

Inquiry report: the voting registration process for EU citizens resident in the UK for the 2019 European Parliamentary elections held in the UK | Electoral Commission Search

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of 7 May 2019. Our evidence included: calls made and emails sent to our enquiry lines formal complaints made directly to us concerns raised by MPs – via parliamentary questions and correspondence (before and after the elections) about the registration process for EU citizens and EU citizens being unable to vote feedback from members of the Electoral Co-ordination and Advisory Board (ECAB) – a group coordinated by the Electoral Commission and the Cabinet Office (which brings together the 12 Regional Returning Officers from across the UK), on their experiences relating to the registration and participation of EU citizens and what activity they carried out to tell EU citizens what they had to do in order to be able to vote in the European Parliamentary elections feedback from electoral administrators about the challenges they faced in relation to EU citizens registering to vote and voting data from Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) about how many citizens of other EU Member States were registered to vote at the 2019 European Parliamentary elections, and who had been included in the May 2019 local government register. The process for registering to vote for citizens of other EU Member States EU citizens' right to vote Citizens of all EU Member States living in the UK are entitled to register and vote at European Parliamentary elections. This includes EU citizens who are not British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizens. British citizens resident in Gibraltar are entitled to register to vote at European Parliamentary elections in the South West electoral region. Legal requirements for registering to vote EU citizens (other than British citizens, and citizens of the Republic of Ireland, Cyprus and Malta) had to complete and submit an additional declaration if they wanted to vote in the UK at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections, even if they were already registered to vote for local government elections in the UK. If they preferred, EU citizens living in the UK could choose to vote in the country where they held citizenship instead, and they did not have to submit a declaration in the UK to do so. The deadline for submitting an application and declaration ahead of the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections was midnight on Tuesday 7 May 2019 (12 working days before polling day). This was the same as the deadline for applications by any other eligible citizens to apply to register to vote at the 23 May elections. Practical requirements for registering to vote Applying to register to vote Citizens of other EU Member States could apply online to register to vote in the same way as UK or Commonwealth citizens. If their application was determined successful by the ERO they would be included in the register and able to vote at local government elections. Alternatively, they could download and complete a paper application form, which they would need to submit and ensure was received by their local ERO before the deadline. Paper application forms were available to download from the UK Government's register to vote website. Completing the declaration In addition to applying to register to vote, citizens of other EU Member States also needed to download and complete a paper application form which included the necessary declaration (commonly referred to as a 'UC1' form) in order to be included in the register for European Parliamentary elections. This form was available on our Your Vote Matters website from 2 April 2019. These electors could also have requested a copy of the form from their local ERO, and in many cases would have been sent the form directly by their ERO. They needed to send the signed declaration form to their local ERO. EROs could only determine applications and declarations which they had received by the deadline of midnight on Tuesday 7 May 2019. Electors could not complete and submit this declaration online as the law requires it to include a signature; however, electors could have submitted a scanned copy of the completed form as an attachment to an e-mail. Promoting awareness of the registration process for citizens of other EU

Member States What we did Contacts with Cabinet Office On 9 January 2019 the Commission's chair, Sir John Holmes, had a meeting with Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP, in his capacity as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and a senior Cabinet Office minister. At this meeting our contingency planning work in relation to scheduled and unscheduled electoral events, including the potential for European Parliamentary elections in the UK, was discussed. Our contingency plans were also the subject of a meeting between our staff and Cabinet Office officials on 25 January 2019. On 6 March 2019 our Chief Executive, Bob Posner, had a meeting with the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP. At this meeting, we outlined its intention to publish guidance as part of its contingency planning for potential European Parliamentary elections. Further to these meetings, our Chief Executive wrote on 29 March 2019 to David Lidington about the ongoing uncertainty about whether the European Parliamentary elections would be held in the UK. He highlighted the fixed dates in the electoral timetable and the extent to which this limited the available time for prudent operational and regulatory preparations. In particular, he highlighted the need for the UK Government to provide assurances for Returning Officers about the reimbursement of any reasonable spending by them on contingency preparations. After the date on which the UK had been due to leave the EU, 29 March, the UK Government wrote to Returning Officers on Monday 1 April, confirming that they would be reimbursed for any expenditure on activity necessarily undertaken to prepare for the possibility of a European Parliamentary elections. Guidance and advice to EROs Before any electoral event, we provide guidance and advice to ROs and EROs to support and encourage their provision of a high quality service for voters. In addition, the Electoral Coordination and Advisory Board (a UK-wide body which is co-chaired by us and Cabinet Office, which brings together key stakeholders from across the electoral community, including the 12 Regional Returning Officers) held a series of teleconferences in the lead up to the European Parliamentary elections to review contingency planning for the then unconfirmed poll. The first of these teleconferences took place on 11 March 2019. The registration and participation of EU citizens was raised formally as an issue at the ECAB teleconference on 29 March 2019. We provided additional support to electors and electoral administrators by amending the existing UC1 form with supplementary information such as new deadlines and qualifying EU member states since the last polls, and circulated guidance on registering EU citizens to all EROs and ROs on 4 April 2019, advising EROs on sending declaration forms to EU citizens. Direct public awareness activity We have a statutory duty to promote public awareness of electoral systems (and connected matters). Each year, we run a voter registration campaign ahead of scheduled elections to make sure that eligible voters are aware of the need to be registered, and also that they know there is a deadline by which they need to do this. While we maintain contingency plans for unscheduled polls, the late confirmation that the 2019 European Parliamentary elections would be held in the UK significantly reduced our planning and set up time. We would normally run a campaign for a scheduled poll of this significance over a period of four to six weeks – and it would have been many months in the planning – but due to the late announcement and enabling by government of these elections proceeding, we only had two and a half weeks from launch to the registration deadline. Activity to raise awareness with citizens of other EU Member States During those two and a half weeks, we ran a mass campaign, delivered through TV advertising, to reach as many eligible voters as possible. This was supported by targeted digital advertising to reach our under-registered groups. These are primarily those who have recently moved house, and those aged 18-34. Additionally, in

this case, that included those who had not had local elections earlier in May. As well as promoting awareness among UK and eligible Commonwealth citizens ahead of the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections, we used our own channels and platforms to promote the need for citizens of other EU Member States to complete the UC1 declaration if they wanted to vote in the UK. This included promoting messages on our social media channels , providing information on our [yourvotematters.co.uk](http://yourvotematters.co.uk) website , and producing a briefing pack for local authorities and other partner organisations to help them carry out their own awareness work. One of our Twitter posts on 24 April, which reminded EU citizens to submit their declaration forms, was retweeted over 1,500 times and liked over 800 times. The UC1 form itself was added to the 'What does the European Parliament do?' page of our Your Vote Matters website on 2 April. This was followed by additional information for EU citizens in mid-April highlighting the need to complete an additional form. This content was in line with that provided to EU citizens in 2014. We also proactively promoted those resources through an edition of our Roll Call newsletter on 30 April, through our 'Delivering Democracy' Facebook group with local authorities (where it was seen by well over 100 members), and directly with a variety of organisations relevant to citizens of other EU Member States in the UK. This included contacting 24 Member State Embassies. What the UK Government did The UK Government was responsible for the design and messaging on the register to vote website. This included information and messages for citizens of other EU Member States who wanted to vote at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections in the UK. On 10 April the Cabinet Office Minister made the legislation which set the date of polling day for the 2019 European Parliamentary elections in the UK. Once that legislation had been made, the Cabinet Office updated the information provided on the landing page of the register to vote website to include messaging for citizens of other EU Member States who wanted to vote. The link to 'about voting in the European Parliament elections if you're an EU citizen living in the UK ' took users to the GOV.UK European Parliament page . This contained a more detailed explanation of how to register to vote, and included a link to the Your Vote Matters website page where users could download what was described as the ' European Parliament voter registration form ' . We understand that the Cabinet Office considered whether it would be possible to improve navigation and develop additional functionality for the register to vote website, once it had become clear that the UK would take part in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. This included considering how to allow citizens of other EU Member States who applied to register to vote through the website to also receive the UC1 form directly. However, officials concluded that there was not enough time to develop, appropriately test, and implement this functionality in the period available. Cabinet Office also considered adding new messaging for citizens of other EU Member States within the user journey for people applying to register to vote online. Officials concluded that it would not be possible to add this without displaying the message to all users when it was relevant to only EU citizens – which they estimated to be about 10% of total applicants. Cabinet Office has reported that there were 235,382 views of the GOV.UK European Parliament page, 25% of which came directly from the link on the Register to Vote homepage. What Electoral Registration Officers did Activity by EROs We asked the Regional Returning Officers for feedback on their experiences relating to the registration and participation of EU citizens. We also asked them about the activity EROs in their electoral region carried out to tell EU citizens what they had to do in order to be able to vote in the European Parliamentary elections. The Association of s also sent out a post-election survey to its members to ask them what they did. Most

responses included reference to their local authority working hard to send out forms, and complete follow up actions as soon as the polls had been confirmed, but also that the process was difficult and restricted due to the timing and the legislation around EU electors. Some examples of what EROs did, included: emails and/or letters sent to all eligible EU nationals telling them that they were eligible to vote in the European Parliamentary elections and that they had to complete and return the UC1 form if they wanted to vote in the UK follow up reminder emails and letters providing all the necessary information, including clear instructions on when EU citizens had to complete and return the UC1 form by, on council websites and related social media targeting messaging to areas with known high concentrations of EU citizens Sending out UC1 forms After the elections we contacted EROs across the UK to ask them to tell us how many UC1 forms they had sent to citizens of other EU Member States who were already registered as local government electors. This indicates that approximately 2.4 million forms were sent out. However, it is not clear that these are all forms sent out to unique electors and it is likely that the figure includes some reminders issued by ERO. We also asked when the forms were sent to electors and the majority of EROs were able to provide this breakdown. However, the data we have received (see chart below) commonly relates to when EROs sent forms to be printed and then dispatched – not when they were directly posted to electors. The data we have received suggests that more than three quarters of all forms had been sent for print and dispatch by 18 April 2019. That is within the two week period after the Commission had emailed EROs to remind them of the need to contact citizens of other EU Member States. Chart 1: UC1 forms: Dates of print and dispatch Feedback from EROs and electoral administrators indicates that, where they held email addresses, some EROs decided to send copies of the UC1 form by email to citizens of other EU Member States who were already included in the local government register. If these emails were recorded as undelivered, they then sent a hard copy form to the elector at their registered address. Feedback from EROs on the challenges they faced After the elections we asked electoral administrations to give us feedback on their experience of running the European Parliamentary elections, and to tell us about any challenges they faced in relation to EU citizens registering to vote and voting. Many of those who responded to our survey talked about the impact of the period of uncertainty about whether the elections would go ahead in the UK, and the late confirmation that it would be held. Where local elections were also held in May, administrators told us they were under considerable pressure and in some instances unable to send UC1 forms to EU citizens as early as they would have wanted or follow up non-responders as they would have done in previous polls. Other issues included: there was a lack of understanding by EU citizens of what they had to do in order to be able to vote UC1 forms were returned after the deadline or with errors some administrators experienced blame on polling day when EU citizens realised that they were unable to vote electoral management software was not 100% up to speed to cope with the volume and processing of UC1s. Impact on EU citizens How many EU citizens were included in the register After the elections we contacted EROs across the UK to ask them to give us information about how many citizens of other EU Member States were registered to vote at the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. We also asked for information about the number of citizens of other EU Member States who had been included in the May 2019 local government register. European Parliamentary electoral data and information from EROs about citizens of other EU Member States This shows that approximately 450,000 (21%) of citizens of other EU Member States who had been included in the May 2019 local government register were also registered to vote in the European Parliamentary

elections in the UK on 23 May 2019. This proportion varied considerably across individual local authority areas, although three quarters of all EROs who returned data to us reported that between 10% and 30% of citizens of other EU Member States who had been included in the May local government register were also registered to vote in the European Parliamentary elections in the UK on 23 May 2019. We cannot know how many of those who were not registered to vote at the European Parliamentary elections in the UK may have wanted to vote in the UK but were not able to submit the declaration in time before the deadline. Equally, it is not possible to assess how many of these people opted to vote in the EU Member State where they held citizenship, or actively decided not to vote in the election at all. Overall, an estimated 37.2% of all registered electors turned out to vote at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections in the UK. Turnout at the European Parliamentary elections in the UK in 2014 was 35.4%. Comparison with the 2014 European Parliamentary elections Our estimates of the completeness of the local government electoral registers have found that citizens from other EU Member States are less likely to have complete electoral register entries (i.e. be included in the register at their current address) than UK citizens. In Great Britain, the rate of completeness among citizens of other EU Member States was estimated to be 54% in December 2018 (similar to the 53% we found in February/March 2014). This compares to 86% for UK and Irish citizens in December 2018. After the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections we asked EROs to tell us how many citizens of other EU Member States had been added to the register of European Parliamentary electors through the interim notices of alteration to the registers (in the weeks before the registration deadline). We received data covering all but five areas, which showed that approximately 400,000 citizens of other EU Member States were added to the registers ahead of the 2019 elections. Figures from 2014, when 29 EROs were unable to provide data to us, shows that approximately 325,000 citizens of other EU Member States were added to the registers ahead of the May 2014 European Parliamentary elections. However, drawing any comparison between the 2014 and 2019 data is difficult because of the different levels of non-response from EROs, the increase in the absolute number of eligible EU citizens in the UK between 2014 and 2019, and the earlier issue of UC1 forms in 2014 (which might have meant that more electors were added to the register of European Parliamentary electors in the period before the interim notices of alteration). The reasons why some EU citizens were unable to vote We have looked at evidence from a wide range of sources where concerns were raised about EU citizens being unable to vote in the May 2019 in the UK European Parliamentary elections. These sources included: 149 calls made and emails sent directly to the Electoral Commission's enquiry line 618 formal complaints raised directly with the Electoral Commission - we looked at a sample of these complaints which confirmed that they matched the findings from our other data sources concerns raised by MPs – via parliamentary questions and correspondence - before and after the elections raising the issue of EU citizens not being able to register to vote and vote We found that the reasons why some EU citizens were unable to vote fell into three main areas. It is also likely that some citizens of other EU Member States may have chosen to vote in the country where they held citizenship, either because this is something they have previously done or because they did not think that the UK would take part in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. However, there is no available data on the number of people who actually chose this option. EU citizens who were not aware of the declaration requirement EU citizens who were not aware of the declaration requirement The most frequently cited concern was that some citizens of other EU

Member States were not aware that they needed to complete an additional declaration in order to be included in the register of European Parliamentary electors. This accounted for over half of the queries that we received from EU citizens and most of those we received from a family member on their behalf. It included people who: had successfully completed an application to register to vote (as a local government elector), but did not realise that a further declaration was needed to be able to vote in the European Parliamentary elections in the UK said that the acknowledgement that confirmed they were registered to vote as a local government elector did not tell them that a further declaration was needed, and therefore assumed that this meant they were also registered to vote in European Parliamentary elections in the UK had received a declaration form from their ERO, but didn't understand that they needed to complete it to be able to vote in the European Parliamentary elections in the UK EU citizens who had not submitted a declaration in time EU citizens who had not submitted a declaration in time A smaller number of queries were from citizens of other EU Member States who had understood that they would need to complete a separate declaration in order to be included in the register of European Parliamentary electors, but were unable to submit it before the deadline on 7 May 2019. This included people who: said that they had not received a declaration form from their ERO but found out about the requirement from another source; had downloaded, completed and submitted the form by post, but found it had not been received by the ERO before the deadline said that they had not received a declaration form from their ERO but found out about it from contacting their ERO regarding other issues but too late to be able to submit the declaration had received a declaration form from their ERO, but had not had enough time to complete and submit it by post to the ERO before the deadline EU citizens who submitted a declaration in time but were still unable to vote EU citizens who submitted a declaration in time but were still unable to vote Around a sixth of queries, almost all received directly from citizens of other EU Member States, highlighted that they had been able to complete and submit a declaration before the deadline on 7 May 2019, but found they were still unable to vote. This included people who: had completed and submitted the declaration form by email or by using an online service, but said that the ERO would not accept a submission in that way believed that they had completed and submitted the declaration form by post before the deadline, but said that the ERO claimed they had not received the form by the deadline believed that they had completed and submitted the declaration form by post before the deadline, but said that they were not included in the register of European Parliamentary electors on polling day because of a clerical error by the ERO. Key dates in the lead-up to the elections Key dates in the lead-up to the elections 2019 European Parliamentary elections: chronology of events Date Event July 2014 We publish a report on the administration of the May 2014 European Parliamentary elections in the UK. The report highlights the need to simplify the registration process for citizens of other EU Member States in time for the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. November 2014 The House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee publishes Fourth Report of Session 2014-15, Voter engagement in the UK. It recommends that we should run a specific campaign aimed at Commonwealth citizens and citizens of other EU Member States resident in the UK on eligibility and how to register to vote. It also recommends that we should bring forward proposals for simplifying the process for EU citizens living in the UK to register to vote at European Parliamentary elections promptly, so that changes can be made before the next elections in 2019. December 2014 Our staff attend initial meeting with Cabinet Office officials on registration process for EU citizens along

with members of other representative groups. January 2015 UK Government responds to European Commission request for information about how it plans to remedy the electoral registration difficulties encountered by some EU citizens living in the UK at the May 2014 European Parliamentary elections. We understand that the UK Government informed the European Commission that it intended to remedy these issues through legislation or practice, with the aim of having a solution in place before the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. February 2015 UK Government publishes response to Political and Constitutional Affairs Committee's report on Voter engagement in the UK, confirming that 'Cabinet Office plans further discussions with us and other electoral stakeholders on the registration process for EU citizens to consider ways to simplify the process for EU citizens living in the UK to register to vote at EP and local elections'. 7 May 2015 UK Parliamentary general election: polling day. 23 June 2016 European Union referendum: polling day. 16 March 2017 European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act receives Royal Assent. 29 March 2017 UK Government issues notice of the UK's withdrawal from the EU under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union. The default EU exit date under Article 50 is defined as 29 March 2019, before the next scheduled European Parliamentary elections in May 2019. 8 June 2017 UK Parliamentary general election: polling day. 13 July 2017 The UK Government introduces the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. This includes from 'exit day' the repealing of legislation governing the UK's participation in European Parliamentary elections (i.e. the European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002 and the European Parliament (Representation) Act 2003). The Bill also includes delegated powers enabling the repeal of other relevant provisions through secondary legislation. 27 March 2018 We receive confirmation that our 2018-19 budget bid had been approved by Speaker's Committee, including contingency funding for possible European Parliamentary elections in May 2019. 14 May 2018 Minister for the Constitution Chloe Smith MP confirms in replying to a written Parliamentary Question that the UK will not be taking part in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. The Minister states that the UK Government therefore does not intend to make an Order setting the date of the poll for the European Parliamentary elections in 2019; nor will it undertake the usual preparations for Information Exchange between the UK and the Member States in respect of EU citizens (including UK citizens) living in another Member State. The Minister also confirms that the UK Government has written to every local authority Returning Officer to inform them of the cancellation of the 2019 European Parliamentary election in the UK. 31 May 2018 Minister for the Constitution Chloe Smith MP writes to Sir John Holmes, Chair of the Electoral Commission, expressing the UK Government's view that 'it would not be prudent for money to be spent preparing for elections that the Government is clear will not take place'. 26 June 2018 The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill receives Royal Assent. Schedule 9 provides for the repeal of the two main Acts governing the conduct of European Parliamentary elections: the European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002 and the European Parliament (Representation) Act 2003. However, these repealing provisions would only commence on 'exit day', then defined as 29 March 2019. 3 December 2018 The European Parliamentary Elections Etc. (Repeal, Revocation, Amendment and Saving Provisions) (United Kingdom and Gibraltar) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 are made. The Regulations provide for the repeal or revocation of all provisions not included in the 2002 Act and the 2003 Act in relation to the franchise and the registration of electors in respect of European Parliamentary elections in the UK and Gibraltar and in relation to the conduct and administration of those elections, including provisions in respect of election expenditure in the UK and Gibraltar. They would



come into force on 'exit day'. 15 January 2019 House of Commons votes against UK Government's Withdrawal Agreement in the first 'meaningful vote'. 23 January 2019 Regulated period for political parties and non-party campaigners begins. 11 March 2019 First weekly teleconference of the Electoral Coordination and Advisory Board. 12 March 2019 House of Commons votes against UK Government's Withdrawal Agreement in the second 'meaningful vote'. 28 March 2019 We receive confirmation that its 2019-20 budget bid had been approved by Speaker's Committee, including contingency funding for possible European Parliamentary elections in May 2019. 21 March 2019 The European Council agrees to an extension of Article 50, meaning Brexit will no longer happen on 29 March 2019. The extension will be until 22 May 2019, provided the Withdrawal Agreement is approved the following week. If not the European Council agrees to an extension until 12 April 2019 and expects the UK to indicate a way forward before this date for consideration by the European Council. 29 March 2019 House of Commons votes against UK Government's Withdrawal Agreement in the third 'meaningful vote'. Our Chief Executive, Bob Posner, writes to Cabinet Minister David Lidington highlighting the ongoing uncertainty about whether the European Parliamentary elections will be held in the UK and on the need for assurances to Returning Officers that they will be reimbursed for any reasonable spending on contingency preparations. 1 April 2019 Cabinet Minister David Lidington writes to Returning Officers: 'Cabinet Office is therefore confirming that Returning Officers will be reimbursed in the usual way for any expenditure on activity that is necessarily undertaken, at this stage and in the coming weeks, to prepare for the possibility of European Parliamentary elections on Thursday 23 May 2019'. 4 April 2019 We advise Electoral Registration Officers on the sending of UC1 declaration forms to EU citizens. 8 April 2019 European Parliamentary Elections (Appointed Day of Poll) Order 2019 made and laid (came into force on 10 April 2019). 10 April 2019 The UK and EU27 agree a further extension of Article 50 until 31 October 2019, with the possibility of leaving earlier if the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified by both parties before this date. The conclusions state that 'If the UK is still a Member of the EU on 23-26 May 2019 and if it has not ratified the Withdrawal Agreement by 22 May 2019, it must hold the elections to the European Parliament in accordance with Union law. If the United Kingdom fails to live up to this obligation, the withdrawal will take place on 1 June 2019'. 12 April 2019 Deadline for receiving electoral registration applications for 2 May local council and mayoral elections (midnight). 2 May 2019 Local council and mayoral elections (England and Northern Ireland): polling day. 6 May 2019 Bank holiday across UK. 7 May 2019 Cabinet Minister David Lidington confirms the UK will take part in European Parliamentary elections on 23 May. Deadline for receiving electoral registration applications for European Parliamentary elections (midnight). Deadline for receipt of UC1 declaration forms (midnight). 8 May 2019 Cabinet Minister David Lidington confirms it is no longer possible for Parliament to legislate to cancel European Parliamentary elections. 23 May 2019 European Parliamentary elections (UK and Gibraltar): polling day. Background to the policy and legislation Background to the policy and legislation In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty extended the right to vote and stand as a candidate at European Parliamentary and local government elections in each EU Member State to citizens of other Member States who were resident there. Citizens of Cyprus and Malta were already entitled to vote in European Parliamentary elections in the UK by virtue of their status as Commonwealth citizens. A European Council directive set out the detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote at European Parliamentary elections: citizens of other EU Member States should have to complete the same process as national citizens in

each country to register to vote, but they would also need to submit an additional declaration stating that they would only exercise their right to vote in the Member State where they were living. The UK Parliament subsequently legislated for this declaration requirement, which would only be valid for 12 months after submission.

Changes to legislation before 2014 In 2001, the UK Parliament approved changes to the declaration process for citizens of other Member States to be included in the register for European Parliamentary elections in the UK, to reflect the introduction of rolling electoral registration. Under the new system, eligible citizens could apply to register to vote at any time of the year and would be added to the register by updates published at the beginning of each month. This meant that there was now a deadline for registration applications ahead of any election at 12 working days before polling day. The same deadline would apply to declarations by citizens of other EU Member States ahead of European Parliamentary elections. In 2013, the UK Parliament approved changes to the requirements and process for registering to vote in Great Britain, to move to a system of individual electoral registration. This system had already been introduced in Northern Ireland, since 2003. From June 2014 in England and Wales, September 2014 in Scotland, and June 2018 in Northern Ireland, citizens could also apply to register to vote using an online service. This included citizens of EU Member States applying to register to vote in local government elections. Parliament did not change the requirements for applications and declarations by citizens of other EU Member States to be included in the register of European Parliamentary electors following the introduction of individual electoral registration or online registration. The online service was not configured to allow citizens of other Member States to submit the additional application and declaration needed to be included in the register of European Parliamentary electors. The 2014 European Parliamentary elections In our statutory election report published in July 2014, we highlighted that citizens of other EU Member States living in the UK had experienced problems at the May 2014 European Parliamentary elections. We found that a significant number of citizens of other EU Member States resident and registered to vote in the UK who wanted to vote in the UK at the May 2014 European Parliamentary elections were unable to. This was because they had not successfully completed the necessary declaration. We said that we would work with the UK Government, EROs and organisations representing citizens of other EU Member States in the UK to identify what could be done to simplify the system and remove unnecessary administrative barriers to participation, so that this problem did not affect electors at the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. In particular, we said that we would consider whether legislation could be changed so that in future, citizens of other EU Member States did not need to complete more than one electoral registration form to be able to vote at European Parliamentary elections in the UK. We said that we would make any recommendations to the UK Government in sufficient time for any changes to legislation to be introduced ahead of the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. During autumn 2014 we were able to begin productive discussions with representative groups such as the New Europeans campaign group. These discussions aimed to analyse the problems with electoral registration for citizens of other EU Member States living in the UK, and to begin the process of identifying proposals for changes to the process for future European Parliamentary elections. During these discussions we identified that UK electoral law would need to be changed to make the improvements that would be needed. This meant the UK Government would need to develop and introduce new legislation. In December 2014 our staff attended an initial meeting with Cabinet Office officials to discuss options for resolving this issue, along with

members of groups representing citizens of other EU Member States living in the UK. The UK Government indicated in February 2015 that it planned further discussions with the Commission and other stakeholders on the registration process for EU citizens, but no such discussions were held. Immediately after the June 2015 UK Parliamentary general election the Government introduced legislation to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. Following the result of the June 2016 referendum, the UK Government issued notice of the UK's withdrawal from the EU under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, with a default exit date defined as 29 March 2019. The UK Government made clear that the UK would not be required to take part in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. [Related content Report: May 2019 European Parliamentary elections and local elections](#) [Read our report about the 2019 European Parliamentary elections and local elections](#) [Results and turnout at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections](#) [View the results and turnout at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections](#) [Past elections and referendums](#) [Read our reports and view data about past elections and referendums](#) [Types of elections](#) about the types of elections in the UK.