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Campaigning for Europe

8 & 9/11/2018, Brussels

(2) Delivering great campaigns: inspire and engage 8 November, JDE62

Speakers: Steve Clark (director for liaison offices of the European Parliament, DG Communication, European Parliament); Daina Ruduša (advocacy and programmes officer); ILGA Europe); Michael Bossetta, political scientist (University of Copenhagen)

Moderator: Laure Van Hauwaert (managing director, EU institutions, WPP)

The moderator, **Laure Van Hauwaert**, opened the session by highlighting the current situation in Europe, where many people do not trust their leaders. She emphasised the need to run engaging electoral campaigns, which not only motivate people to vote, but also have a long-lasting impact on them, so they remain interested in European politics. She said that awareness of the elections alone would not lead people to the ballot box and campaign groups had to explore new and convincing channels of communication to reach out to people. **Ms Hauwaert** then introduced the panel, who spoke about the different ways of increasing voter turnout for the upcoming elections.

The first speaker, **Steve Clark**, began by showing the "This time I'm voting" campaign message, which he said had a strong ground game component. He explained that this campaign message was not only easy to understand, but also looks at why people vote.

Looking at election trends around the world, **Mr Clark** said that anti-establishment opinion, cynicism and mistrust of institutions, experts and the media seemed to linger in people's minds, making them abstain from voting. He stressed that the "This time I'm voting" campaign did not intend to control how people vote or how they understand the campaign message, rather that it was mainly to increase voter turnout.

Displaying the campaign website, **Mr Clark** explained that people could sign up as voters or volunteers. He said they also had the option of expressing their interest in and opinions about the EU, and could get information about events to encourage voting. He highlighted that this method of community mobilisation had proven to be a 'ladder of engagement' and as of 8 November 2018, 86 081 people around Europe had signed up as supporters of the campaign. He said the campaign had also received several VIP endorsements and support from digital players like Google, Facebook and Snapchat.



The second speaker, **Daina Ruduša**, started her presentation by talking about the 'Come Out' campaign strategy of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) in Europe. Explaining the context of the 'Come out' campaign, she showed a map of the status of human rights of LGBTI people in Europe, emphasising how important it was for politicians to support the LGBTI community. She said that in the previous EU elections, only 200 candidates who supported the LGBTI community were elected to the European Parliament. However, the ones who did not win continued to have a strong voice in their local governments and continued working with the LGBTI community. **Ms Ruduša** said that this increased their accountability, making them suitable candidates for future elections.

Portraying the 'Come Out' campaign pledge from the previous elections, **Daina Ruduša** said it mainly aimed to mobilise support for the human rights of LGBTI people among candidates for the next European Parliament, and encourage people from the LGBTI community to come out and vote. **Ms Ruduša** said that while they are still designing the campaign pledge for the 2019 elections, she was also considering ways she could communicate with people and get them to vote. She stressed the need to come up with narratives such as stories from history, fairytales or any real life stories, that would have an impact on people. She explained that such messages would speak the language of actual people, convincing them to vote.

The last speaker, **Michael Bossetta**, started off with a powerful phrase, 'Engaging is greater than inspiring.' He highlighted that engagement is something that is measurable, whilst inspiration only creates a positive feeling but never helps increase voter turnout. Taking the example of the mid-term electoral campaigns in the US, he said feelings of anger, shame and gratitude led people to vote. He explained it was anger about President Trump's policies, shame at not having voted before, and gratitude shown by the leaders they voted for, that made people vote again.

Mr Bossetta explained that engagement was a two-way process and encouraged campaign groups in the EU to concentrate on creating an engaging campaign strategy. He said that in the 2019 elections, campaign groups should encourage their supporters to communicate with others and motivate them to vote. He explained that the supporters become the micro influencers, using various forms of social media and technology to contact their friends and others and encourage them to vote. **Mr Bossetta** said that the micro influencers could use digital technology to interpret, integrate and iterate, whilst third-party technology could be used to analyse how the micro influencers campaign and encourage people to vote.

Before opening the Q&A, the moderator asked the panel what they would consider success in the 2019 election campaign. **Mr Clark** said success would mean mobilising people to talk about the elections and getting as many people as possible to vote. **Ms Ruduša** said having an LGBTI intergroup at European level would be a sign of success, as it would open doors for more conversations about the LGBTI community. **Mr Bossetta** said a successful election campaign would use cross-technology to target supporters and non-supporters and give the EU visibility on all platforms. He said contacting people by telephone, email, social media platforms and other channels of communication to spread the message of the campaign would make it successful.

The audience had several questions, ranging from how to prevent hacking in electoral campaigns, to how to increase personal connections while campaigning. **Mr Clark** said that the "This time I'm voting" campaign aimed to reach out to people from all walks of life in Europe. He said that while some groups might be against it, there hadn't been any cases of hacking so far and repeated that the main aim of the campaign was to increase voter turnout.

Ms Ruduša said developing a personal connection whilst campaigning was always difficult, but finding messages that speak to citizens, like the single mother in Germany or LGBTI people in Slovakia, would make the campaign strategy more engaging. She also said that campaigns needed to have a local angle, because what works in Romania might not work in Germany. She stressed the importance of translating the institutional language of the campaign into local, everyday, down-to-earth language that people could relate to.

Mr Bossetta said that while some people were encouraged to vote by political messages, others liked witty videos, of a cat encouraging them to vote for example. He stressed the importance of looking at what people wanted when creating a campaign message.

Agreeing with the panellists, the moderator concluded the session by emphasising that **"It would take a personal commitment to reach out to others and promote voting by harnessing the power of our connections!"**