Scale of UK's European elections vote scandal "staggering", says campaign group

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News

New figures suggest as many as 1.6 million EU citizens in the UK may have been denied a vote in the recent European Parliamentary elections.

Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

New figures released on Tuesday suggest that as many as 1.6 million EU citizens in the UK may have been denied a vote in the recent European Parliamentary elections.

Tens of thousands of Britons abroad are also feared to have missed out due to the late arrival of postal ballot papers.

Reforms to the registration system were promised by the UK Electoral commission and the UK's

Cabinet Office but, according to a campaign group, "were not carried through."

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A petition calling for a public inquiry into the #DeniedMyVote "scandal" has already reached over 123,000 signatures in less than a week. Newly re-elected UK MEP Claude Moraes, the former chair of the assembly's influential Civil Liberties Committee, has also called for a UK government inquiry.

EU citizens had the right to vote either in the UK or in their member state of origin but had to complete a supplementary form to state their preference.

EU citizens needed to complete the 'UCI' forms to declare they will only vote in the UK, as well as registering online to be on the electoral register.

Campaign group New Europeans has written to Electoral Registration Officers around the UK to ask how many of the supplementary forms that EU citizens had to complete were sent out and how many were sent back.

Based on the figures New Europeans has received back so far, between 9 and 35 percent of EU citizens returned the forms - the average return rate is 23 percent.

> "We warned the UK government that the problems we uncovered in 2014 would reoccur and proposed remedial measures including stocking UCI forms in polling stations. However, the government chose to ignore our advice" **Roger Casale of New Europeans**

Commenting on the findings, Roger Casale of New Europeans, said, "The figures reinforce our worst fears that up to two million EU citizens may have been denied a vote in The European Parliamentary elections."

"We warned the UK government that the problems we uncovered in 2014 would reoccur and proposed remedial measures including stocking UCI forms in polling stations. However, the government chose to ignore our advice.

Casale called for a public inquiry, "to find out how this occurred, who is responsible and to make sure this never happens again."

The former British Labour MP added, "Even allowing for the fact that some EU citizens may have chosen to vote in their member states of origin rather than in the UK, the scale of the denied vote scandal is staggering."

"It is particularly galling because our findings mirror our research following the European elections in 2014, when we identified a similar scale of voter disenfranchisement, at that time in the region of just under one million votes denied."

"We urge all who believe that democracy should be about maximising participation and not the mass exclusion of those eligible to vote to share and sign the petition."

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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