



## ***Press Release:***

# **Put democracy first!**

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**For many European voters, the question is which party to vote for. But for others, it is how to vote. From 22 to 25 May 2014, millions of citizens will have the chance to vote in the elections to the European Parliament. Most will be able to cast their votes without problem. But others will experience barriers because of older age or disability. And they constitute more than 10% of voters. ANEC believes all those entitled to vote should be able to do so. And in secret. Modern solutions and standards should be used to help everyone exercise democratic choice. Democracy must come first!**

“People with visual impairments find problems in their access to on-line information and social media if websites are not designed according to accessibility standards”, commented ANEC Secretary-General, Stephen Russell. “Only 10 EU Member States provide information about candidates and the electoral process in an accessible way on-line<sup>1</sup>. Of thirteen European political parties, none declared its website compliant with web accessibility standards (WCAG 0.1-0.2)<sup>2</sup>. This is to be especially regretted as the websites were set up with the financial support of the European Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://goo.gl/gmUNIF>

<sup>2</sup> Web-sites checked on 13 May 2014.

We urge public authorities and web-developers to use recently-adopted European standards on ICT accessibility to make on-line information accessible to all<sup>3</sup>.”

He added, “It must also not be forgotten that, in order to be able to exercise their rights to vote in polling stations, electors need easy access to the premises, often public buildings such as schools and town halls. In nearly two-thirds of EU Member States, there is a legal requirement for some or all polling stations to be accessible to persons with disabilities. But the criteria for determining whether a polling station is accessible vary widely. ANEC calls for standardisation work on access to the built environment to start as soon as possible at European level<sup>4</sup>. Standards are needed in the framework of public procurement procedures to help public authorities define accessibility criteria in public tenders”.

ENDS

#### **About ANEC**

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and conformity assessment, as well as related legislation and public policies.

ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and is open to the representation of national consumer organisations in 33 countries.

ANEC is funded by the European Union and EFTA, with national consumer organisations contributing in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.



#### ***Raising standards for consumers***

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<sup>3</sup> EN 301 549 “Accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services in Europe”; TR 101 550 “Documents relevant to EN 301 549 Accessibility requirements suitable for public procurement of ICT products and services in Europe”; TR 101 551 “Guidelines on the use of accessibility award criteria suitable for public procurement of ICT products and services in Europe”; TR 101 552 “Guidance for the application of conformity assessment to accessibility requirements for public procurement of ICT products and services in Europe”.

<sup>4</sup> Second phase of Standardisation Mandate M/420 in support of accessibility requirements for public procurement in the built environment.