the specific campaign products.

I myself will begin by saying a few words on the principles underpinning the strategy.

Back in 2007 when the Bureau of the European Parliament began its first discussions on this issue, it reached very quickly a consensus

- that the 2009 communication strategy had to try to be more original and professional than at previous European elections**
- that it needed to reflect the importance of the Parliament particularly as a legislator which, over the past 5 years, has seen it effectively deciding the final compromise on a number of key proposals.**
- that it needed to reflect the grandeur of the European elections at which 375 million citizens will be called on to**

vote, making this not just an unprecedented exercise in transnational democracy but outside national elections in India, the greatest exercise in democracy in itself.

The Bureau was also firmly of the view that to meet these goals the Parliament required the assistance of an outside communication agency. By means, therefore, of an open call for tender an agency was chosen, namely Scholz & Friends, a German company based in Berlin but with partner offices in all 27 Member States.

Working for and together with Francesca Ratti and her staff, Scholz & Friends and DG Communication came up with a strategy inspired by three principles.

First, this is a single strategy with a single message common to all Member States. There is some tailoring, of course, to accommodate national specificities but the strategy is not an aggregate of 27 separate campaigns as was the tendency on past occasions.

Second, the single message of the campaign is about choice. It is not designed to appeal to citizen's civic duty but to highlight

- that there are major policy choices confronting the EU which will impact on citizens' lives**

- that these choices are decided at European level with the Parliament playing the leading role as to which policy choice is selected
- that citizens can influence the selection of those policy choices by voting in the European elections for candidates who reflect their political preferences.

This focus on choice will, we know, provoke discussion. There will be criticism but also, we hope, praise. The European Parliament has deliberately chosen a concept that has the potential to engage minds and connect to the citizen.

At the same time, and this is the third principle, the campaign is institutional and non-partisan. The message is centred on choice but does not favour any particular choice. It is deliberately designed to appeal to all shades of political opinion, from those that hold strongly integrationist positions to those that are more concerned about the preservation of the sovereignty of Members States.

We take pride in our co-operation with the European Commission, which for first time since the 1979 Elections is fully engaged and has mobilised its resources to make sure that the Election campaign gains in visibility. Other institutions and organisations have offered their help to multiply and support our actions on the ground. Most governments have joined a common effort to spread Parliament's message as widely as possible. We are grateful

to our partners for their support and commitment. This is the first truly pan-European campaign that our Parliament has ever developed.

Now let me handover to Mechtild to tell us about how we will roll out the campaign in the Member States.