EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY

ELECTIONS ACT 1999

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

SUMMARY

5.   Since the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, British voters have elected MEPs using the first-past-the-post system. The Act enables the 1999 and subsequent European Parliamentary elections in Great Britain to be conducted using a regional list electoral system. This system is designed to ensure that in each region parties will win a share of the seats which is broadly proportional to their share of the vote in that region.

6.   The new system does not apply to Northern Ireland, which will continue to elect its three MEPs using the single transferable vote system.

The regional list system

7.   Under the regional list system, Great Britain will be divided into eleven regions, each returning between four and eleven MEPs.

8.   Scotland and Wales will each constitute a single region and will return eight and five MEPs respectively.

9.   England will be divided into nine regions. These will be the same regions as are already used by the Government Offices for the Regions, with the exception of Merseyside, which will be combined with the Northwest region. The table below shows the geographical composition of the nine English regions, their electorates and the number of MEPs to be returned by each.

REGION	*GEOGRAPHICAL AREA*	*ELECTORATE February 1998*	*NO.OF MEPS*
East Midlands	Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire	3,178,655	6
Eastern	Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk	4,033,848	8
London	London boroughs, the City of London	4,964,862	10
North East	former county of Cleveland, Durham, Northumbria, former county of Tyne & Wear	1,977,117	4
North West	Cheshire, Cumbria, boroughs within Greater Manchester, Lancashire, former Metropolitan county of Merseyside	5,208,775	10

REGION	*GEOGRAPHICAL AREA*	*ELECTORATE February 1998*	*NO.OF MEPS*
South East	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex	5,987,407	11
South West	former county of Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Scilly Isles, Somerset, Wiltshire	3,758,481	7
West Midlands	Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, former Metropolitan county of West Midlands	4,036,595	8
Yorkshire & The Humber	former counties of Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire	3,807,997	7

How the Regional List System works

10.   Political parties will put forward lists of candidates in their preferred order. Once published by the returning officer, this order cannot be changed. Individual independent candidates will also be able to stand. Voters may cast only one vote. They can vote either for a party list (which will show the names of all the party's candidates) or for an individual candidate. On completion of the poll, votes for each individual candidate and each party are counted and the seats are allocated as follows.

- The first seat is allocated to the party or individual candidate with the highest number of votes. If the seat is allocated to a party, it goes to the first candidate on that party's list.

- The second seat is allocated as follows. First the voting figures are adjusted:

    — if the first seat was allocated to a party, that party's total votes are divided by two

    — if the first seat was allocated to an individual candidate, that candidate and the votes cast for him drop out of the calculation for the second and subsequent seats.

    The second seat is allocated to the individual or party with the highest number of votes after these adjustments. The process continues until all the seats are allocated.

- The seats allocated to parties are allocated to the party's candidates in the order in which they appear on its list.

11.   At all stages:

- each party's original total is divided by the number of seats that party has already been allocated, plus one;

- once an individual candidate is allocated a seat, that candidate and the votes cast for him drop out of the remaining calculations;

- if a party wins more than one seat, the seats are allocated to its candidates in the order in which they appear on the party list;

- if everyone on a party list has been allocated a seat before all the seats have been allocated, the party and the votes cast for it drop out of the remaining calculations.

Worked Example

12. The following example shows how the seats would be allocated in a seven-member region. Three parties, A, B and C, put forward party lists and one independent stands as an individual candidate. One million votes are cast, 380,000 for Party A, 300,000 for Party B, 180,000 for Party C and 140,000 for the individual candidate.

Calculation

Stage 1

Party A (total)	380,000
Party B (total)	300,000
Party C (total)	180,000
Individual candidate	140,000

The first seat is allocated to the candidate at the top of the Party A list.

Stage 2

Party A (total divided by 2)	190,000
Party B (total)	300,000
Party C (total)	180,000
Individual candidate	140,000

The second seat is allocated to the candidate at the top of the Party B list.

Stage 3

Party A (total divided by 2)	190,000
Party B (total divided by 2)	150,000
Party C (total)	180,000
Individual candidate	140,000

The third seat is allocated to the candidate in second place on the Party A list.

Stage 4

Party A (total divided by 3)	126,666
Party B (total divided by 2)	150,000
Party C (total)	180,000
Individual candidate	140,000

The fourth seat is allocated to the candidate at the top of the Party C list.

Stage 5

Party A (total divided by 3)	126,666
Party B (total divided by 2)	150,000

Party C (total divided by 2)	90,000
Individual candidate	140,000

The fifth seat is allocated to the candidate in second place on the Party B list.

Stage 6

Party A (total divided by 3)	126,666
Party B (total divided by 3)	100,000
Party C (total divided by 2)	90,000
Individual candidate	140,000

The sixth seat is allocated to the individual candidate.

Stage 7

Party A (total divided by 3)	126,666
Party B (total divided by 3)	100,000
Party C (total divided by 2)	90,000

The seventh seat is allocated to the candidate in third place on the Party A list.

13.   The final result is that the seven seats are allocated as follows.

Party A (total)	380,000 votes # 3 seats
Party B (total)	300,000 votes # 2 seats
Party C (total)	180,000 votes # 1 seat
Individual candidate	140,000 votes # 1 seat