



# Guidelines for **LOCAL AUTHORITIES**



**Participation matters** – Fostering Civic and Political Engagement of Mobile EU Citizens

**JUST/2014/RCIT/AG/CITI/7283** – Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union



# GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The presence of non-national EU citizens in most Member states has grown significantly in recent years, passing from 4.7 million in 2005 to more than 15,5 million in 2016 (source: Eurostat). Most intra-EU mobility flows still originate in the Central and Eastern European Member States, despite a substantial increase recorded in the flows from southern Member States affected by the crisis. These flows have led to a significant increase in the number of non-national EU citizens of voting age in several Member States but their inclusion in the political life of their countries of residence is still very low. Latest studies show a very low level of active engagement, both inside and outside political parties, and identify many obstacles to participation. These include procedural obstacles to registration in the electoral rolls; lack of or limited information available as a result of poor commitment by local institutions; low interest on the part of eligible EU citizens due to the feeling that political participation has no impact on their daily lives; difficulty of understanding the specific dynamics of a different political system; limited involvement in political activities due to a lack of interest on the part of political parties in engaging non-nationals as active members.

This handbook has been written in the framework of the European project 'Participation Matters', co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union, which addresses the issue of insufficient political inclusion and participation of EU citizens residing in member States of which they are not nationals. This project has been implemented in Italy, Austria and Spain with the main agents of change: local authorities, that are primarily responsible for providing information and removing procedural obstacles and associations of EU mobile citizens, which have proven to be the real propulsive forces of participation and engagement.

Activities with local authorities included the testing of innovative procedures and practices aimed at promoting a complete and effective information on voting rights through practical tools and at facilitating the enrolment of EU movers in the electoral rolls. These procedures and practices have been identified during participatory meetings with civil servants working in municipal offices directly responsible for services related to the exercise of voting rights. The present handbook illustrates the activities implemented in Spain which have been proven effective and can be easily replicated by other local authorities that experience the same patterns of participation. The activities suggested in this handbook will inspire all the local authorities that are willing to identify new ways of involving non-national EU citizens in the political life of their territories.





# EUROPEAN CITIZENS IN SPAIN: PRESENCE AND VOTER TURNOUT

As far as the European migratory process, one of the particularly important moments for intra-Europe movements took place at the end of World War II, which among other matters, marked the redesign of European borders. In this sense, the characteristics of EU movers in Spain vary significantly and include “economic” migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, others known as “retired migrants”, and student exchange migrants. The migratory process of the first group began in the 1990s and the nationalities with the strongest presence are Romanian, Polish, and Bulgarian. The migratory process of the second group began over 50 years ago and the top nationalities are English, German, Belgian, French, Danish, Italian, Norwegian, and Swedish. The process of the third group began with the launch of the Erasmus program in 1987 and the most common nationalities in all areas of the program are Italian, Polish, French, and German.

If we focus on the specific number of voters and the number of letters sent for participation in European elections, the data collected by the National Statistics Institute can be summarized as follows:

## VOTERS AND LETTERS SENT BY PROVINCE

The provinces with the most voters from other EU nations are Alicante (70,420), Madrid (55,677), Malaga (38,182), Barcelona (31,781) and Balearic Islands (21,052).

The provinces with the most letters sent are Madrid (58,349), Barcelona (45,195), Alicante (38,424), Malaga (31,890) and Valencia (29,602).

## VOTERS AND LETTERS SENT BY COUNTRY OF NATIONALITY

The nationalities with the most voters are Romania (105,938), the United Kingdom (100,114), Germany (44,398), Italy (41,779), and France (31,343).

The nationalities with the most letters sent are Romania (145,302), the United Kingdom (58,427), Italy (45,911), Bulgaria (28,756), and Germany (27,721).



Non-Spanish EU citizens who reside in Spain, by province – Data on September 1, 2014

PROVINCE	EU VOTERS IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS	LETTERS SENT
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>418.187</b>	<b>422.008</b>
Albacete	1.315	2.422
Alicante	70.420	38.424
Almería	13.878	12.003
Alava	1.227	650
Asturias	2.490	4.458
Ávila	649	956
Badajoz	1.245	3.364
Balearic, Islands	21.052	24.822
Barcelona	31.781	45.195
Vizcaya	2.495	4.042
Burgos	1.804	3.003
Caceres	840	1.454
Cádiz	4.455	4.848
Cantabria	3.873	1.921
Castellon	12.855	8.127
Ciudad Real	2.017	4.248
Córdoba	4.110	1.126
Coruña, A	2.055	3.275
Cuenca	2.266	2.810
Guipuzcoa	1.813	3.568
Gerona	11.335	7.957
Granada	6.467	5.663
Guadalajara	3.318	2.483
Huelva	6.149	6.171
Huesca	2.639	2.405
Jaen	797	1.187
León	1.937	1.942
Lleida	3.532	7.570
Lugo	1.040	1.143
Madrid	55.677	58.349
Malaga	38.182	31.890
Murcia	12.615	8.650
Navarra	2.600	4.560
Orense	2.449	1.946
Palencia	380	524
Palmas, Las	12.242	16.756
Pontevedra	3.465	3.242
Rioja, La	2.482	2.836
Salamanca	951	1.394
Santa Cruz de Tenerife	20.369	16.776
Segovia	1.473	1.732
Sevilla	3.580	7.162
Soria	899	519
Tarragona	8.111	8.109
Teruel	1.212	1.079
Toledo	4.255	5.874
Valencia	18.570	29.602
Valladolid	1.740	2.940
Zamora	694	883
Zaragoza	6.252	9.454
Ceuta	36	116
Melilla	99	378



Non-Spanish EU citizens who reside in Spain, by nationality – Data on September 1, 2014

PROVINCE	EU VOTERS IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS	LETTERS SENT
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>418.187</b>	<b>422.008</b>
Germany	44.398	27.721
Austria	2.160	2.140
Belgium	9.148	6.957
Bulgaria	19.737	28.756
Cyprus	21	137
Croatia	30	1.683
Denmark	3.182	2.521
Slovenia	159	530
Estonia	194	817
Finland	2.647	3.357
France	31.343	26.524
Greece	787	1.716
Hungary	965	3.289
Ireland	4.207	4.598
Italy	41.779	45.911
Latvia	466	1.718
Lithuania	1.782	4.082
Luxembourg	174	154
Malt	33	90
Netherlands	14.248	10.606
Poland	7.969	12.069
Portugal	19.571	23.271
United Kingdom	100.114	58.427
Czech Republic	1.028	2.251
Slovak Republic	863	1.679
Romania	105.938	145.302
Sweden	5.244	5.702





# LEGISLATION ON THE VOTING RIGHTS OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS

European citizens that reside in Spain have the right to passive and active suffrage in European Parliament and local elections:

- The right to passive suffrage is the right to be eligible for a position in public office
- The right to active suffrage is the right to vote

## RIGHT TO PASSIVE SUFFRAGE

If you are a European citizen residing in Spain, you can stand as a candidate for a position in public office if you:

- have not been stripped of your right to passive suffrage in your country of origin
- meet all of the requirements established for Spaniards, i.e., you:
  - hold all the requirements to be able to vote
  - have not been deprived of such right due to a court ruling
  - do not hold certain positions in public office

You must also justify that you are not standing as a candidate in any other EU country.

## RIGHT TO ACTIVE SUFFRAGE

As a European citizen, you can vote in local elections and European Parliament elections, if you:

- are of legal age
- have not been deprived of such right due to a court ruling
- are not declared as unfit to vote
- are not admitted to psychiatric hospital through legal authorisation that expressly declares you unfit to exercise your right to vote
- are registered to vote (*empadronado*)
- are registered on the Electoral Census
- have declared your intention to vote





# BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE **POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM** IN SPAIN

Spain is a social, democratic state that advocates freedom, justice, equality and political pluralism as superior values of its legal system. Its political form is a Constitutional Monarchy, where the legislative power resides in the General Courts, executive power in the Government and legal power in the courts and tribunals, whose supreme body is the General Council of Judicial Power. The State administration in Spain is organised into three levels: Firstly, the General State Administration, whose powers extend throughout Spain. The second level is composed of different autonomous administrations, whose powers cover each and every one of the 17 Autonomous Communities and the 2 Autonomous Cities. Lastly, are local administrations, whose powers extend across the municipal area. The Spanish political system is based on the right to vote. Elections are held every four years and can be:

- General: to elect the members of the Congress of Deputies (lower house) and the Senate (upper house).
- Autonomous: to elect members of the autonomous assemblies.
- Local: to elect representatives of the Local Governments, County Councils and Local authorities.
- European Parliament: to elect the Spanish representatives in the European Parliament.

To be able to vote, as a national of a European Union Member State residing in Spain, you must declare that you want to exercise your active suffrage right in Spain.

In the months before the call for general elections, the Electoral Census Office will send a letter to EU citizens residing in Spain so you can declare if you want to exercise your right to vote. A printed sheet will be attached to the letter, similar to the one that is attached to this manual. This letter will not be sent if you have already been sent one for previous elections. If you want to declare that you want to vote, you must fill in, sign and send back the sheet in the franked envelope enclosed to the Regional Electoral Census Office. You can also send the declaration by internet if you have a NIE (Foreigners' Identification Number). To do so, you must go to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Spanish Statistical Office) website, where you will be able to declare that you want to vote with or without a digital certificate. On the day of the elections, you must go to your polling station (Colegio Electoral) with your identification (passport or identity card from your country). Your ID will be checked at the table that you have been assigned, which you can check on the lists printed by the polling station. You will then be able to vote. You do not need to take your ballot paper to the polling station, as there will be one for each of the candidates there. If you cannot find the candidate that you want to vote for, you can file a complaint. The polling station has several polling booths so that you can fill in your ballot in secret. You can decide if you want to use the booths or not. Some polling stations do not comply with all accessibility requirements. If this is the case, and you have any accessibility requirements, you can request for help so that you can exercise your right to vote. If you are blind, you can request that an "accessibility kit" is available at your registration table. You can also vote by post. If you would like to vote by post, you can do so by the deadline established. You can go to any post office, show your identity document and fill in a sheet, which requires you to present a census registration certificate. The Census Office will send you any documentation and instructions about how to exercise your right to vote by certified post.





# LOCAL AUTHORITY STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE VOTER TURNOUT

Based on information obtained from voter turnout meetings with local entities and European migrant associations, we deduced that they all agreed that information on the procedure for exercising the right to vote is key. As a result, the strategy to promote voter turnout was the same in both instances: focusing efforts on distributing our voting manual. These manuals were available in Spanish as well as in the most common languages of the European citizens residing in our country: Romanian, Bulgarian, German, and English.

These manuals were distributed at events organized in conjunction with migrant associations. In the case of local entities, whenever a European citizen registered with a city government, they were given a manual, written in their own language, on exercising their right to vote.

Title of the experience	Manuals on exercising the right to vote.
Name of the local authority	City government census registration offices.
Location of the experiment	Various cities in the provinces of Huelva, Málaga, and Madrid.
Target group	European citizens, newly arrived in Spain, who visit a city government census office to register.
Brief description of the experience and the results (including information on how to transfer the practices and procedures to other situations)	At every census registration office, when a European citizen states their intent to register with that city government, they are informed of their right to vote in the municipal and European elections and they are given a comprehensive manual in their own language so they understand the procedure for participating in the aforementioned elections.
Materials produced	

The councils of certain city governments in the Málaga province (Estepona, Benahavis) that only focus on foreigners are the perfect channels for gathering information about what European citizens expect as well as providing them with key information, while facilitating their integration in the city through organized activities.

Title of the experience	Foreign resident department.
Name of the local authority	Estepona City Government and Benahavis City Government.
Location of the experiment	Estepona and Benahavis, Málaga province (Spain).
Target group	European citizens residing in the city.
Brief description of the experience and the results (including information on how to transfer the practices and procedures to other situations)	The initiatives of Spanish city governments are organized according to departments or councils (Urban Development Council, Social Services Council, etc.). In these city governments, everything is destined to a department exclusively for foreigners that organizes activities, provides information, assists with paperwork, etc.
Materials produced	<a href="http://extranjerosestepona.blogspot.com.es/p/ingles.html">http://extranjerosestepona.blogspot.com.es/p/ingles.html</a>







Almonte (Huelva) has a Cultural Facilitator who coordinates contact with the city's foreigner associations and provides them with information. Although there were no specific campaigns aimed specifically at promoting voter turnout, they work with this concept as a secondary goal for their activities.

Title of the experience	Cultural facilitator.
Name of the local authority	Almonte City Government.
Location of the experiment	Almonte, Huelva province (Spain).
Target group	Foreigner associations in the city.
Brief description of the experience and the results (including information on how to transfer the practices and procedures to other situations)	The cultural facilitator coordinates contact with the city's foreigner associations and provides them with information aimed at promoting inclusion and involvement in the social and cultural life of the city government.
Materials produced	





[www.participationmatters.eu](http://www.participationmatters.eu)

PARTNERSHIP



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