

The  
Electoral  
Commission

# Media handbook

European Parliamentary election

March 2014

# Contents

About this handbook	2
Media contacts and resources	3
European Parliamentary elections overview	5
European Parliamentary election timetable	6
Who's who at the elections?	7
Differences in Northern Ireland	10
Standing for election	11
Campaigning	13
Party spending and donations	15
Individual candidate spending and donations	18
Electoral fraud	20
Registering to vote	23
Voting	26
The Electoral Commission's public awareness campaign	30
Counting the votes	31
After the election	34
The English local elections and mayoral elections	35
Appendix A - List of local elections and mayoral elections	37
Appendix B – Sample ballot papers	41
Appendix C – List of Regional Returning Officers.	42
Appendix D – public awareness campaign images	43

# About this handbook

This handbook covers the European Parliamentary elections.

Scheduled elections are also taking place to 161 local authorities across England. In addition, mayoral elections are due to take place in Watford and 4 authorities in Greater London.

Further information on these elections can be found on page 35 and a full list of English local and mayoral elections can be found in **Appendix A** at the back of this handbook.

# Media contacts and resources

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## Websites

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

Our website has a [dedicated section for journalists](#) featuring news from the Commission. The website also includes our [briefings to the House of Commons and the House of Lords](#) on issues that directly affect voters. The website also has an area containing our guidance for candidates, Local Returning Officers and PAROs.

[www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)

This website provides information for the public on how to register and vote and forms they can print off to register and apply to vote by post or proxy. It includes a postcode search facility allowing people to find out where elections are taking place and an interactive 'polling station walkthrough'.

## **Images**

We have a selection of images that can be used by the press, which are available on our Flickr site:

[www.flickr.com/photos/electoralcommissionuk/collections/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/electoralcommissionuk/collections/)

# European Parliamentary elections overview

On 22 May 2014 voters in the UK will vote for our representatives in the European Parliament. Seventy-three MEPs are to be elected to the 12 electoral regions in the UK.

The number of European Parliament seats in the UK is divided as follows:

<b>Electoral region</b>	<b>MEP numbers per region</b>
East Midlands	5
East of England	7
London	8
North East England	3
North West England	8
South East England	10
South West England	6
West Midlands	7
Yorkshire and the Humber	6
Wales	4
Scotland	6
Northern Ireland	3

# Election timetable<sup>1</sup>

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Last day for publication of notice of election.	Monday 14 April 2014.
Deadline for delivery of nomination papers and lists of candidates of registered parties to Regional Returning Officer.	By 4pm on Thursday 24 April 2014.
Last date for withdrawals of nominations	By 4pm on Thursday 24 April 2014.
Publication of statement of parties and individual candidates nominated	5pm on Thursday 24 April 2014. <sup>2</sup>
Deadline for registering to vote at the elections.	Tuesday 6 May 2014.
Deadline for applying for a new postal vote or for making changes to existing postal or proxy votes.	5pm on Wednesday 7 May 2014.
Deadline for applying for a proxy vote (except emergency proxy applications)	5pm on Wednesday 14 May
<b>Polling day</b>	Thursday 22 May 2014
Deadline to issue replacement postal ballot papers	5pm on Thursday 22 May 2014.
Deadline for emergency proxy applications	5pm on Thursday 22 May 2014.
Verification and counting of ballot papers.	As soon as practicable after the close of polls.
Declaration of result	No earlier than 10pm on Sunday 25 May 2014.
Deadline to submit political party and non-party campaign spending returns (For those spending £250k or less)	Friday 22 August 2014
Deadline to submit political party and non-party campaign spending returns (for those spending over £250k)	Friday 22 November 2014.

<sup>1</sup> As a result of a bank holiday in Gibraltar on 1 May 2014, some electoral deadlines in the South West electoral region are different to the deadlines elsewhere in Great Britain. [Please see our full timetable for these dates.](#)

<sup>2</sup> If there are any objections, the Statement of Persons Nominated may be published later, but no later than 4pm on Friday 25 April.

# Who's who at the elections?

## The Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. We set standards for well-run elections and regulate party and election finance.

We publish guidance for political parties, candidates and their agents, and non-party campaigners on how they must comply with the statutory reporting requirements. We also supply guidance for polling station staff.

We also:

- encourage people to register to vote and raise awareness about the different ways that people can cast their vote.
- set the standards for running elections and electoral registration, and report on how well these are done
- register political parties
- make sure people understand and follow the rules on party and election finance
- publish details of where parties get their money from and how they spend it
- Set performance standards for Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers. Both sets of officers then report on how well they have performed against these standards. For more information visit the [Performance Standards section of the Commission's website](#).

## Regional Returning Officer

Each of the UK's 12 European electoral regions has a Regional Returning Officer (RRO). The RRO for Northern Ireland is the Chief Electoral Officer and the 11 RROs in Great Britain are appointed by the Lord President of the Council.

The Regional Returning Officer is responsible for all aspects of the nomination process, the management and coordination of the poll in their region, calculating the results and allocating seats. The RRO also announces the results.

A full list of Regional Returning Officers for the European Parliamentary elections can be found in **Appendix C**.

## **Local Returning Officer**

The Local Returning Officer has the responsibility for the organisation and conduct of the election in the local counting area including the issuing of poll cards and postal vote packs, conduct of the poll on 22 May and the counting of votes in their area.

The Local Returning Officer is required to act in accordance with any instructions given by the Regional Returning Officer. The local counting area is the district, borough or unitary local authority area in England, and the local authority area in Scotland and Wales.

## **Electoral Registration Officer**

The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the electoral register and list of absent voters within their area. Every local authority is required to appoint an ERO.

## **Election agent**

A party or individual candidate must have an election agent. This is the person responsible for the proper management of the election campaign. Parties standing in only one electoral region are also required to appoint an election agent.

Individual candidates who do not appoint an agent are automatically deemed to be their own election agent. If parties do not appoint an agent, then the Nominating Officer of the party is deemed to be the agent.

[Read the guidance we have published for election agents here.](#)

## **National election agent for a political party**

Any party standing for election in more than one European Parliamentary electoral region must appoint a national election agent who acts as the election agent for all of the electoral regions where the party is fielding a list of candidates.

## **Postal voting, polling and counting agents**

Agents may also be appointed to attend the opening of postal votes, the poll and the verification and count. Additionally, one of the counting agents for each registered party or individual candidate may be designated to request any recounts.

## **Presiding Officer and poll clerks**

Local Returning Officers appoint Presiding Officers to run polling stations. They are supported by poll clerks. Polling station staff must act impartially at all times and ensure that the proper procedure for voting is followed. Their duties include organising the layout of the polling station, issuing ballot

papers, assisting voters and ensuring that ballot boxes are transported securely to the count venue.

The Electoral Commission produces a polling station handbook for polling station staff. This guide contains information for polling station staff, including 'dos and don't's and accessibility standards. [It is available on our website here.](#)

## **Tellers**

Tellers are political party volunteers who stand outside polling stations and may ask for the electoral numbers of those who have voted. They identify likely supporters who have not voted and encourage them to vote before the close of poll. While they have an important role in elections, they have no official legal status. The law does not permit tellers to operate inside polling stations.

# Differences in Northern Ireland

There are a number of different rules for the European Parliamentary elections in Northern Ireland.

A brief summary of the key differences between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is provided below.

- The Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland is the registration officer and returning officer for all elections.
- MEPs in Northern Ireland are elected using the Single Transferable Vote system – there are no party lists and you vote for a candidate by order of preference rather than a party.
- Northern Ireland has individual electoral registration.
- A reason has to be given in order to qualify for a postal vote. In Great Britain, postal voting is available on demand and a reason doesn't have to be given.
- Specified photographic ID must be presented at polling stations.
- The deposit is returned if an individual candidate or political party achieve one-quarter (1/4) of the quota at any stage of the count rather than one-fortieth (1/40) in Great Britain.

# Standing for election

## Who can stand as a candidate at the European Parliamentary elections?

For someone to be able to stand as a candidate at a European Parliamentary election in Great Britain and Northern Ireland they must:

- be at least 18 years old on the day of their nomination.
- be a British or Irish citizen; an eligible Commonwealth citizen; or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union resident in the UK or Gibraltar.

## Are there any reasons why someone couldn't stand as a candidate?

There are a number of disqualifications that would prevent a person from standing. These include:

- Being disqualified from standing for election to the House of Commons (with some exceptions)
- Being a particular type of bankrupt.
- Being detained in prison for more than a year or being subject to a particular court decision.

Further details of disqualifications can be found in [our guidance for candidates](#).

## Do candidates and parties have to pay a deposit?

Yes, the deposit is **£5,000** for a party or an individual candidate. After the election, the deposit will be returned if a party or individual candidate polls more than 2.5% of the total number of valid votes cast in the electoral region.

## Who decides which candidates a party puts forward for the European Parliamentary election?

In Great Britain political parties use the party list system for the European Parliamentary election. They decide which candidates they want to put forward and in what order they want them to appear on their list.

In Northern Ireland there are no party lists, but parties still decide internally which candidates they wish to put forward.

Individual candidates, who do not represent any political party, can also stand for election.

## **Do parties contesting the elections have to be registered with the Commission?**

Parties can only contest elections if they are registered with the Commission. The main benefit is that a party can have its name, description and emblem on the ballot papers. Also, once a party has registered its name with us, no other party can register this name or a confusingly similar name. This is to stop voters mistaking one party for another on the ballot paper. Parties that are not registered may only describe their candidates as 'Independent' on the ballot papers (and/or 'Annibynnol' in Wales).

[Read more about the registration process in our guidance here.](#)

## **When does a party have to register by to contest the European Parliamentary elections in May?**

The Commission has advised potential parties to submit their application by Friday 11 April to allow adequate time for the application to be processed.

## **Do you have to stand under a political party name?**

No. A person may stand as an individual candidate, i.e. not for any political party.

## **Can all parties use a description and/or emblem on the ballot paper?**

Yes, parties registered with the Electoral Commission are able to request that one of their registered descriptions and/or one of their party's official emblems is printed on the ballot paper.

Parties in Wales may use either the English or Welsh version of their descriptions, or both versions of either the party name or description as long as they are registered with us.

## **What about individual candidates?**

Individual candidates can only use the description 'Independent' on the ballot papers (and/or 'Annibynnol' in Wales) and cannot use an emblem.

## **What happens after the close of nominations?**

The Regional Returning Officer will publish a statement of parties and persons nominated for the electoral region at the end of the period for objecting to nomination papers (5pm on 24 April 2014) provided there are no objections.

# Campaigning

There are many rules surrounding elections campaigns. These range from the use of imprints on election materials to statements about other candidates.

[Detailed guidance on campaigning rules is available here.](#)

## **Are there rules about what candidates can say about one another?**

As at all elections, it is illegal to make a false statement about the personal character of a candidate in order to affect the election of a candidate. Rules about defamation also apply to election materials.

The police may investigate allegations of the specific electoral criminal offence of making a false statement. Defamation issues are a matter for the civil courts.

The Electoral Commission does not have any regulatory role in relation to the content of campaign material used at elections.

## **Would the Electoral Commission investigate if someone said something false about a rival candidate or party in campaign material?**

No. The Commission has no role in policing the content of campaign material. The police would investigate allegations of the specific criminal offence of making a false statement mentioned above. Defamation issues are a matter for the civil courts.

## **What is an 'imprint'?**

An imprint is added to campaign material to show who is responsible for its production. It helps to ensure that there is transparency about who is campaigning.

It should include the name and address of the printer and promoter of a candidate's election materials.

A standard imprint should look like this:

*Printed by Armadillo Printing Ltd, 20 Barry Avenue, Leeds.  
Promoted by J Smith on behalf of the Vote Party, both of 110 High Street, Stafford.*

## **What materials should carry an imprint?**

All printed election materials (i.e. posters, placards and leaflets distributed for the purpose of promoting the election of a candidate) must include an imprint.

Not including an imprint on election material could result in enforcement action by the Commission.

Electronic materials – such as websites and emails – should also have imprints. The imprint should include the name and address of the promoter and the organisation on whose behalf it has been produced.

### **What is a hustings event?**

This is a meeting where election candidates or parties debate policies and answer questions from the audience.

Hustings events are usually held by organisations, such as community groups or campaigners, so that voters can ask candidates about issues that are important to them.

The Commission produces guidance for parties, candidates, agents and hustings organisers. For further information, please see the *Hustings events* document [on the Commission's website here](#).

# Party spending and donations at the European Parliamentary election

There are limits on what political parties can spend on campaigning in the run-up to the elections.

The rules are slightly different for individual candidates standing at the European Parliamentary elections. See page 17 for more details on the rules affecting individual candidates.

## What is the 'regulated period'?

This is the period of time during which spending limits and rules apply.

For the European Parliamentary elections in 2014, it began on **23 January 2014** and ends on **22 May 2014**.

## How much can parties spend at European Parliamentary elections?

The spending limit for parties for the regulated period is £45,000 multiplied by the number of MEPs to be returned in each region.

Spending limits for each region are shown below:

Electoral region	Spending limits
East Midlands	£225,000
East of England	£315,000
London	£360,000
North East England	£135,000
North West England	£360,000
South East England	£450,000
South West England	£270,000
West Midlands	£315,000
Yorkshire and the Humber	£270,000
Wales	£180,000
Scotland	£270,000
Northern Ireland	£135,000

## **Does spending before the regulated period count?**

It can in some cases. Money that was spent before the start of the regulated period must be included if the goods or services purchased are used during the regulated period.

## **What activities count towards the spending limit?**

Activities included in campaign spending are:

- Advertising of any kind. For example, street banners, websites or YouTube videos.
- Unsolicited material sent to voters. For example, letters or leaflets.
- The manifesto and other documents setting out a party's policies.
- Market research or other methods of finding out how people intend to vote.
- Press conferences or other dealings with the media.
- Rallies and events.
- Transport in connection with publicising a campaign.

## **Who can parties accept donations from?**

By law, political parties can only receive donations from certain sources. Any donations of over £500 must come from permissible sources.

These are:

- An individual registered on a UK electoral register, including overseas electors and those leaving bequests.
- A Great Britain registered political party.
- A UK-registered company which is incorporated within the European Union (EU) and carries out business in the UK.
- A UK-registered trades union.
- A UK-registered building society.
- A UK-registered limited liability partnership (LLP) that carries out business in the UK.
- A UK-registered friendly society.
- A UK-based unincorporated association that is based in and carries on business or other activities in the UK.

## **Are there limits on how many donations a party can accept?**

No. Limits are only placed on the amount of money parties spend during the regulated period.

### **Do parties have to report their spending?**

Yes. After the election, political parties have to report how much they spent on campaigning during the regulated period. This report must be made to us.

If parties spend £250,000 or below, the reporting deadline is **22 August 2014**.  
If parties spend over £250,000, the reporting deadline is **22 November 2014**.

Party list candidates must also prepare and submit an election spending return for their personal expenses to the Regional Returning Officer within 50 days of the date the result is declared.

### **Will I be able to see parties' spending returns after the election?**

Yes. The Commission will publish these returns no later than 20 working days following the deadlines above.

### **What about non-party campaigners' spending?**

There are also limits on non-party campaign spending.

[Read more about these rules here.](#)

# Individual candidate spending and donations at the European Parliamentary election

Like parties, individual candidates and their agents at the 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.

## **What is the 'regulated period' for individual candidates?**

The regulated period begins on the date after a person officially becomes an individual candidate and ends at the close of the poll.

Except for the South-West combined region (which includes Gibraltar) the earliest date a person can officially become a candidate is Monday 14 April 2014. If a person is standing in the South West combined region, the earliest date they can officially become a candidate is Thursday 10 April 2014.

## **How much can individual candidates spend at European Parliamentary elections?**

The spending limit for individual candidates (i.e. those not on a party list) for the regulated period is £45,000 multiplied by the number of MEPs to be returned in each region.

This is the same as the limits for party spending shown in the table in the previous section.

## **Who do individual candidates report their spending to and when?**

The election agent of an individual candidate will need to prepare and submit an election spending return to the Regional Returning Officer by Monday 14 July (for results announced on Sunday 25 May) or Tuesday 15 July (for results announced on Monday 26 May).

Both the candidate and election agent will need to sign a declaration stating that the return is complete and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief.

## **Do candidates still have to tell the Regional Returning Officer if they don't spend anything?**

Yes. Even if a candidate does not spend anything, a nil return must be submitted.

### **Will I be able to see the returns after the election?**

Yes. Candidates' spending returns are kept by the Regional Returning Officer and will be available for public inspection on request for a year after they were received.

### **Do candidates have to report donations as well as spending?**

Yes. The candidate's spending return must include details of all donations towards their campaign that were over £50 in value.

Some candidates, however, may receive donations for political activities other than their candidacy (for example, the donation of travel expenses to a country in which they have an interest) They must report these donations in their capacity as a 'regulated donee' to the Electoral Commission if the donations are over £1,500.

### **What is a 'regulated donee'?**

Regulated donees are:

- holders of relevant elective office
- members of registered political parties
- members associations

There are rules on the donations regulated donees can accept, and the loans they enter into, that are in connection with their political activities.

[Read more about the rules affecting regulated donees here.](#)

# Electoral fraud

There are a number of criminal offences relating to electoral fraud. The relevant police force for the area in which elections were taking place would investigate any allegations that an offence may have taken place.

Every police force has designated a Single Point of Contact (known as a SPOC) to lead on election-related crime and who will give advice to local police officers. Anyone making an allegation should be prepared to give the police a statement and substantiate their concerns.

Anyone, including candidates, politicians and members of the public, who has evidence of electoral fraud taking place should go straight to the police.

## What are the different types of electoral offences?

### Personation

This is where an individual votes as someone else (whether that person is living or dead or is a fictitious person), either by post or in person at a polling station, as an elector or as a proxy.

### Undue influence / Intimidation

A person is guilty of undue influence if they directly or indirectly make use of or threaten to make use of force, violence or restraint, or inflict or threaten to inflict injury, damage, loss or harm, in order to induce or compel any voter to vote or refrain from voting.

### Bribery

A person is guilty of bribery if they directly or indirectly give any money or procure any office to or for any voter, in order to induce that voter to vote or not vote.

### Multiple voting and proxy voting offences

There are various offences regarding multiple voting and proxy voting, including voting as an elector or proxy when subject to a legal incapacity to vote and voting more than once in the same election.

### False registration information

It is an offence to supply false registration information to an Electoral Registration Officer. It is also an offence to supply false information in connection with an application for a postal or proxy vote.

### Is postal voting secure?

Postal voting on demand is more secure following a tightening of the law in 2007 and is used by 15% of the electorate nationally.

Postal voters now have to provide their signature and date of birth when applying for a vote, and also when casting their postal vote. Voters should make sure they complete their postal vote in secret and return it directly to the Returning Officer. Both records are then checked. If they don't match, the ballot paper is rejected.

### **How does the Electoral Commission work with political parties to prevent postal vote fraud?**

The Electoral Commission has an agreed code of conduct with political parties. The code says candidates and campaigners:

- should never touch or handle anyone else's ballot paper.
- should never observe voters completing their ballot paper. If you are with a voter when they complete their ballot paper, remember they should always complete it in secret.
- should not ask or encourage voters to give them any completed ballot paper or ballot paper envelope.
- If asked by a voter to take a completed postal ballot pack on their behalf, campaigners should immediately post it or take it directly to the office of the Returning Officer or to a polling station.

Earlier this year the Commission [published the results of an extensive review of electoral fraud vulnerabilities](#) and recommended that campaigners no longer handle postal or proxy vote application forms or completed postal ballot papers.

The Commission is now in the process of discussing these changes with political parties and other campaigners and plans to introduce a revised Code of Conduct for Campaigners for elections after May 2014, including the May 2015 UK Parliamentary general election. Details of which the parties and campaigners that have agreed to follow the code will be made public.

### **What happens if a political party breaches your code of conduct?**

The Electoral Commission asks political parties to investigate any reported breaches and take action to ensure that any problems are not repeated. This includes potentially taking disciplinary action against party members.

### **What is the Electoral Commission doing to prevent fraud at these elections?**

The Commission has identified a number of areas where there is a higher risk of allegations of electoral fraud.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Burnley, Calderdale, Coventry, Derby, Hyndburn, Kirklees, Oldham, Pendle, Peterborough, Slough, Tower Hamlets, Walsall, and Woking.

Earlier this year the Commission called for action to be taken to protect the integrity of elections in all areas, but particularly in these higher risk areas. In particular, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) were asked to analyse their area's history of alleged and proven electoral fraud, together with electoral data from previous elections.

Based on this analysis, they were asked to plan what steps they would take against fraud – for example, the tests they would apply when considering applications to register to vote.

Police forces were also urged to have strong plans in place for policing elections, drawn up in consultation with EROs and ROs.

### **Who is responsible for putting in place plans to deal with electoral fraud?**

Responsibility for ensuring that robust plans to prevent and detect electoral fraud are in place lies with Returning Officers. They must work closely with their local police force. The Electoral Commission monitors these plans and makes clear where more needs to be done to protect the integrity of elections.

### **What more is being done to prevent electoral fraud?**

Individual Electoral Registration (IER) is being brought in later this year to tighten up the registration process. The Commission has been calling for this since 2003.

Under this new system, individuals will be asked to provide 'identifying information', such as a date of birth and national insurance number, when they apply to register.

The Commission has also recently recommended that voters should be required to show ID at polling stations in Great Britain and is currently working on detailed proposals for how the scheme should work.

# Registering to vote

## Who can register?

Any person resident in the local authority area and who meets the age and nationality qualification is able to register to vote.

The age qualification is that:

- a person can register once they are 16 but cannot vote until they are 18 or over

The nationality qualification is that they are:

- a British citizen
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen <sup>4</sup>
- a citizen of any other European Union country

## What is the deadline to register to vote?

People must register by Tuesday 6 May 2014 in order to be able to vote on Thursday 22 May 2014.

## What is the deadline for applying for postal and proxy voting?

The deadline for applying for a postal vote is 5pm, Wednesday 7 May 2014.

The deadline for applying for a proxy vote (except for emergency proxy applications) is 5pm, Wednesday 14 May 2014.

## How can someone register to vote?

People can register to vote by contacting the Electoral Registration Officer at their local authority or visiting [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk) to download a registration form. The form must be completed and returned to their Electoral Registration Officer.

## What does the Electoral Commission do to encourage people to register to vote?

At the beginning of April we will launch our public awareness campaign for the 22 May 2014 elections. The campaign, which will run across TV, radio and online media in the run up to the registration deadline, will make people aware of the need to register by 6 May 2014 if they want to vote in the elections.

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<sup>4</sup> A qualifying Commonwealth citizen is one that has leave to enter or remain in the UK or does not require such leave.

### **Can someone register to vote at two different addresses?**

This depends on the individual's particular circumstances. A person can register to vote at an address if they are resident at that address. It may be possible to be registered at more than one address, as long as the person is resident at each address.

An example of this may be full-time students, who may be able to register at both their term-time address and their home address. It would be an offence for a person to vote twice.

It is up to the local Electoral Registration Officer to decide if a person is resident at any particular property.

### **Can prisoners register?**

Remand prisoners (those who have not been convicted or sentenced) can register. Convicted prisoners detained because of their sentence cannot.

### **How do members of the armed forces register?**

Service personnel and their spouses or civil partners, serving in the UK or overseas, can register either at their UK home address as an ordinary voter or as a 'service voter'.

Service voters fill out an armed services declaration so they can be registered when away from their home address on duty.

For more information visit the [Armed Forces section of our website](#).

### **What about British citizens overseas?**

British citizens living overseas can also vote in the European elections by post or by proxy, provided they have registered as overseas electors.

To register as an overseas elector, expatriates must have been registered to vote in the UK within the last 15 years. Those who were too young to register when they left the UK can also still register as an overseas voter as long as their parent or guardian was registered to vote in the UK in the last 15 years.

### **What can the electoral register be used for?**

There are two versions of the electoral register – the 'edited' register and the 'full' register.

- The full register is used for elections, preventing and detecting crime, and checking applications for credit. A copy of the full register must be made available for inspection, under supervision, at the office of the Electoral Registration Officer and at any other place (if any) suitable for inspection in the registration area.

- The edited register can be sold to anyone and used for any purpose, including direct marketing. If people do not want their details sold on to anyone else, you should tick the opt-out box.

### **Do individual candidates and parties receive a copy of the electoral register?**

Yes. Individual candidates (once they officially become a candidate) are entitled to receive a free copy of the full electoral register and the lists of people voting by post or proxy (the absent voters' lists) for the electoral region that they are contesting.

The election agent of a registered political party is entitled to a free copy of the full electoral register and absent voters' lists for the whole of the electoral region. The register and lists can only be supplied to the election agent after the Nominating Officer of the party, or someone authorised in writing to act on their behalf, has submitted a nomination form.

Parties and individual candidates can use the electoral register to:

- help them campaign
- check that donations and loans come from permissible sources

Details that appear only in the full register and do not appear in the edited version of the register must not be released.

# Voting

## Who can vote in the European Parliamentary election?

To vote in the European Parliamentary election a person must be registered to vote and also be one of the following:

- a British citizen living in the UK
- a British citizen living overseas that has been registered to vote in the UK within the last 15 years
- a qualifying Commonwealth citizen living in the UK
- a citizen of the Republic of Ireland living in the UK
- a European Union citizen living in the UK
- someone registered to vote as a Crown Servant
- someone registered to vote as a service voter

European Union citizens living in the UK can only vote in the European Parliamentary elections if they have declared that they intend to vote in the UK, as opposed to in the EU country of which they are a national.

People can find more information about the elections, and download a voter registration form, by visiting our website, [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk). The deadline to register to vote in the elections is **Tuesday 6 May**.

## When will polling stations be open?

All polling stations open at 7am and close at 10pm.

## Where can people go for more information?

- Voters can call the Electoral Commission's helpline on 0800 3 280 280 for advice on how to register to vote, the process of voting, and to request a voter registration form. This helpline will open at the end of March 2012.
- Our website, [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk), contains all the information people need to register to vote, including voter registration forms. On this site, voters can also watch an animated polling station walk-through and read about the process of voting.
- Elections teams at local authorities can offer advice on how to register to

vote. People should contact their local authority if they are unsure whether they are on the electoral register.

### **How do people vote?**

There are three ways in which voters can cast their vote:

- In person at a polling station
- By post
- By proxy

### **What voting system is used?**

In Great Britain proportional representation (closed list) is used for the European Parliamentary election.

In Northern Ireland the single transferable vote (STV) system is used.

### **What will the ballot paper look like?**

In Great Britain, parties will be listed first, alphabetically, on the ballot paper followed by individual candidates, also alphabetically.

In Northern Ireland, the ballot paper will provide a list of candidates only.

Example ballot papers can be seen in **Appendix A**.

### **How should ballot papers be completed for the European Parliamentary elections?**

In Great Britain you mark one cross against either:

- a) The party you wish to vote for.
- b) The individual candidate you wish to vote for.

Northern Ireland uses the single transferable vote (STV) system meaning voters mark 1, 2, 3 and so on against candidates in order of preference.

### **How does someone vote at a polling station?**

All polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on polling day. Every voter is allocated a specific polling station serving the area in which they live. The Local Returning Officer will send a poll card to each elector giving the location of the polling station.

It is not necessary for voters to bring their poll card when they vote.

The elections office at the relevant local council can provide information on where polling stations are located.

## How does someone vote by post?

Those who have already registered to vote can choose to vote by post if they cannot, or do not wish to, attend the polling station in person. **The deadline for applying for a postal vote for the European Parliamentary elections is 5pm on 7 May 2014.**

Voters can apply for a postal vote for a single election, for a specified period or indefinitely. When applying for a postal vote, voters must supply their date of birth and signature. These are known as 'personal identifiers' and are checked when voters cast their postal vote as a security measure.

Postal votes must be received back by the Local Returning Officer by 10pm on polling day. They can be posted or returned by hand to the Local Returning Officer at the relevant council offices, or they can be handed in at any polling station in the counting area.

Postal vote application forms are available from electoral registration offices, from [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk) or by calling our helpline on 0800 3 280 280.

## How does someone vote by proxy?

Voting by proxy (appointing a person to vote on your behalf) is a convenient way of voting if a person is unable to get to the polling station. It can be useful if a person falls ill and is unable to get to the polling station on election day, or if they are abroad during an election.

When applying for a proxy vote, voters may need to have someone support their application and confirm that their reason for applying for a proxy vote is valid.

If proxy voters change their mind and wish to vote in person, they can still do so, providing their proxy has not already voted on their behalf (or applied to vote by post).

**The deadline for applying for a proxy vote for the elections is 5pm on 14 May 2014.**

In the case of medical emergencies or being called away unexpectedly for work reasons, voters may apply for an emergency proxy up to **5pm on polling day.**

## What happens if someone is queuing at a polling station at 10pm?

For the first time at any poll in England and Wales and for the first time at a European Parliamentary election in Scotland, a voter who is in the polling station or in a queue at their polling station at 10pm will be allowed to vote.

### **Are there rules on impartiality for the media?**

News reports, features and editorials in print or online media are not subject to electoral law, and the law does not require them to be impartial.

Paid for advertising (including free advertising that would normally be paid for) promoting a candidate or party should be included in a candidate's election expenses, and subject to the normal rules surrounding campaign materials.

Political impartiality in broadcast media is covered by the editorial guidelines relevant to that particular broadcaster:

- The BBC's editorial guidelines on broadcasting during an election can be found [here](#).
- Commercial broadcasters are subject to the Ofcom Broadcasting Code, which can be found [here](#)

### **Can the media enter polling stations?**

No. No filming or interview is allowed in the polling station. If media wish to film or conduct interviews outside the polling place, they must ensure that voters are not hindered or harassed on their way to vote and that the entrance to the polling place is not obstructed.

# The Electoral Commission's public awareness campaign

The Commission is running a campaign– beginning on Tuesday 1 April – encouraging people to register to vote by the deadline of Tuesday 6 May. In Northern Ireland the campaign will begin on Monday 14 April.

The campaign will use media we know is particularly accessed by under-registered groups, which include young people and recent homemovers. Our GB campaign will run across television, online catch-up television, radio and online.

We will also be running a 'registration' and 'voter information' campaign in Northern Ireland similar to ones we have conducted for previous elections. The voter information campaign will remind voters of the need for photographic identification at the polling station, how to vote and where to find further information on the elections. This will run across television, printed media, radio, online and on outdoor posters.

In addition to the above, the Commission is running a predominantly online campaign aimed at encouraging UK expats to register to vote, and is working closely with the Ministry of Defence to ensure members of the armed forces have registered.

Images from our campaign are shown in **Appendix D**.

# Counting the votes

## **When and where does the count take place for the European Parliamentary election?**

Votes can be counted at any time following the close of poll, but no results can be declared until 10pm on Sunday 25 May 2014 (this is the earliest that results for the elections can be declared).

The counts take place locally at designated count centres, and are overseen by the Local Returning Officer from each counting area. The totals for each counting area are then reported to the Regional Returning Officer and announced locally once they have been approved by the Regional Returning Officer.

Once the totals from all of the counting areas have been received, the Regional Returning Officer calculates the result, allocates the seats and declares the result for the region.

For example, the count in Nottingham takes place at the Nottingham Tennis Centre. The result from this count would then be reported to the Regional Returning Officer for the East Midlands at Kettering Borough Council who will declare the eventual result.

A list of all Regional Returning Officers can be found at **Appendix C**.

Count locations can be obtained by contacting the press office of the local authority in your area.

## **When are postal votes opened?**

Election staff will open postal ballot packs returned up to and on polling day to check the accompanying personal identifiers (the date of birth and signature of the voter).

At these opening sessions, the ballot papers must remain face down and election staff will not count these votes at these sessions.

The counting of postal votes takes place at the same time as votes cast in polling stations.

## **Where are the votes counted?**

Ballots are counted in a count centre as designated by the Local Returning Officer.

## **Is electronic counting used?**

No. Votes are counted by hand by appointed counting staff at these elections.

## Can the media attend the count?

Members of the media can normally attend the count provided they have applied to the Local Returning Officer (via the press office at the relevant local authority). They should abide by any instructions the Local Returning Officer gives. Local Returning Officers do not have to allow any member of the press into the count (unless they are also a candidate, agent, counting agent or accredited observer).

## Can the media attend the results event?

Yes. The declaration of results for a region will be made by the Regional Returning Officer. See **Appendix C** for a full list of Regional Returning Officers. You should contact the press office of the relevant local authority to find out more about the arrangements and locations of these events.

## Where are the votes counted?

Ballots in Great Britain are counted in local count centres as designated by the relevant Local Returning Officers.

Ballots in Northern Ireland will be counted at The Kings Hall, Belfast.

## How are seats allocated?

In Great Britain, the D'hondt system of proportional representation is used allocate seats. This means that:

- The Regional Returning Officer will total all of the votes cast for each political party and individual candidate within the electoral region before applying the d'Hondt formula to carry out the allocation of seats.
- The first seat is allocated to the party or individual candidate that has received the highest number of votes cast in the electoral region.
- Each subsequent seat is allocated to the party or individual candidate that has the highest number of votes after the following calculation, which is carried out after the allocation of each seat:

<b>Total number of votes received ÷ Number of seats political party/individual candidate has already been allocated in the electoral region +1</b>
--

- The seats that each political party is entitled to are filled by the candidates in the order in which their names appear on the party list.

Any individual candidate who has been allocated a seat or any party which has been allocated as many seats as there are candidates on its list will be excluded from the subsequent stages of the calculation.

In Northern Ireland, the single transferable vote (STV) system is used.

Voters mark 1, 2 and 3 against candidates in order of preference. The candidates with the least votes are eliminated and their votes redistributed.

This is repeated until there are only the required number of candidates left.

# After the election

## Can someone challenge the result of an election?

Yes. The outcome of a European Parliamentary election can be challenged through an election petition.

Only certain people can lodge an election petition, and only under specific circumstances.

An election petition can be presented by:

- someone claiming to have been a candidate at the election
- someone claiming to have had a right to be elected or returned at the election
- an elector who had a right to vote at the election

The allowable grounds for a petition are that:

- a successful candidate was not duly elected
- the results were not duly declared
- the election was invalidated by the following corrupt or illegal practices.

See our [guidance for candidates and agents \(page 5\)](#) for further details on election petitions.

Petitioners must present the petition within 21 calendar days of the declaration of the result. Petitioners must sign the petition and return it to the Elections Petitions Office.

# The English local elections and mayoral elections

[Key dates for the English local elections can be found in our elections timetable.](#)

## **When will the count begin?**

This can vary for different local authorities and may take place following the close of poll, or the following day. Contact your local authority press office to confirm timings.

## **Where will the count and declaration of results take place?**

This will take place at a venue determined by the Returning Officer. Contact your local authority press office to confirm where this will be.

## **When will the results be announced?**

It is not possible to say exactly when the result will be announced as this is dependent on a number of factors, including timing of the count and any re-counts.

## **What is the regulated period for the local and mayoral elections?**

This begins on the date a person officially become a candidate and ends at the close of the poll.

## **What is the campaign spending limit for candidates at the local and mayoral elections?**

For mayoral candidates, the spending limit for the regulated period is £2,362, plus 5.9p per registered elector in the local authority area where a candidate is standing.

For local government candidates, the spending limit is £600, plus 5p per local government elector in the ward where the candidate is standing.

## **Who do local election and mayoral candidates report their spending to and when?**

Candidates' spending must be reported to the Returning Officer within 35 days of the declaration of the result of the election. The Commission provides [guidance and forms for candidates and their agents](#) on what they must report after the election.

### **Do candidates have to report donations they receive?**

Yes. They must include details of all individual donations of over £50 accepted during the regulated period. They must also provide a total for all the donations they receive (including those up to £50). They do this as part of the spending returns they provide to the Returning Officer.

See our guidance for candidates and agents at the [Mayoral elections](#) or the [local government elections](#) for more information on spending and donations.

### **Will I be able to see the spending returns after the election?**

Yes. Candidates' spending returns will be available for public inspection at council offices as soon as possible after they are received. Contact your local authority for more details.

**For more information on the local and mayoral elections, please contact the press office on 0207 271 0704.**

# Appendix A

## List of English local government elections on 22 May 2014

<b>Council</b>	<b>Cycle</b>
Adur District Council	Half
Amber Valley Borough Council	Third
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Basildon Borough Council	Third
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	Third
Bassetlaw District Council	Third
Birmingham City Council	Third
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	Third
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Bradford Council	Third
Brentwood Borough Council	Third
Bristol City Council	Third
Broxbourne Borough Council	Third
Burnley Borough Council	Third
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Cambridge City Council	Third
Cannock Chase District Council	Third
Carlisle City Council	Third
Castle Point Borough Council	Third
Cheltenham Borough Council	Half
Cherwell District Council	Third
Chorley Borough Council	Third
City of Westminster	Whole
Colchester Borough Council	Third
Coventry City Council	Third
Craven District Council	Third
Crawley Borough Council	Third
Daventry District Council	Third
Derby City Council	Third
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Eastleigh Borough Council	Third
Elmbridge Borough Council	Third
Epping Forest District Council	Third
Exeter City Council	Third
Fareham Borough Council	Half
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Gloucester City Council	Third
Gosport Borough Council	Half
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	Third
Halton Borough Council	Third

Harlow District Council	Third
Harrogate Borough Council	Third
Hart District Council	Third
Hartlepool Borough Council	Third
Hastings Borough Council	Half
Havant Borough Council	Third
Hertsmere Borough Council	Third
Huntingdonshire District Council	Third
Hyndburn Borough Council	Third
Ipswich Borough Council	Third
Kingston-upon-Hull City Council	Whole
Kirklees Metropolitan Council	Third
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Leeds City Council	Third
Lincoln City Council	Third
Liverpool City Council	Third
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	Whole
London Borough of Barnet	Whole
London Borough of Bexley	Whole
London Borough of Brent	Whole
London Borough of Bromley	Whole
London Borough of Camden	Whole
London Borough of Croydon	Whole
London Borough of Ealing	Whole
London Borough of Enfield	Whole
London Borough of Hackney	Whole
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham	Whole
London Borough of Haringey	Whole
London Borough of Harrow	Whole
London Borough of Havering	Whole
London Borough of Hillingdon	Whole
London Borough of Hounslow	Whole
London Borough of Islington	Whole
London Borough of Lambeth	Whole
London Borough of Lewisham	Whole
London Borough of Merton	Whole
London Borough of Newham	Whole
London Borough of Redbridge	Whole
London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames	Whole
London Borough of Southwark	Whole
London Borough of Sutton	Whole
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Whole
London Borough of Waltham Forest	Whole
London Borough of Wandsworth	Whole
Maidstone Borough Council	Third
Manchester City Council	Third
Milton Keynes Council	Third
Mole Valley District Council	Third
Newcastle City Council	Third

Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Council	Third
North East Lincolnshire Council	Third
North Hertfordshire District Council	Third
North Tyneside Council	Third
Norwich City Council	Third
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	Half
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Oxford City Council	Half
Pendle Borough Council	Third
Peterborough City Council	Third
Plymouth City Council	Third
Portsmouth City Council	Third
Preston City Council	Third
Purbeck District Council	Third
Reading Borough Council	Third
Redditch Borough Council	Third
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	Third
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Rochford District Council	Third
Rossendale Borough Council	Third
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Royal Borough of Greenwich	Whole
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Whole
Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames	Whole
Rugby Borough Council	Third
Runnymede Borough Council	Third
Rushmoor Borough Council	Third
Salford City Council	Third
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Sheffield City Council	Third
Slough Borough Council	Third
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Third
South Lakeland District Council	Third
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Southampton City Council	Third
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	Third
St Albans City & District Council	Third
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Stevenage Borough Council	Third
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Stratford on Avon District Council	Third
Stroud District Council	Third
Sunderland City Council	Third
Swindon Borough Council	Third
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Tamworth Borough Council	Third
Tandridge District Council	Third

Three Rivers District Council	Third
Thurrock Council	Third
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Third
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council	Third
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Warrington Borough Council	Third
Watford Borough Council	Third
Welwyn Hatfield District Council	Third
West Lancashire Borough Council	Third
West Oxfordshire District Council	Third
Weymouth & Portland Borough Council	Third
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	Third
Winchester City Council	Third
Wirral Metropolitan Borough of	Third
Woking Borough Council	Third
Wokingham Borough Council	Third
Wolverhampton City Council	Third
Worcester City Council	Third
Worthing Borough Council	Third
Wyre Forest District Council	Third

### **Mayoral elections**

Hackney
Lewisham
Newham
Tower Hamlets
Watford

# Appendix B

## Sample European Parliamentary election ballot paper

Election of Members of the European Parliament for the [insert name of Region, e.g. 'North-West Region']					
Vote only once by putting a cross  in the box next to your choice					
<b>Bloggs Party</b>					
1. Ali Barber	6. Blossom Tree		<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Dusty Boots	7. Roger James				
3. Earl Grey	8. August Caesar				
4. Robin Hood	9. Sierra Leone				
5. Mary Contrary	10. Apple Orchard				
<b>Cromwell Party</b>					
1. Terry Teller	6. Orion Belt				<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Jane Doe	7. Anita Patel				
3. John Smith	8. Blu Sapphire				
4. Harper Graham	9. William Finn				
5. Benedict Eggs	10. Santa Valentine				
<b>Nightingale Party</b>					
1. Charles Bucket	6. Basil Bush		<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Kris Kringle	7. Sunny Day				
3. Hamish Scot	8. Rain Storm				
4. Pepper Pott	9. April Showers				
5. Susannah Salt	10. Winston Wonder				
<b>Pelican Party</b>					
1. Michael Angelos	6. Victoria Line		<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. Suki Moon	7. Briana Spears				
3. River Deep	8. Sandy Shore				
4. May Day	9. Roman Ruin				
5. Dallas Cowboy	10. Edward Conquerer				
<b>Tudor Party</b>					
1. Leif Fall	6. Jemima Duck		<input type="checkbox"/>		
2. William Shakes	7. Lincoln President				
3. Grace Period	8. Satsuma Kyoto				
4. Coral Reef	9. November Rain				
5. Vincent Flowers	10. Windy Miller				
<b>Baker, Cupcake</b>					
Independent			<input type="checkbox"/>		

# Appendix C

## List of Regional Returning Officers in the UK

<b>Electoral region</b>	<b>Regional Returning Officer</b>
East Midlands	David Cook, Kettering Borough Council
Eastern	Steve Packham, Chelmsford City Council
London	Barry Quirk, London Borough of Lewisham
North East	Dave Smith, Sunderland City Council
North West	Sir Howard Bernstein, Manchester City Council
South East	Mark Heath, Southampton City Council
South West	Paul Morris, Borough of Poole Council
West Midlands	Mark Rogers, Birmingham City Council
Yorkshire and the Humber	Tom Riordan, Leeds City Council
Northern Ireland	Graham Shields, Chief Electoral Officer
Scotland	Mary Pitcaithly, Falkirk Council
Wales	Bryn Parry-Jones, Pembrokeshire County Council

# Appendix D

## Public awareness campaign images



**If you're not registered, you can't vote.**

To make sure you can vote in the elections in your area on 22 May, check you are registered.

**Register by 6 May.**

It's your vote, don't lose it

The Electoral Commission



**UK expats, you can vote from abroad.**  
Simply register now for the European Parliamentary elections.

 **REGISTER TO VOTE NOW**

The Electoral Commission

For further information and a form visit [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces)



**Elections in your area, 22 May**  
If you're not registered, you can't vote  
Click here and register by 6 May

The Electoral Commission

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Email: [publications@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:publications@electoralcommission.org.uk)