



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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final

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Assembleia da República for its Opinion concerning the Communication "Preparing for the 2014 European elections: further enhancing their democratic and efficient conduct" {COM(2013) 126 final} and the Recommendation {C(2013) 1303 final}, adopted together with the Communication.*

*The Commission welcomes the Opinion, which positively assesses and supports the objectives announced in the Communication, notably to strengthen the link between EU citizens and the democratic process of the Union, to reinforce legitimacy of the EU decision-making process and ultimately, to foster a European public space. The Recommendation, adopted together with the Communication, has called on Member States, on European and on national political parties to take concrete measures in view of these objectives.*

*By recommending to Member States and to political parties to ensure that citizens are informed of the links between national and European political parties, the Commission aims at enhancing the transparency of the European elections and at offering citizens a choice between meaningful political options on European issues. The recommendation for European political parties and national political parties to announce the candidate they support for the function of President of the Commission will also contribute to strengthening the European dimension of the elections.*

*The Commission is aware that, as the Assembleia da República notes in its Opinion, national legislation across the EU varies widely as to the possibility to indicate the affiliations between European and national political parties on the ballots. The Commission is closely following the measures taken by the Member States with a view to implementing the Recommendation and notably measures taken with a view to allowing the displaying of such information on the ballots.*

*The Assembleia da República underlines in its Opinion that enhancing the democratic conduct of the European Parliament elections would require measures to be taken not only at the level of the European political parties but also at a level closer to the electorate itself. In this context, the Opinion raises the need to examine further options, leading to more direct links between the electorate and the European parties or granting new powers to European parties.*

*Ms Maria da Assunção ESTEVES  
President of the  
Assembleia da República  
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*The Commission is fully aware of the importance of further efforts to make citizens aware of the connections between political processes at national and EU level. In its EU Citizenship report 2013 "EU citizens: your rights, your future" {COM (2013) 269 final}, the Commission announced as an example that it would further promote EU citizens' awareness of their EU citizenship rights, and in particular their electoral rights by producing and promoting the dissemination of a handbook presenting these EU rights in clear and simple language (action 12).*

*The Commission notes that its recommendations put forward in view of the European Parliament election also draw on expectations expressed by the citizens themselves through citizens consultations launched by the Commission and through Eurobarometer Surveys. The Commission agrees that broad consultation of citizens is essential and is of particular importance in case of initiatives taken in the context of enhancing democratic functioning of the EU institutions.*

*Furthermore, the Commission will assess and report on the implementation of the Recommendation in the 2014 European Parliament elections.*

*As underlined in the Opinion, further measures have been taken with a view to streamline procedures linked to the implementation of EU citizens' electoral rights: it was made less burdensome for Union citizens to participate as candidates in the European elections, notably through new arrangements laid down in Directive 2013/1/EU, adopted on a proposal of the Commission. The Commission welcomes that the Portugal has transposed this Directive.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Assembleia da República and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*