

# Technology in aid of ideology

Antoni Gutiérrez-Rubí  
[www.gutierrez-rubi.es](http://www.gutierrez-rubi.es)

Digital applications that help in making political choices are becoming more and more common in electoral processes. These tools and technologies help us to “think”. They develop ideas through logical response routines similar to those that parties and candidates have and use in their political platforms and speeches. Interpretations of behaviour shape political orientations.

The increase in the number of citizens who do not vote or who are undecided until almost the day the polls open (as well as the uncertainty in opinion polls) and the need for public institutions and political organisations to promote participation, has fostered the proliferation of applications conceived as ideological *self-check* tools.

In the recent European elections in June a tool ([EU Profiler](#)) was created that, by means of a simple 30-item questionnaire, showed which national or European party was closest to your political ideas, where you stand on the political spectrum and how probable it is that you would vote for other parties. More than half a million people responded to the questionnaire, created by a team of 130

researchers sponsored by the [European University Institute in Florence](#).

This is not the first time that a tool of this kind has been developed. We saw it during the 2007 pre-election campaign when USA Today created the "[Candidate match game](#)", in which they indicated through a kind of survey, which candidates were ideologically closest to you or had ideas most similar to yours. The rules of the game were quite simple: the form asked questions about topics ranging from your opinion on the war in Iraq to your opinion on immigration to what you think about climate change. While you were responding, you could see a graph with all the candidates in the primary elections, which changed depending on whether their opinions or statements coincided with the responses you chose for each question. In the end it showed, in order, the three candidates that had ideologies and opinions most similar to yours.

Both EU Profiler and Candidate Match are descendents of similar tools or games in France ([Polimètre](#)) and the Netherlands ([Votematch](#)), created at the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007, respectively.

Questions structured around political proposals from the various different options prevent the party to which each

question pertains from being identified beforehand. Self-tested voters respond without bias from the political arena and reach ideological conclusions as a preliminary and orienting step in their voting decisions. In short, these tools propose an election that is "consistent" with voters' ideologies or values.

The quantity and quality of these applications is only going to increase, as they represent an immense help to voters and the media. And they are sure to put more than one candidate in the hot seat with regard to his or her political beliefs. But they also foster a political horizon in which self-affirmation outweighs debate, consensus, agreement or alliance.