

May 2014 European Parliamentary elections –
overseas elector public awareness campaign
evaluation

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Background

On 22 May, expatriates who had been registered to vote in the UK within the last 15 years, were able to vote for their representatives in the European Parliament. May 2014 was the first time since 2011 (the referendum on the voting system used to elect MPs to the House of Commons) that overseas voters were able to vote in a UK poll.

We ran a predominantly online registration campaign targeting British citizens living overseas in the top 10 - 20 countries ¹with the highest number of British expats.

Our previous campaigns showed that online advertising was the most cost-efficient way of reaching British citizens living overseas. Based on this, we advertised on specific websites that we knew were commonly used by British citizens overseas, such as the BBC and the websites of British newspapers. These adverts directed people to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/overseas, where they could read further information and download a registration form.

Our campaign also included a Facebook advert, and advertising that was triggered in response to people using Google search terms indicating an interest in UK elections.

In addition, we created non-date specific radio adverts (radio fillers) that could be played when required by overseas radio stations aimed at expats, such as Talk Radio Europe. There were two versions of this advert; one was 40 seconds and the other was a 10 second cut-down version.

To complement the paid-for advertising we carried out enhanced media relations activity – beyond what we had attempted in previous campaigns – in the top 10 to 20 countries to highlight voter registration, as well as proxy voting. This involved working in partnership with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), political parties and expat organisations (such as Votes for Expat Brits).

¹ The top 10-20 countries were drawn from Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) statistics.

Campaign media dates

The Overseas registration campaign ran from 24 February until 18 April in non-European countries and 27 April in Europe.

Creative

Two creatives were used featuring balloons and bottles. In addition, a Facebook advert was also used. *These can be viewed at Appendix A.*

KPMs

The overseas campaign had a target of **25,000** registration form downloads from www.aboutmyvote.co.uk. This target assumed that we would run a campaign three times as effective as our autumn 2009 campaign (where around 7,000 forms were downloaded).

This target was particularly stretching, but we felt that significantly more partnership work, along with an increased online take-up since our last campaign would result in further downloads. We considered that this would be achievable with an approach that involved significantly more partnership work than our previous campaigns.

Campaign cost

The overseas voter campaign cost **£71,713.92**. This is broken down as follows:

Category	Spend
Production	£55,605.36
Biddable	£9,604.20
Display	£27,983.70
Radio fillers production	£8,725.20
Radio fillers distribution (subscription to Cabinet Office Fillers Marketing Service)	£2,400.
Total	£104,318.46

Agencies

- Comms planning: MEC
- Media buying online: M4C
- Advertising: DLKW Lowe
- AMV: Redweb

Media relations

Enhanced media relations activity was undertaken to complement the campaign.

This included:

An Overseas Registration Day

This was held on 26 February 2014 and was used as a hook for media releases. This was also highlighted by our partners, and generated numerous pieces of coverage, both domestically and overseas. *A list of articles can be viewed in Appendix A.*

To support Overseas Registration Day Greg Clark MP also recorded a video message to expats urging them to register to vote ahead of the 22 May 2014

Social media activity

At the beginning of the campaign the Media team ensured that the Commission was following every British consulate and embassy on Twitter. This resulted in many of these following us back and re-tweeting our tweets.

Tweets were issued throughout the campaign, but with increased frequency throughout Overseas Registration Day.

Although consulates and embassies had been instructed by FCO to tweet about the campaign, many did not do this. The Media team took action by tweeting at consulates / embassies who had not tweeted (in countries with high numbers of British expatriates) and asked them to re-tweet our message.

The following British consulates / embassies tweeted about the campaign:

- Slovenia
- Austria
- France
- Germany
- Hong Kong
- Croatia
- Montenegro
- Serbia
- Belgium
- New Zealand
- UEA

Other organisations that supported the campaign on Twitter included:

- Telegraph Expat
- Expatriate Healthcare
- Conservatives Abroad
- The Overseas Vote Foundation
- Labour International

Partnerships / stakeholder work

As part of the campaign we formed partnerships with several organisations. These included:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FCO were engaged early on in the process and meetings were held to ensure they were informed of our plans. We wrote to the Foreign Secretary about the campaign and corresponded with Mark Simmond, Foreign Office Minister, on the matter. The Commission also attended the Know Before You Go team's partner networking event to meet representatives from companies who provide services to expatriates (for example expatriate insurance companies).

Template materials (press releases, tweets, letters to editors and blog posts) were provided to the Head of Consular Communications at FCO. These materials were subsequently distributed to comms leads at consulates and embassies to assist them in any PR work they carried out to promote the campaign.

Parties' overseas networks

All three main parties overseas networks were contacted. Results shown below:

- **Labour International**

The campaign was discussed with Labour International who subsequently stayed in touch via email over the course of the campaign. They made use of the template PR materials, but also felt that a poster would have been useful as they were planning to set up stalls on Overseas Registration Day. Although we had not produced a poster as part of the campaign materials, LI only required a very basic notice in black and white to highlight the www.aboutmyvote.co.uk. A poster was produced by the Comms team to ensure that this opportunity was not missed.

- **Conservatives Abroad**

Conservatives Abroad requested meetings with the Commission regarding the overseas campaign and subsequently stayed in close contact throughout the durations of the campaign. They provided a list of expatriate publications and websites that may be useful targets for the Commission's press releases.

Conservatives Abroad also launched a competition on Overseas Registration Day to encourage expatriates to persuade friends and family to register to vote.

- **Liberal Democrats overseas network**

The Liberal Democrats published articles on their website, linking to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/overseas.

Votes for Expat Brits

Votes for Expat Brits stayed in close contact during the course of the campaign and used the template PR materials to place blogs and articles. They also regularly emailed their contacts to remind supporters to circulate the www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/overseas link to friends, family, social media contacts and press media contacts.

All MPs

MPs received two briefings about our public awareness campaigns, including information about the overseas campaign. These were distributed in [December 2013](#) and [January 2014](#). In the second, MPs were provided with a number of suggested activities to help support the campaign. These included example tweets, articles and blogs.

*A list of key contacts within the above organisations is included at **Appendix C** for use in future campaigns.*

Results

A total of **7,079** overseas voter registration forms were downloaded throughout the duration of the campaign (24 February – 27 April) and a total of **87,814** clicks were

recorded from the adverts through to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/overseas. Of these clicks, **9,587** were from Display advertising, **62,453** from the Facebook advert, and **15,774** from Biddable activity.

Analysis

Although it was disappointing not to hit our target in terms of downloads, the number of clicks show that the adverts were successful in generating interest in registering to vote. The reasons for the drop-off from click-through to download are unclear, however anecdotal evidence suggests that this may be due to:

- the process being too onerous;
- expats realising they have passed the 15 year limit during which they are eligible to register;
- expats choosing to register and vote in their country of residence; or
- lack of interest following click-through to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/overseas

Key statistics from the campaign are shown below. The full campaign analysis and advert performances are available [here](#).

Clicks per country

Country	Clicks
Pakistan	46,011
India	12,492
Turkey	9,592
Thailand	4,575
Ireland	3,701
Spain	2,728
United States	1,725
Australia	1,647
New Zealand	1,236
Canada	1,120
South Africa	1,075
United Arab Emirates	814
Cyprus	420
France	337
Germany	80
Netherlands	39
Greece	22
Switzerland	20
China	3

Israel	1
Total	87,814

Cost per click (CPC)

For the Display adverts the cost per click worked out at **£2.13**. For the Biddable activity this was significantly lower at **£0.19**.

Cost per landing (CPL)

Not all clicks through to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk resulted in people 'landing' on the page (i.e. some may immediately navigate away). The CPL is therefore higher. For this campaign, the CPL worked out at **£3.67** for Display and **£0.26** for Biddable.

Cost per download (CPD)

The CPD has been worked out from the cost of the whole campaign (£71,713.92) divided by the total number of overseas forms downloaded throughout the whole duration of the campaign (7,079). This worked out at £10.13 per download.

Performance of adverts

Two different creatives were used as part of the campaign (see Appendix A).

- The 'balloons' advert generated a higher click-through rate (CTR) at 0.13%.
- In comparison, the 'bottles' advert performed at a CTR of 0.05%.

Note: Click through rate is calculated from the number of impressions (i.e. each time the advert is seen) divided by the number of clicks on the adverts.

Highest traffic delivering key words

For the Search section of the campaign, the highest traffic-driving key phrases were:

- 'How do I register to vote'
- 'How to vote'
- 'Proxy voting'
- 'Register vote'
- 'Election Commission'
- 'Registered to vote'

- 'How to register to vote'
- 'Register for voting'
- 'Electoral roll'
- 'Vote registration'

Radio filler performance

The fillers were distributed to a number of radio stations, however the Cabinet Office's Fillers Marketing Service (COFMS) experienced difficulties in getting these into certain territories. This was a new type of project for COFMS and whereas UK-based radio stations are familiar with and supportive of fillers, radio stations overseas are not used to receiving them. In the UK it is easy to track and report transmissions (using a supplier that listens to airwaves) but this does not extend to overseas.

COFMS asked their radio digital delivery supplier, Adstream, if they had relevant radio contacts in the countries we requested. Sadly they did not have many of these and there were certain countries where they hadn't worked before, making the task more difficult.

Adstream approached radio stations in the following countries:

- **Ireland** – while quite a number of stations were approached, none wanted to run the filler.
- **France** – COFMS approached several radio stations but found very few English language stations.
- **Monaco** – Approached Riviera Radio but received no response.
- **New Zealand** – 3 stations were approached, no response.
- **Germany** – Approached Jazz Radio 101.9 (some English programming). They responded, but were not interested in airing.
- **Dubai** – Approached Dubai 92, Virgin Radio Dubai, Dubai Eye. They responded, but were not interested in airing.
- **Portugal** – Approached Kiss Algarve. They responded, but were not interested in airing.

- Cyprus – Approached Melody Radio. No response.

COFMS did, however, receive positive feedback from Talk Radio Europe and Power FM in Spain.

- **Talk Radio Europe** – who have approximately half a million listeners across the Costa Del Sol, Gibraltar, Costa Callida and Costa Blanca – played the filler a total of **3 times** during the campaign period (2 plays of the 10 second version, 1 play of the 40 second version)
- Power FM – who play to audiences in Lanzarote and the Canary Islands – played the filler **124 times** (97 plays of the 10 second version and 27 plays of the 40 second version).

Comparison to previous campaigns

Campaign	Details	Clicks	Cost per click (CPC)	Click-through rate (CTR)	Downloads achieved	Cost
Autumn 2008 targeted campaign	<p>Ran from September – November 2008.</p> <p>Involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online advertising. • Press advertising. • Mailing of leaflets / posters to consulates / embassies. 	34,000	£4.66	0.07%	3,717	£299,010 (budget £300,000)
2009 European elections campaign	<p>Ran an exclusively online campaign from 20 April – 15 May 2009.</p> <p>Activity was focussed on the Yahoo ITV subsidiary sites and AOL websites, with targeting based on the resulting traffic from the sites in the autumn 2008 campaign.</p>	14,216	Information not held.	Information not held.	1,849	Information not held.
Autumn 2009 targeted	Ran from 16 September–23 November 2009.	25,166	£3.06	0.07%	7,382	£82,847.75 (budget £100,000)

campaign						
2014 European elections campaign	Ran from 24 Feb – 27 April	150,267	£0.09 (based on an average of biddable delivering £0.19 per click and display delivering £2.13 per click)	0.06% overall (0.13% for 'balloons, 0.05% for 'bottles')	7,079	£71,713.92 (budget £60,000)

Recommendations

Below are a number of recommendations to help inform the planning for the 2015 General election:

Closer monitoring of budget use for Search

The Indian general election took place during some of the period that our campaign was running. This may have caused the high number of clicks from India as a result of people using our search terms in English and being targeted with the adverts. This used up a large amount of the budget for search, leaving little for adverts to make appearances in countries with higher numbers of British expats.

We recommend that a process be put in place to ensure that M4C notify us if budget is being used up in countries that are not key targets, so alterations can be made and certain countries / areas excluded from Search activity.

Use of a PR agency to target expatriates more extensively

Now that online registration is available for expatriates we expect more clicks to translate into registrations, rather than there being the current drop-off from clicks to registration form downloads.

Anecdotal evidence does, however, suggest that there are large numbers of expats that do not access information via the internet and rely predominantly on printed publications for information. Others make use of chat rooms and forums to exchange information.

As the Commission has limited resources / expertise in this area, we recommend making use of a PR agency to:

- Develop partnerships with companies who target expat workforces (e.g. insurance companies, moving companies etc.)
- Target expat broadcasters and printed publications.
- Set up and respond to discussions in expat forums to notify users that they are eligible to vote despite having moved overseas.

Better partnership work

We recommend that better use be made of partners. FCO have now put the Commission in touch with their Know Before You Go team who have an extensive list of companies who work with expats. Depending on the partnerships developed (for example pension providers and companies employing expats) by a PR agency and any crossover, these should be targeted with template PR materials to use in their communications with expats.

Expatriate groups and parties' overseas networks have also told us that it would be useful to have a poster available so they are able to target communities that do not make so much use of the internet. We recommend that a poster is designed and made available on the Commission's website for groups to download and print.

Set a KPM of at least 100,000 registrations

Despite missing our KPM for this campaign, the click-through data suggests that expats are interested in the subject and may complete a registration now that there is no longer a requirement to print the form or have it counter-signed by another British passport holder. The draw of the General Election supported by increased partnership work and the use of a PR agency, is also likely to generate more interest, and so we recommend that a high KPM be set.

Review current creative

Although the creative used for this campaign was successful, we recommend reviewing these to ensure the messaging is correct and the creative is as successful as possible.

Appendix A – list of articles

British expats: did you know you can vote in the European Parliamentary elections? *Algarve Daily News - Post by Samantha Mills, Electoral Commission Head of Campaigns. Also featured on the Votes for Expat Brits blog.*

Calling British Expats – The UK Wants Your Vote *Global Tax News*

Time is running out to register to vote in the European elections *Euro Weekly News, Spain*

Register to vote *Living France*

Expats urged to register in time for EU elections *The Local, Germany*

Register to vote *Round Town News*

British expatriates - It's your vote, don't lose it *Gov.co.uk*

Amsterdam council against using cash to encourage expats to vote *Expatriate Healthcare*

Amsterdam City Council is to express its opposition to plans by the Borough Council of Zuid to use €60,000 (£49,000) of public money encouraging expatriates to vote in local elections. The article goes on to report that only a small percentage of the 5.5 million British expats are thought to have registered for the European Parliamentary elections. The Electoral Commission has launched a radio and social media campaign to tackle the situation.

British expats urged to register for European Parliamentary elections *Expat info desk*

British expats in France urged to register to vote *Easy Branches – European News*

Contest to urge voting in UK poll *Gulf Daily News*

A competition has been launched by British expatriate society Conservatives Abroad to encourage as many people as possible to register to vote in next year's UK general election. A signed copy of UK Foreign Minister William Hague's award-winning biography of Britain's youngest prime minister William Pitt the Younger and a £50 Amazon voucher are up for grabs to whoever gets the most overseas friends and families to sign-up.

Today is Overseas Register to Vote Day for British Expats *Anglo Info*

British expats: Don't lose your vote in the forthcoming European Parliament elections *Cyprusexpat.com*

Overseas voters *BBC Three Counties (radio interview from the Commission about the campaign)*

Campaigners urge expats to register for European vote *Expatriate Healthcare*

British expats - "It's your vote, don't lose it" urge Lib Dems in Europe on Overseas Registration Day *Brussels & Europe Liberal Democrats*

British expats, register to vote NOW!" urges UK Electoral Commission *British in France*

British expatriates - It's your vote, don't lose it *This French Life*

Expat Voters - Could you influence the next UK Government? *Conservatives Luxembourg*

European elections – become an overseas voter *Wort.lu*

Reminder to British Expats to Register to Vote in European Elections *Chronicle.lu*

British expats in Europe to ensure they can vote in upcoming elections *Expat Forum*

European Elections: 26 February Designated Overseas Registration Day *Luxembourg Chronicle*

No vote, no voice: Expats urged to register for European elections *Telegraph*

IER Difficulties Mean British Expats Should Proactively Register to Vote. *Votes for Expat Brits blog*

Expat Brits urged to use vote *The Connexion, France*

Harry Shindler receives MBE from British Ambassador to Italy *French News*
Article about Harry Shindler, a veteran of allied landings at Anzio in WWII, also mentions the Commission's expat campaign. 'Next Wednesday, February 26, has been designated "Overseas Registration Day" by the Electoral Commission, which is hoping to get more expats to take up their right to vote this year.'

British expatriates - "It's your vote, don't lose it" *Algarve Daily News*

UK expats – you can vote from France *Languedoc Midi*

UK expats, you can vote from abroad *Typically Spanish*

British expatriates – it's your vote, don't lose it *ThisFrenchLife.com*

"British Expats, Register to Vote!" urges Electoral Commission *Conservatives Abroad*

British expatriates – "It's your vote, don't lose it" urges elections watchdog on Overseas Registration Day *Arab News Review*

Voting in Belgium in the European Parliamentary elections *BIS.gov.uk*

Why it's important for British expats to vote *Telegraph*

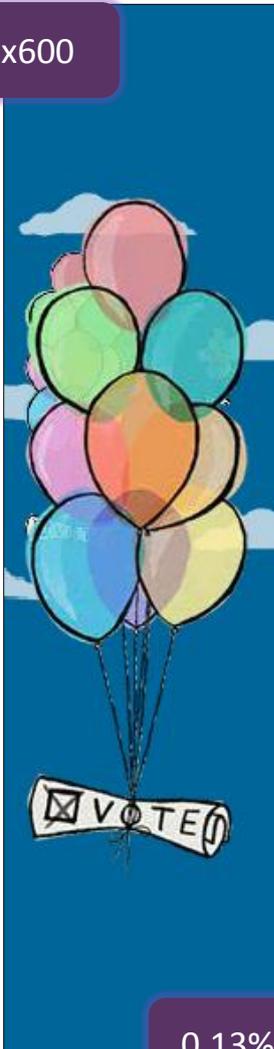
Electoral Commission Online 2014 campaign aims to triple expat voter registrations *Conservatives Abroad*

UK Electoral Commission aims to triple registrations by expat voters *Expatsblog.com*

Electoral Commission – European Elections 2014 *Votes for Expat Brits blog*

Appendix B – creative

160x600



0.13% CTR

Facebook advert

UK expats, register now

aboutmyvote.co.uk



Expats, you can vote from abroad. Register now for the European Parliamentary elections.

300x250



0.06% CTR

728x90



0.05% CTR

Appendix C – key contacts

Votes for Expat Brits

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Conservatives Abroad

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Labour International

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Liberal Democrats overseas

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