Electoral data in Romania - still hoping for a better case ...

Submitted on 25 Apr 2014 by Bogdan Manolea

Today, 25th April, marks the official start of the campaigns for the 2014 European Parliament elections in Romania. The campaigns will last one month, culminating in the vote taking place on 25 th May.

Although this process should represent a great opportunity for Open Electoral Data in the country, sadly it seems that this will not be the case.

One of the purposes of the **Permanent Electoral Authority (AEP)** is to "create a proper framework for all citizens to re-discover the participation to the political life - and especially for the mechanism of the democracy and the significance of the vote". The institution has the opportunity to be a real leader in the process of using new technologies to allow citizens to be active players in the election eco-system. Unfortunately, AEP is not taking this opportunity.

A few weeks ago, AEP was praised by the Open Data Govt. unit following the release of their first 3 electoral datasets in the Romanian Open Data portal, although these only contained data from the 2012 national and local elections.This raised expectations that new datasets may be imported to Open Data portal ahead of the Euro elections, but this has not been the case.

Furthermore, having spent around 1 million Euros on a new package of "software services" just 2 months ago (albeit under suspicious circumstances); it appeared that the release of data may have become one of AEP's priorities, although the lack of activity since the purchase has now dashed these hopes.

The list of candidates is in un-reusable PDF formats. Contact data is missing and the lists of voting sections (which should be a pretty standard list), have strange XLS formats and fields. This will require anyone interested in re-using the data in any IT application to dedicate tens of hours of clean-up time in order to make them usable. Moreover (as usual) no copyright licenses are provided with the data, which pushes the entire re-usage into a very grey legal area.

Several NGOs that wanted to contact the candidates MEPs have had to start from scratch and spend several hours of volunteer work just to create a simple list of all candidates contact data.