

## UK Government under fire from Electoral Commission for democracy failings

Written by Martin Banks on 11 October 2019 in News  
News

The UK Government has come under heavy criticism from the country's Electoral Commission for failing to “ensure adequate levels of democracy”, including the “exclusion” of up to 1.7 million EU citizens from May’s European elections.



*Photo credit: Press Association*

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An investigation by the UK Electoral Commission accuses the Government of failing to act on the Commission’s recommendations following the 2014 EU elections when hundreds of thousands of EU citizens were denied the vote.

The Government is also accused of frustrating the ability of people who were eligible to vote in the European elections in 2019 from being able to do so and failing to implement reforms to the registration process for EU citizens living in the UK who wished to vote.

The Electoral Commission also said UK Electoral Registration Officers were not able to send out the necessary forms to EU citizens in time and some British overseas voters who were eligible to vote were unable to do so.

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It is claimed that UK Government policy led to four out of every five continental EU citizens in the UK (1.7 million) not submitting an additional declaration in time to be allowed to vote at the European Parliament elections earlier this year.

A civil rights organisation, New Europeans, says "it is likely that the Government's actions affected the outcome of the elections."

Commenting on its findings, the Electoral Commission said, "The experience of EU citizens at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections in the UK illustrates the impact of making significant decisions about elections without thinking through all the possible contingencies and making sure the interests of voters are always put first."

"By not taking steps to proactively identify alternative solutions soon after the 2014 election, and then simply assuming there was no chance of European elections happening again, the UK Government missed the opportunity to legislate for improvements to the process for future elections."

"The experience of EU citizens at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections in the UK illustrates the impact of making significant decisions about elections without thinking through all the possible contingencies" **UK Electoral Commission**

The report has been welcomed by New Europeans, which has campaigned since 2013 for the rights of EU citizens.

Speaking on Friday following the publication of the report, Roger Casale, a former Labour MP and CEO of New Europeans told this website, "The report is a vindication of our #DeniedMyVote campaign and in particular our estimate that over one million EU citizens and Britons abroad may have been excluded from the EU election – an election which saw the Brexit Party emerge with the largest number of seats of any UK party in the European Parliament."

"EU citizens in the UK have been the victims of institutional racism. The mass exclusion of EU citizens from the European elections was not a matter of chance but rather the deliberate outcome of the Government's failure to remedy known flaws in the system."

“By not remedying those known flaws, the Government deliberately presided over a situation in which literally millions of eligible voters were discriminated against in such an appalling way that 1.7 million of them were not allowed to vote, despite being registered UK electors.”

Casale added, “We continue to call for a full public inquiry to make sure that nothing like this can ever happen again and we will also continue to raise the matter with the appropriate committees in the European Parliament in anticipation of the European Commission’s forthcoming report on the conduct of the European elections in the UK and other Member States of the EU.”

“The report is a vindication of our #DeniedMyVote campaign and in particular our estimate that over one million EU citizens and Britons abroad may have been excluded from the EU election – an election which saw the Brexit Party emerge with the largest number of seats of any UK party in the European Parliament” **Roger Casale, New Europeans**

Campaigners first raised the alarm about the possibility that hundreds of thousands of eligible voters would be excluded from the European elections.

Following the elections, New Europeans sent a dossier of evidence to the European Parliament, pointing to a “systematic attempt by the UK Government to exclude EU citizens and Britons abroad.”

### **About the author**

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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