

EVENT REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

EUROPEAN OFFICE BRUSSELS

DR. HARDY OSTRY

OLIVER MORWINSKY

JUDITH MARTSCHIN

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“How to campaign for European elections 2019”

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“We all know that it is our political party that can bring forward our continent”, Dara Murphy, EPP Vice-President and Election Campaign Director, declared at the dinner roundtable “Friends of Parliament” in the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Under the heading “How to campaign for European elections 2019” Dara Murphy presented the election campaign the EPP will be pursuing over the next 15 months. He called for EPP policy leaders to aim for clear messaging and greater EU-wide focus in the elections.

Dr Hardy Ostry, Director of the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, introduced the event by welcoming the guests and Dara Murphy. He emphasized the importance and uniqueness of the event. Dr. Ostry reminded the audience of the challenges the European Union had overcome since the last election in 2014, putting the European project under scrutiny. Although the EU was now better off in terms of employment, economic health and financial stability, Europeans continued to see European integration critically. It was thus the responsibility of the political parties, notably of the EPP, to create a European identity and to build up confidence towards the EU in order to make people going to the polls, Dr. Ostry declared.

Dara Murphy took up Dr. Ostry’s statement by insisting on the party’s responsibility for the electoral outcome: “We know the date and there will be no excuse”, he confirmed. In the following, Mr. Murphy presented the roadmap of the EPP’s election campaign for the next 15 months: The first step was to create research groups that identify the strengths, weaknesses and capabilities of the 53 member parties in order to design an appropriate message and to

find a narrative for the election campaign. The research findings will be presented to party leaders on 22 March. The research groups are also charged with identifying the key influencers on social media. Mr. Murphy emphasized that in addition to the traditional channels, the EPP should make greater use of social media. In June, the groups would come together and the “mechanics”, namely the research findings and the distribution channels of the message, would be combined, Mr. Murphy said.

He admitted that the election campaign was not about “inventing the wheel” but about “relying on the network” the EPP had. This network could be especially important for smaller member parties. He also put forward the importance of the ‘Spitzenkandidat’ in the election campaign, who would be elected in a democratic Primary and who needed to be very clear in explaining his vision to the people. With regard to the ‘Spitzenkandidat’ debate, Mr. Murphy commented that there had never been proposed an alternative with democratic legitimacy. He recommended the policy leaders to point out what the EPP had achieved these last years but at the same time, to accept mistakes and to admit that the party could do better. Another priority for him is to explain how local and European politicians work together because “we know that the more people understand the European institutions, the more likely they are to vote for EPP”. The European elections should be no longer second order elections, Mr. Murphy stated.

His fundamental approach comprised clarity and control when it comes to urgent issues such as migration and climate change. He further pledged for supporting stronger social and economic progression in Europe by delivering tight social policies in the Member States. He closed his speech by stressing

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that in times of Brexit one “should not be afraid to be emotional and robust”. It was the EPP that could bring forward the continent and that was responsible for the next generation to experience a united Europe.

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