

# Improving the practical arrangements for the holding of the European elections in 2014

2013/2102(INL) - 27/03/2014 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented a report on the implementation of the Commission's recommendations on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament, which was addressed to the Member States and to the European and national political parties. The European Parliament has also adopted resolutions to this effect.

The Commission's Recommendation on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of European elections was generally well received. This is a preliminary report on initiatives that Member States and national and European political parties are developing, to increase transparency, raise citizens' awareness and promote pan-European campaigns around candidates and their programmes. This report aims to stimulate exchanges of best practice and to encourage new initiatives to enhance the democratic life of the EU in light of the upcoming 2014 European elections.

[Recommendation 2013/142/EC](#) was divided into two main strands: (i) strengthen the transparency of the elections and the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making process in the EU; (ii) increase the efficiency of the elections by streamlining procedures for the implementation of the right of EU citizens to vote and stand as candidates in their Member State of residence.

## (1) Democratic conduct of the elections:

*Information for voters on the affiliation between national and European political parties:* Member States generally welcomed this recommendation.

- **The vast majority of Member States who responded reported that they had told national political parties** about the need to increase transparency and improve information for voters to enhance the democratic conduct of the European elections.
- However, it appeared that electoral legislation in several Member States does **not allow ballot papers to display the names or logos of European political parties**. Amongst these Member States three are considering amending their legislation to allow this information to be displayed.
- Certain Member States believe that national political parties are best placed to inform their electorate on their party's affiliation.
- **European political parties** told the Commission that they would encourage and support political campaign messages which emphasise national parties' affiliation.

## *Support for a candidate for President of the European Commission:*

- The European political parties have followed up on the recommendation to make known their candidates for President of the European Commission. **At the end of March 2014, six European political parties have nominated their candidate(s):** Mr Jean-Claude Juncker for the European People's Party (EPP), Mr Martin Schulz for the Party of European Socialists (PES), Mr Guy Verhofstadt for

the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and for the European Democratic Party (EDP) Mr José Bové and Ms Ska Keller for the European Green Party and Mr Alexis Tsipras for the European Left.

- European political parties are also planning to raise awareness about their candidates and their programmes.
- **Member States** told the Commission about wider communication measures they were taking to increase voter participation such as information campaigns for first-time voters, webpages on the elections, media briefings, and round-table discussions and seminars.

***The common voting day:*** While some Member States have agreed to hold polls on Sunday **25 May 2014**, others have rejected the idea explaining that voting on week days or Saturdays would increase turnout. National traditions were also put forward to explain rejection of a common voting day.

**(2) Efficient conduct of the elections:** to ensure the legitimacy of European elections, Directive 93/109/EC requires procedures to make sure that EU citizens do not vote or stand as candidates in both their Member State of origin and in their country of residence in the same elections.

- Drawing on discussions with experts from Member States, the Commission set out in Recommendation 2013/142/EU a list of measures to simplify the data exchange mechanism in place for this purpose.
- The Commission recommended in particular that Member States set up a **single contact authority** in each Member State to facilitate a smoother exchange of voters' data with other Member States.
- For the 2014 European elections, all Member States have agreed to put in place a single contact authority for sending and receiving notifications through the information exchange mechanism, except the United Kingdom, which plans to send notifications about EU voters via local electoral authorities.
- The Commission ensured that all Member States were fully informed of the type of data required by Member States to efficiently verify the identity of their nationals who have registered to vote in the Member State where they reside.
- Almost all Member States improved the security of the data exchange taking place in the run up to the elections, by implementing a common electronic format and using an encryption tool recommended by the Commission.

In conclusion, the Commission considers that its Recommendation on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of European elections was **generally well received**.

The Commission will produce a **full report** after the European elections, assessing the implementation of relevant EU law, including the implementation of the Recommendation. It will highlight further initiatives that were taken in the run-up to the European elections and look at the role of civil society organisations. This should help identify possible new avenues for the future, towards ever more democratic European elections.