

Title:

Forename:

Surname:

Representing:

Organisation

Organisation (if applicable):

UTV Television

Email:

What additional details do you want to keep confidential?:

Keep part of the response confidential

If you want part of your response kept confidential, which parts?:

[REDACTED]

Ofcom may publish a response summary:

Yes

I confirm that I have read the declaration:

Yes

Additional comments:

UTV Response to Ofcom's Review of its list of Major Parties for the May 2014 Elections.

In addition to its own response UTV also endorses the joint response provided by ITV, STV, CHANNEL 4 & CHANNEL 5.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Ofcom's consultation on its review of the list of

major political parties for the European and local council elections to be held on 22nd May 2014.

Following Ofcom's decision to maintain a list of major parties and placing them in a separate annex from the PPRB rules enabled Ofcom to review the definition of "major parties" and update the list as appropriate.

However the decisions which are made in this review will both set a precedent for next year's elections and all subsequent elections in the future and therefore it is imperative that the final decision does not unnecessarily alter the current status quo which sees a central list for the UK as a whole as well as the individual nations themselves.

Question 1: Which of the approaches described above do you think is the appropriate framework within which Ofcom should assess the evidence of parties? past electoral support and current support in Great Britain-wide elections? If you do not agree with any of these approaches, please explain why and, if appropriate, suggest an alternative.:

While we acknowledge the approaches that Ofcom has set out in the consultation provide alternative approaches for assessment, we are concerned that a review of past and present support for political parties under a 'Great Britain-wide' (UK wide) or 'Two-Stage' approach could create uncertainty and unfairness when dealing with each election.

We believe Ofcom has not fully accounted for the diversity of each individual election in each nation and how in practice the different systems of voting i.e. first-past-the-post, forms of proportional representation or other voting methods, may determine how each party is assessed in relation to the support it receives and how this might affect the process of allocating each parties PEBs considered on their past electoral support or current support in a UK wide or 'Two-Stage' approach.

In the case of a UK wide approach and to a lesser extent the 'Two-stage' approach, it seems that these may work for some UK wide broadcasters (where an assessment can be made for the country as a whole), but it undermines the major parties in Northern Ireland and doesn't recognise the lack of support that UK wide parties gather in Northern Ireland.

[REDACTED]

We are in support of the current system which operates two types of lists. One for the major parties in the UK (used for UK wide broadcasters) and one for each individual nation (like ourselves). We therefore favour the 'nation by nation' approach.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on Ofcom's current preliminary views in paragraphs 2.36 to 2.42 above on the effect of the application of the various methodologies to decide the Ofcom list of major parties ahead of the 22 May 2014 elections?:

As stated in the consultation, we acknowledge that the list of major parties in Northern Ireland was subject to consultation in late 2012 and the subsequent PPRB statement published earlier this year saw the Alliance Party added to the list of major parties.

There is no proposal by Ofcom to change the current list of major parties in Northern Ireland given that the 2014 European Parliamentary elections are the first elections to take place in Northern Ireland since the PPRB Statement.

The application of the methodology shows that on a UK wide and 'Two-stage' approach, UKIP are added to the list of major parties; and with the nation-by-nation approach UKIP are added in England and Wales (not Scotland). We agree that this is appropriate and that UKIP are added to the list of major parties for the UK as a whole.

In accordance with our view on the approaches in question 1, we believe a 'nation by nation' approach is the right approach to ensure fair treatment of major parties in each nation by assessing the evidence of past & present electoral support.

Paragraph 1.10 (footnote 13) & 2.17 of the consultation suggest that parties from Great Britain rarely ever field candidates in Northern Ireland and while the Northern Ireland Assembly has one UKIP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), UKIP does not (yet) have significant levels of support in Northern Ireland to affect the list of major parties in respect of the 2014 European Parliamentary elections.

[REDACTED]

While there are also no other parties in Northern Ireland other than the 5 major parties already on the current list who have seats in the House Of Commons, the allocation of PPB's should still assess all political parties who have a certain level of support in Northern Ireland (on par with parties UK wide) case by case in the run up to elections. New parties, such as NI21 (founded in June 2013 and who have 2 seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly) are emerging and created by ex-party MLAS they can have a large following of supporters and could change the political landscape quickly. This means potentially that research would need to be conducted extensively before each election.

We agree strongly for a 'nation by nation' approach to allocating party political broadcasts and reporting in Northern Ireland while maintaining a list of major parties in the UK as a whole, for national PPB allocation and reporting.