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Briefing

Voting in the European Parliament Elections

The UK was scheduled to leave the European Union (EU) at the end of March ('Brexit'), but because no agreement was reached, this deadline has now been extended to 31 October 2019. If, however, the UK and EU ratify a withdrawal agreement before then, the UK will leave on the first day of the following month. So the earliest the UK could now leave the EU would be 1 June.

Elections for the European Parliament are due to take place in all EU countries on Thursday 23 May 2019, and since the UK is still a member of the EU, an election will take place even though those elected as Members of the European Parliament may only serve for a short time. Despite this, it is important that as many people as possible vote to ensure that the views of Scottish people are represented in Europe while the UK is still a member.

Please circulate this issue of MEMO+ among your membership and encourage everyone to vote!

The European Parliament consists of 751 MEPs, 73 of whom represent the UK. The UK is divided into 12 electoral and each of these elects between 3 and 10 MEPs depending on the size of the population in that area. The whole of Scotland is a single electoral region, and will elect 6 MEPs by a system of proportional representation.

If you are at least 18 years old and your name is on the Electoral Register you will automatically receive a polling card and be able to vote. If you are unable to go to the polling station you can still vote by post or can name another person to vote on your behalf at the polling station (voting by proxy) provided your name is on the register by the date below.

If you are not sure whether or not you are registered to vote, you can find out by contacting your local Electoral Registration Officer. Contact details for all Electoral Registration Officers are available [here](#).

If your name is not currently on the Electoral Register, you can [register online](#), or contact your local Electoral Registration Officer to ask for a paper application form. The deadline for registration is 7th May.

Citizens of other European countries living in the UK may vote in the UK if they are listed in the Electoral Register. However, with the exception of citizens of Ireland, Malta, and Cyprus, they must also complete a [European Parliament voter registration form](#) to confirm that they will vote only in the UK and not in their home country.

Important dates for the European Parliament election

7 May 2019	Deadline for registering to vote
8 May 2019	Deadline for a) applying for a new postal vote b) changing or cancelling an existing postal or proxy vote c) returning a European Parliament voter registration form
15 May 2019	Deadline for applying for a new proxy vote. <i>Note: if you are prevented from voting by a medical emergency, you may apply for a proxy vote any time until 5pm on polling day.</i>
23 May 2019	Polling day – vote between 7am and 10pm.

How to vote

The ballot paper will list the political parties in alphabetical order of party name followed by any independent candidates. The candidates standing for each party will be listed under the name of their party. However, voters can only choose the party they prefer, not a named candidate.

Vote by putting one X beside the political party or independent candidate that you want to support.

Click on the links below to the candidate lists in Scotland for each of the main political parties contesting the election.

[Scottish National Party](#)

[Labour Party](#)

[Green Party](#)

[Brexit Party](#)

[Conservative Party](#)

[Liberal Democrat Party](#)

[United Kingdom Independence Party](#)

[Change UK](#)

How your vote counts

The European Parliament election uses a party list system similar to that used to elect Regional MSPs to the Scottish Parliament. It is different from the systems used in Westminster General Elections and Scottish local Council elections.

The form of proportional representation (known as the **d'Hondt** system) used in the European Parliament election aims to equalise as nearly as possible the number of votes needed by each candidate in order to be elected. This is done by allocating a proportion of the party's votes to those of its candidates who have already been elected, and then considering which party has the largest remaining number of unallocated votes.

The six Scottish seats are allocated one by one in six separate rounds of counting:

- 1) In the first round of counting, the party with the most votes wins a seat for the candidate at the top of its list.
- 2) In the second round, the total number of votes originally received by the party that won the first seat is divided by 2. Half of their votes are allocated to the seat already won, and the other half remain in the contest. The second seat is won by the party that now has the largest number of the unallocated votes.
- 3) In each subsequent round, the total number of votes originally received by each party is divided by the number of seats it has already won plus 1 (so if it has one seat then its number of votes is halved; if it has won two seats, then the number of votes it originally received is divided by 3, and so on), and the next seat is won by the party that then has the highest number of the remaining votes. This pattern is repeated for six rounds, until all of the available seats have been allocated.
- 4) Each political party fills the seats it has won with its candidates, in the order in which they were listed on the ballot paper. Voters cannot influence this order.

[Click here](#) for an illustration of the d'Hondt system.

Because the votes received by the largest parties are increasingly disregarded in the later rounds, it is possible for parties with a small share of the vote to win seats disproportionately in the final stages. Consequently this voting system can result in small – and sometimes extremist – parties winning more influence than their support warrants. This is more likely if there is a low turn-out, that is, if only a small percentage of the population votes in the election.

Election Results

Ballot papers can be opened and the count can begin immediately after polling stations close at 10pm but Returning Officers may choose to delay starting the count until the following day, especially in areas that have to wait for ballot boxes to be delivered from rural polling stations, so it is not certain how early the results will be announced. The full results for the European Parliament will not be available until at least Sunday 26 May, and quite possibly later than that.

Useful Links

- **Election information from the European Parliament**
<https://www.european-elections.eu/how-to-vote/united-kingdom>
- **Your Vote Matters**
<https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/>
- **The Electoral Commission**
<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>

- **List of local Electoral Registration Officers with full contact details**
<https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/register-to-vote/find-your-local-authority>
- **Register to vote**
<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>
- **European Union citizens: European Parliament voter registration form**
https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/255197/EU-citizen-European-Parliament-voter-registration-form-English.pdf
- **Application form for a Postal Vote**
https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/222454/Postal-vote-application-form.pdf
- **How to vote by post**
<https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/how-do-i-vote/voting-by-post>
- **Application forms to vote by proxy**
Note that there are several different application forms depending on the reason that you are asking for a proxy vote
<https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/how-do-i-vote/voting-by-proxy>

Please circulate this issue of MEMO+ among your membership and encourage people to register and to vote in the elections on 23 May!



*The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438) <https://www.scojec.org/>*



***BEMIS** is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. (Scottish Charity, no. SC027692) <http://www.bemis.org.uk/>*



*The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.gov.scot/>*