

The 2014 Elections from a Politician to a Lobbyist

Using the experience of a former elected Member of the European Parliament and a current professional Christian lobbyist, this session will describe the unique pressures and personal challenges of a European election campaign from the inside. It will also consider how the Christian public can best be motivated to engage with the election process, and the difference that a perspective of faith makes to the role of factors like ambition, approach to opponents and coping with failure to those caught up in the process. If possible, some early assessment of the implications of the election results for Christians in Europe will also be offered.

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I. The European Elections – Why Bother?

A. Role of the European Parliament

1. Appointment of the European Commissioners
 - a. Choice of the new Commission President?
 - b. Confirmation Hearings
2. Co-legislator with the Council of Ministers
 - a. 9 % - 70% of national laws
 - b. The perils of the 1st Reading Agreement
3. Ratifier of International Agreements
 - a. Trade Deals
 - b. Data Sharing

4. Holding the Purse Strings

- a. Approves (or not!) EU Budget
- b. Defunding of coercive abortion & funding of traffic victims helpline

II. The European Elections – What Does It Feel Like on the Inside?

A. ‘Selectorate’, not Electorate

- 1. Party Members/Hierarchy main choosers of who gets in
 - a. UK voting system gives least power to electorate
 - b. Low-placed candidates forced to do most of the legwork for least chance of election

B. ‘Suspended Animation’

- 1. Election period trying for old and new Members
 - a. Office & Accommodation in Brussels have to be maintained, with no certainty of continuing role
 - b. For newcomers there are weeks of delay when they know they have been chosen, but have no office or official status yet in Brussels.

C. The Unseemly struggle for Position

- 1. The count is barely over before the struggle for position must begin
 - a. Political Group loyalties are tested and re-assigned. New Groups are formed, old ones re-formed.
 - b. Vice-Presidencies of Parliament to be shared out

- c. Committee Chairs and Co-ordinators appointed
- d. Committee and Delegation memberships chosen

III. **The Election Results – What Does It Mean for Christian Values?**

A. **Disenchantment with the Mainstream**

1. A further distancing of citizens from the political elite
 - a. Process common to national and European level, but heightened in UK & bailout countries
 - b. Can the ‘democratic deficit’ be overcome?

B. **End of the ‘Left/Progressive’ consensus?**

1. In part because of better internal discipline the broad Left has won most votes on Christian values issues up until recently
 - a. Promotion of a ‘right’ to abortion on demand
 - b. Insistence on redefinition of marriage for a diversity of family forms
 - c. Re-interpretation of ‘tolerance’ to become compulsory affirmation of alternative lifestyles
2. If this consensus is broken, does the push for social engineering stand still, or can the process of ‘progressive’ change be reversed?

C. **Rise of Nationalism, Populism, Euroscepticism**

1. In most countries parties on both left and right extremes gaining ground from the traditional right and left of centre parties

- a. Many nationalists and xenophobes claim loyalty to Christian heritage in opposition to the 'Islamic threat', how do we respond to that? (Would Jesus really vote for the BNP?)
- b. Will there be a lessening of attacks on subsidiarity on issues like abortion and marriage?
- c. Election of Parliament's President and agreement on confirmation of Commissioners likely to be less predictable or comfortable than in the past