

European Parliamentary elections in Great Britain

Guidance for candidates and agents

Overview document

March 2019

This document applies only to the 23 May 2019 European Parliamentary elections in Great Britain. Our guidance and resources for all other elections can be accessed from our website at:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent>.

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Purpose of our guidance for candidates and agents

1.1 Our guidance aims to provide practical advice for anyone who wants to stand either as an individual candidate or as a party list candidate at a European Parliamentary election in Great Britain, and for political parties. It also provides guidance to anyone who will be acting as an agent at these elections.

1.2 It covers the whole election process, including what you need to do to stand as an individual or party list candidate and what parties need to do to submit party lists, the campaign and election periods, the declaration of the result and election spending. It includes relevant factual material as well as a guide to sources of further information. Standing for election can be complicated, but we hope that our guidance will make it as straightforward as possible.

How to use our guidance

1.3 Our guidance is made up of six parts, setting out the different stages candidates, agents and political parties need to go through when contesting a European Parliamentary election.

1.4 Each part is accompanied by a number of forms and resources, which can be directly accessed via links in the individual parts. Alternatively, all of the relevant guidance, forms and resources will be available on our [dedicated webpage for candidates and agents](#) at a European Parliamentary election.

1.5 The following parts make up our full guidance for European Parliamentary elections:

- [Part 1 - Can you stand for election?](#)
- [Part 2a - Standing as an independent candidate](#)
- [Part 2b - Standing as a party candidate](#)
- [Part 3 - Spending and donations for individual candidates](#)
- [Part 4 - The campaign](#)

Data protection legislation applies to the processing of all personal data.

Please contact the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) for further information about how the General Data Protection Regulation affects you.

All spending on behalf of party list candidates is party campaign expenditure. We produce separate [guidance for parties submitting party lists](#).

- [Part 5 - Your right to attend key electoral events](#)
- [Part 6 - After the declaration of results](#)

1.6 Before starting the process of standing for election potential candidates need to be confident that they meet all of the requirements for standing for election. You should therefore first read [Part 1](#) of our guidance, which covers all of the qualifications and disqualifications.

1.7 Once satisfied that you can stand, you should read [Part 2a](#) (if you wish to stand as an individual (i.e. independent) candidate) or [Part 2b](#) (if you wish to stand as a candidate on a party list, or if you are the Nominating Officer of a political party wishing to submit a list of candidates to stand on the party's behalf), which deal with the nominations process and guide you through which forms you or your party need to submit and by when.

1.8 Candidates and agents at European Parliamentary elections must follow certain rules about how much they can spend, who they can accept donations from, and what they must report after the election. [Part 3](#) of our guidance explains these rules for individual candidates. We have also produced [spending guidance for parties](#) submitting lists of candidates for election.

1.9 [Part 4](#) covers what you need to bear in mind when campaigning, including rules on the publication and display of campaign literature.

1.10 Candidates and agents also have a right to attend key electoral processes. These are: the opening of postal votes; the poll; the count; and the calculation of the result. Additionally, candidates can appoint representatives to attend these electoral events on their behalf. Details on your rights and what to expect at these events are provided in [Part 5](#).

1.11 Finally, there are a number of actions parties, candidates and agents will need to take once the result has been declared, including submitting their spending returns. This is covered in [Part 6](#).

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1.12 To keep the guidance as relevant to the reader as possible, we have split most guidance parts into an 'Essential information' section, which all candidates, agents and political parties should read as it contains information that is relevant to all, and a 'Supplementary information' section, that will be relevant only to some. You will be directed to the 'Supplementary information' section at relevant points throughout the 'Essential information' section.

The electoral system

1.13 The UK is represented by 73 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). In the UK, there are 12 European electoral regions and each one is represented by between three and ten MEPs.

European Parliamentary electoral region	Number of seats for election
Eastern	7
East Midlands	5
London	8
North East	3
North West	8
Northern Ireland	3
Scotland	6
South East	10
South West	6
Wales	4
West Midlands	7
Yorkshire & the Humber	6

You can find further information on how the UK is represented in the European Parliament and the role of MEPs on the website of the [UK Office of the European Parliament](#).

1.14 MEPs in Great Britain are elected under a closed list proportional system. Voters are asked to mark their ballot paper by placing a single 'X' in the box next to the individual candidate or party of their choice.

Who does what at a European Parliamentary election?

The Regional Returning Officer

1.15 Each European electoral region has a Regional Returning Officer who has overall responsibility for the election in that area. Regional Returning Officers in Great Britain are appointed by an Order made by the Secretary of State.

1.16 They are responsible for the nomination process and for calculating and declaring the result of the election. Regional Returning Officers will also liaise with and co-ordinate the work of Local Returning Officers in their region, and have the power to give directions to them relating to the discharge of their functions at the election.

1.17 Regional Returning Officers will offer briefings ahead of the election and we strongly encourage you to attend, even if you have been an agent or stood for election before.

1.18 [Our list of Regional Returning Officers](#) information on who the Regional Returning Officer is for each region.

The Local Returning Officer

1.19 Local Returning Officers are responsible for running the election in their local counting area. Each local authority area makes up a separate local counting area.

1.20 The Local Returning Officer is normally a senior officer of the local authority. You will be able to contact the Local Returning Officer for any local authority area by contacting the relevant local authority elections office. Contact details of all

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elections offices in England and Wales can be found at www.yourvotematters.co.uk. In Scotland, you can contact the Local Returning Officer through the elections office at the local council.

1.21 The Local Returning Officer is responsible for administering the voting process in their area. Their duties include issuing postal votes, running polling stations and counting the votes cast in their area.

The Electoral Registration Officer

1.22 Electoral Registration Officers are responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists for their local authority area. You can contact the Electoral Registration Officer for any area through the relevant local authority elections office in England and Wales, or the relevant electoral registration office in Scotland. Again, contact details can be found at www.yourvotematters.co.uk.

The Electoral Commission

1.23 We are an independent statutory body established in November 2000 by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. We are currently headed by ten Commissioners, including a Chair. We report directly to the UK Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

1.24 We are responsible for overseeing a number of aspects of electoral law – the registration of political parties and third parties, the monitoring and publication of significant donations to registered political parties, and the regulation of national party and local candidate spending on election campaigns. We also have a role in promoting voter awareness and are required to report on the administration of certain electoral events, including European Parliamentary elections, and, if requested, on any other electoral matter. We also accredit observers to be present at election proceedings.

1.25 We do not run elections but have responsibility for providing advice and assistance on electoral matters to all

those involved in elections, including Regional Returning Officers, Local Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, political parties and candidates.

1.26 We are here to help, so please get in touch if you have any questions. Our contact details can be found on the next page.

Contacting us

If you are a candidate in England

If your question is about the **spending or donations**, please contact us at:

Email: pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0333 103 1928

For **any other queries**, please contact us at:

Email@ infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0333 103 1928

If you are a candidate in Scotland

In Scotland, you can contact us for all queries at:

Email: infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0131 225 0200

If you are a candidate in Wales

In Wales, you can contact us for all queries at:

Email: infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0333 103 1929

