The European elections explained: how to find reliable sources

It's time to vote! Between 6 and 9 June this year, millions of EU citizens will help shape the future of the European Union by voting in the European elections. The European Parliament is the only directly elected EU body and the European elections are one of the biggest democratic events in the world. In this podcast series, we break down everything you need to know about the upcoming European Parliament elections.

In this episode, we'll be exploring an important topic: how to find reliable sources and recognise official information from EU institutions, especially at a time of misinformation.

With the European elections coming up, it's so important to be well-informed about the candidates and policies, and the important issues at stake. However, the internet is full of misleading information, making it challenging to separate fact from fiction. Today, we'll explore some strategies to navigate the information landscape effectively.

Let's start by talking about why it is so important to find reliable sources. Misinformation can influence our perceptions and our decisions, especially when it comes to voting. The European Union is a complex entity, and understanding how it works requires accurate information.

In general, when looking for information online, our first reflex is to type key words into a search engine. This isn't a bad idea! However, keep in mind that the first search results are not necessarily the most reliable sources. They are often the most visited webpages or they are simply sponsored.

One key strategy to identify reliable sources is to go straight to the official websites of European institutions. These websites provide accurate, up-to-date information on policies, legislation, and the roles of EU institutions. The primary official website of the EU is europa.eu. Here, you can find a wealth of information, directly from the source.

How can you recognise official EU websites? First and foremost, the domain names of official EU websites end with 'europa.eu'. Furthermore, they are always available in all the official EU languages and mention other EU institutions or channels at the bottom of the webpage. Facts and figures on EU websites are always checked and verified with scientific sources and statistical institutions.

Another tip is to look for official social media accounts verified or managed by the European institutions. These accounts often share reliable updates and clarifications on important issues. Verified accounts usually have a blue tick next to their name, indicating that they are authentic.

In addition, consider visiting the official websites of political parties and candidates taking part in the European elections. These websites often outline their programmes and policy proposals in detail, helping you to make informed comparisons.

It's also essential to cross-check information from multiple sources. If a particular piece of news seems alarming or controversial, verify its accuracy with reputable news organisations or fact-checking websites.

Lastly, be cautious of information shared on social media. While social media platforms can be very useful for connecting with others and staying informed, they are also potential breeding grounds for misinformation. Always verify the source and author before sharing or believing information published on the internet.

To summarise, finding reliable sources in the lead-up to the European elections is a crucial step in making informed decisions. By accessing official websites, verifying information from multiple sources, and being critical of what you see online, you can navigate through the noise of misinformation and arrive at well-founded conclusions.

Your vote will decide which Members of the European Parliament will represent you in preparing new laws and will also influence the selection of the European Commission. These decisions will shape your daily life and the lives of people across the EU. Democracy is not something to take for granted. It is a collective achievement and thus a collective responsibility, and each and every one of us has a role to play in it.

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