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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE OVERSEAS VOTING LAWS
AND SYSTEMS OF SELECTED COUNTRIES ¹**

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A. INTRODUCTION

The people's right to elect their representatives is a basic feature of all democratic states. This fundamental right is constitutionally guaranteed in almost all countries. Citizens, as stakeholders in the State, choose their own leaders through elections. They likewise decide issues of national importance through the conduct of national referenda.

A more recent development in participatory democracy is the extension of the ability to vote to citizens living overseas. This evolved because of increasing demands by citizens to exercise their right to vote regardless of their physical location or reason to be absent from their domicile on election day. While currently overseas migration is a major contributing factor, the precursor for absentee voting by citizens out of the country was states trying to enable voting by

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members of the military fighting in World War I and II. As accommodations were made for members of the military, the process was extended to those accompanying the military and continues to be extended to other classes of citizens as globalization provides opportunities for increasing migration. Millions of people from poor and less developed countries migrate to other countries in search of jobs either as documented or undocumented workers. A significant number of them settle permanently in their country of choice. This phenomenon of overseas migration also occurs in developed countries. Millions of citizens of developed countries likewise reside outside of their country of origin, as students, as employees of firms with offices abroad, or in retirement.

Many countries have limited experience with overseas absentee voting, having implemented it, if at all, only within the past two decades. It is the purpose of this study to examine the overseas absentee voting laws, systems and experiences of selected countries that allow voting by their citizens living abroad, and to draw lessons from these examples. Such information may be widely useful for the consideration of possible reforms in overseas absentee voting laws and systems for the purpose of encouraging greater participation by persons living abroad in the elections of their country of citizenship.

This paper offers a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences of the overseas absentee voting laws and systems of selected European, North American, and Asian countries.

B. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

1. QUALIFICATIONS TO VOTE

1.1 Citizenship

Citizenship is a common qualification to vote among the 17 countries included in this comparative study, except for Australia and New Zealand, where persons other than citizens are allowed to vote. In Australia, British subjects who are registered voters on a Commonwealth electoral roll as of January 25, 1984, are allowed to vote, even if not living in Australia. In New Zealand, immigrants with permanent residence in New Zealand are allowed to vote, even if not in New Zealand at the time of the election.

1.2 Age

In most countries, the usual minimum age required in order to vote is 18 as of the date of the elections. There are some variations, however. In Italy, the voting age is 18 except for the election of Senators where the voting age is 25. In Thailand, the voter must be at least 18 years old as of January 1 of the year of the election. In Indonesia, the minimum voting age is 17, but younger persons are allowed to vote if they are married or have been married. In Australia, provisional registration as a voter is allowed upon reaching the age of 17, provided that the right to vote is exercised only upon reaching the age of 18.

1.3 Conditions and Restrictions

In some countries, certain conditions and restrictions are imposed on the right to vote while living outside the country. A common condition in several countries is the requirement of prior registration as a qualified voter in the country of citizenship.

A time restriction on the right to exercise overseas absentee voting is imposed by some countries. In Australia, the right to vote by overseas absentee ballot may be exercised only within six years after leaving Australia. Failure to return to Australia within six years results in the loss of the right to vote. However, annual extensions of registration as an overseas absentee voter are also allowed.

In Canada, the right to vote by overseas absentee ballot may be exercised only within five consecutive years after leaving Canada. The five-year restriction on the exercise of the right to vote does not apply to: (a) members of Canadian armed forces posted abroad; (b) employees in the public service of Canada or one of its provinces posted outside of Canada; (c) employees of international organizations to which Canada is a contributing member; and (d) persons living with (a), (b), and (c).

In New Zealand, citizens who are overseas absentee voters are required to have been in New Zealand within three years prior to the exercise of the right to vote overseas, or within 12 months in the case of permanent residents. This requirement does not apply to: (a) public servants or military personnel; (b) heads of diplomatic missions or posts; (c) officers or employees of the New Zealand Trade Development Board; and (d) the spouse, child or child of the spouse accompanying (a), (b), or (c). In all cases, the overseas absentee voter must have established prior permanent residence in New Zealand for an uninterrupted period of at least one year at any one time.

In the Philippines, the overseas absentee voting law is basically designed for the benefit of overseas contract workers who are most likely to return to the Philippines. Restrictions are imposed on the exercise of the right to vote by Filipino citizens who have acquired an immigrant or permanent resident status in another country. They are not allowed to vote unless they execute an affidavit declaring that they have not applied for foreign citizenship and that they shall resume actual physical permanent residence in the Philippines not later than three years from the date of approval of their registration as an overseas absentee voter.

In the United Kingdom, it is required that the overseas absentee voter must have been a registered voter in the UK within the last 15 years prior to the exercise of the right to overseas absentee voting.

Compared to the above-mentioned countries, Germany has a less restrictive policy. The German overseas voter must have established prior permanent residence in Germany for an uninterrupted period of at least three months at any one time after May 23, 1949. If the residence requirement is satisfied, the overseas voter is allowed to vote up to 25 years after leaving Germany. Failure to return to Germany after the lapse of 25 years results in the loss of the right to vote.

In Ukraine, the right to overseas absentee voting is granted only to those Ukrainian citizens who left the country legally.

In Australia, failure to vote, whether in the country or overseas, results in automatic delisting from the registry of voters.

2. METHODS OF VOTING

The two principal methods of voting used by the countries in this study are: (1) voting in person; and (2) postal voting. These voting methods are discussed in the succeeding sections together with other voting methods and the combined use of different voting methods.

2.1 In-Person Voting

Voting in person requires a personal appearance by the voter at a designated polling place, established by the country of which the voter is a citizen in the foreign country where he or she is living. The polling place is often in an embassy or consulate or, more rarely, in borrowed or rented halls. Four countries in this study, Moldova, Poland, Russia and Ukraine, use the in-person voting method exclusively for overseas voting. Common to these four countries (and others) is the fact that in-person overseas voting is allowed only on election day itself.

An advantage of in-person voting is the fact that the true identity of the voter can be established by providing proof of identity (and of being registered to vote) and there is an assurance that the ballot was actually cast by the voter him/herself. A major drawback is the fact that the overseas polling stations may not be accessible to many voters during the day or days allowed for overseas voting for economic, physical disability or other reasons. This is critical for countries that have a significant voting population overseas and yet allow only one day for in-person voting. As a result, only those who can go to the polling station on election day can vote. Some countries have anticipated this problem and have provided for other mechanisms such as advance in-person voting during an extended period; allowing voting outside of the designated polling stations; and limited voting by mail, among others. In the case of the Philippines, which has an estimated seven million expatriates, advance in-person voting is allowed within 30 days up to election day for land-based voters, and up to 60 days in advance for sea-based voters (sailors).

2.2 Postal Voting

Postal voting refers to the casting of votes by mail, either directly to the appropriate electoral authority of the voter's electoral district of his/her country of origin, or to his/her country's embassy or consulate that has jurisdiction over the voter. This definition of postal voting includes the personal delivery of the postal ballot to the embassies and consulates. Postal voting is used either as the exclusive or principal method for overseas absentee voting by six countries in this study, namely: Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States.

In postal voting, the ballot is delivered to the voter by mail, usually together with an inner and outer envelope. The executed ballot is placed inside the inner envelope which is then placed in

the outer envelope and sent by mail to the appropriate electoral authority or to the embassy or consulate. Postage is usually provided for free.

The potential inaccessibility of the polling station to the voter is addressed by postal voting since the voter receives and returns the ballot by mail. A disadvantage of this system is the fact that the ballots may not arrive on time for the counting of votes. Usually, however, sufficient time is allowed for the overseas absentee voter to mail in his/her vote. In Australia and in several states of the United States, postal ballots are still valid and counted even if received within a specified period after election day.

A second disadvantage of postal voting is the fact that there is no complete assurance that the registered overseas voter is in fact, the person who cast his vote by mail. In the United Kingdom and Australia, it is required that the application for postal voting be witnessed. In Canada, the voter is required to submit, together with the application for overseas absentee voting, a photocopy of his/her passport or birth certificate as proof of Canadian citizenship. In Spain, proof of identity and the certificate of inclusion in the electoral census must be mailed together with the postal ballot. In the US, some states require that the application for registration as an absentee voter be notarized and some states require a witness to sign the outer, transmittal envelope attesting to the fact that the voter placed the voted ballot in the sealed inner envelope.

The United States has developed a form of postal voting that has minimized some of its disadvantages—a write-in absentee ballot that is pre-positioned overseas at embassies, consulates, military installations and with some organizations of American citizens abroad. In the event a voter does not receive the regular absentee ballot in sufficient time to vote it and return it to be counted, the voter may obtain a write-in absentee ballot and either write-in the candidate's name or political party affiliation and send the write-in ballot to be counted. However, the voter must have requested a regular absentee ballot at least 30 days before the election and be otherwise eligible to vote in order to be eligible to use the write-in ballot. The local election official, upon receiving a write-in absentee ballot, verifies that the voter made a timely request for a regular absentee ballot and holds the write-in ballot until the appointed time to count absentee ballots. If the regular absentee ballot is received in time to be counted and the voter has also submitted a write-in ballot, the write-in ballot is not counted. This was instituted as a backup for out of country citizens living or working in remote areas, such as missionaries, or areas with infrequent mail service, such as submariners.

2.3 Other Methods of Voting

The other methods of overseas absentee voting are proxy voting, as in the case of the United Kingdom, and voting by facsimile transmission (fax) as in the case of the United States and New Zealand under certain conditions.

In proxy voting an overseas absentee voter is allowed to appoint his/her proxy to vote in person in his/her country of origin. Among the countries subject of this study, only the United Kingdom allows proxy voting.

Voting by fax was introduced recently in New Zealand as an additional option for overseas voters.² Voting by fax is allowed in some states in the United States if conditions do not allow for timely receipt and return of election materials. Voting by fax was authorized by all US states in the 1990 elections for military and citizens located in the Middle East associated with Operation Desert Storm. Use of the Internet for overseas absentee voting is not currently used by any country subject of this study, although it is being studied with pilot trials in some countries.

2.4 Combinations of Voting Methods

Some countries use a combination of different voting methods to ensure greater participation of overseas voters in the electoral exercise. Seven countries subject of this study, namely: Australia, Indonesia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and Portugal, use both in-person voting and postal voting for overseas voting. In the case of Australia, it is the choice of the overseas voter whether he/she votes in person or applies for a postal ballot. In the Philippines, where overseas voting is a very recent experience, postal voting was allowed on an experimental basis for overseas voters in countries with efficient postal systems, such as Canada, United Kingdom and Japan, in the May 2004 elections. The expansion or restriction of the use of postal voting for future Philippine elections is under evaluation.

In Thailand, postal voting is allowed only in countries where the number of registered overseas voters is less than 500. In Portugal, postal voting is allowed for the election of members of Parliament and representatives to the European Union. In-person voting is used for the election of the President of Portugal.

3. METHODS OF REGISTRATION

There are several ways of classifying the registration system for overseas absentee voters: (a) by source of information; (b) by place of registration; and (c) by method of registration.

3.1 By source of Information

In countries such as Germany, Italy and Lithuania, the overseas voters' lists are principally sourced from the local census bureaus or population register of the countries where the voters are physically present. In the case of Italy, information available in the countries' consulates (where citizens are expected to register their presence in the jurisdiction) is also used in the preparation of the voters' list. In countries such as the Philippines, Poland and Thailand, the voters' lists are principally sourced from the registration of overseas absentee voters conducted by the diplomatic and consular missions abroad. In all these cases, qualified voters need not apply for registration since their names are automatically included in the voters' list.

Consular registration lists have also been used by Ukraine, but the procedure has been criticized because only 300,000 of the estimated 7 million Ukrainians living abroad are registered at their embassies and consulates. Parliament has recently amended the law to provide for the establishment of special overseas polling stations to register voters, and to allow for applications for absentee ballots by mail from local election authorities in Ukraine.

² <http://www.elections.org.nz/votin/mresources-chn.html>.

In countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States, the overseas absentee voter is required to apply as an overseas absentee voter to the authorities of his/her electoral district in the home country. This method of registration is usually employed by countries using postal voting. A disadvantage of this system is that voters may have little or no connection with the home electoral district, and yet remain passionately interested in major elections.

3.2 By place of Registration

In countries that primarily use postal voting for overseas absentee voting such as Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, the registration of overseas absentee voters is usually done by the local electoral board in their home country. The embassies and consulates usually perform a secondary role by providing registration information and assistance to the overseas voters. The registration of overseas absentee voters by countries using in-person voting is usually done by the diplomatic missions and consulates.

3.2 By method of Registration

The registration of overseas voters in countries using the postal voting system is done by mail. Registration in countries using the in-person system is usually done in person at the diplomatic missions and consulates, although in some cases persons possessing a registration card or certificate from their home country may vote on election day by presenting this evidence of prior registration.

4. REQUESTING AND DELIVERING BALLOTS TO OVERSEAS VOTERS

In countries using the postal voting method such as the United States and Canada, the application for registration as an overseas absentee voter also serves as the request for a postal ballot. In some countries like the Philippines and Australia, a separate application for postal voting is required for each election.

In voting by mail, the ballots are obviously sent to the voter by mail, along with instructions for postal voting and, in some countries, information on the list of candidates. In the case of voting in person, the ballots are given to the voter in the polling station.

5. PERIODS FOR VOTING

The period for voting varies from country to country. In the case of in-person voting, the voting period ranges from voting on election day only to as much as 60 days before voting day. Voting conducted before election day is called advance or early voting. On the other hand, the voting period for postal voting is generally allowed from the date of receipt of the postal ballot up to election day. In some countries, votes cast by mail that are received as late as 15 days after election day are still valid and counted, but in most cases they must be postmarked not later than election day.

5.1 In-Person Voting

- ▶ Australia, voting in person is allowed from 48 hours after the declaration of nominations up to the close of voting on election day.
- ▶ Lithuania, voting in person starts ten days before election day.
- ▶ Philippines: voting in person is allowed within 30 days up to election day in case of land-based voters and within 60 days up to election day in case of sea-based voters.
- ▶ Portugal, voting in person starts two days before election day for presidential elections.
- ▶ Thailand, overseas voting in person is conducted and finished at least six days prior to election day.
- ▶ Indonesia, Moldova, Poland, Russia and Ukraine, voting in person at overseas polling stations is allowed only on election day itself.

5.2 Postal Voting

Generally, overseas postal voters are allowed to mail their completed ballots upon receipt thereof. Countries using the postal voting system have set different deadlines for the receipt of the postal ballot. In the case of Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Philippines and the United Kingdom, postal votes received up to the close of voting on election day are counted.

Some countries require receipt of the postal ballots prior to election day. In New Zealand, postal ballots sent to New Zealand's diplomatic missions and consulates must be received before 4:00 p.m. on the day prior to election day. In Italy, overseas postal ballots are mailed to, and must be received by, the Italian embassies and consulates not later than ten days prior to election day. In Thailand, postal ballots must be received in the diplomatic missions and consulates at least six days before election day.

On the other hand, other countries allow receipt of the postal ballots within a reasonable period after the date of elections in the home country. In Australia, postal ballots received within 13 days after election day are still counted. In the United States, the deadline for receipt of the postal ballots is determined by the individual states. Several states count postal ballots received up to 15 days after election day, but they must be postmarked by election day.

5.3 Addressee of Postal Ballots

The recipient of postal ballots also varies. In the case of Australia, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States, postal ballots must be sent to, and received by, the proper electoral boards in their respective home countries.

In the case of Indonesia, Italy, Lithuania, Philippines and Thailand, postal ballots are required to be mailed to the diplomatic mission or consulate that has jurisdiction over the overseas absentee voter.

Canada and New Zealand provide the option for voters to mail their ballots either directly to the local electoral district in the home country, or to the diplomatic missions and consulates abroad.

6. COUNTING AND CANVASSING OF VOTES

Ballots cast in person at overseas polling stations are counted and canvassed in the overseas polling station itself.

Generally, postal ballots mailed to the diplomatic missions and consulates are also counted and canvassed abroad. The exceptions are Canada, Italy and New Zealand, where the postal ballots received by embassies and consulates are forwarded to the appropriate local electoral boards in the home countries where the postal ballots are counted and canvassed.

Postal ballots sent to the local electoral board in the voter's home country are counted and canvassed in the home country.

7. POSITIONS THAT MAY BE VOTED UPON

Most of the countries that are the subject of this study allow overseas absentee voting for all federal or national elective posts such as President, Vice President and Members of Congress or Parliament, and in national referenda.

Some countries such as Australia, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, allow their overseas citizens to vote for local electoral positions in their respective countries. This follows logically from the fact that these countries require overseas voters to obtain their ballots from the local electoral authority and return them to that authority.

8. REPRESENTATION OF OVERSEAS CITIZENS IN POLICY MAKING BODIES

Several countries have already institutionalized structures and mechanisms to increase the participation of their overseas citizens in the decision-making process in their home country.

In Italy, overseas Italian voters elect 12 Deputies and 6 Senators for the Single Global Overseas Constituency in Parliament. Overseas Portuguese elect four representatives to Parliament. In the Philippines, overseas Filipinos are allowed to vote for a maximum of three members of the House of Representatives through the party-list system.

Italy, Spain and Portugal have formed consultative bodies composed of elected or appointed expatriates. These consultative bodies are organized in order to maintain and strengthen the expatriates' link to their homeland.

In Italy, a consultative body called the General Council of Italians Abroad is organized at the national level. This Council is composed of 94 members (65 elected and 25 appointed) and is consulted by the Italian government on all matters concerning overseas Italians.³ In each overseas consular district, overseas Italians elect their representatives to the Committees of Italians Abroad. These Committees, composed of 12 to 24 members, are elected by all Italians

³ *ibid.*, p. 20.

registered in each consular district. The Committees collaborate with the Italian consulates on matters affecting Italian expatriates.⁴

In Spain, Councils of Spanish Residents are formed in each consular district. The Councils are consultative bodies for the Spanish consulates on matters affecting Spanish residents abroad. These Councils are composed of 7 to 21 members in each consular district, elected at large by the Spanish citizens who are registered voters in the consular district.⁵

The counterpart consultative assembly of Portuguese citizens abroad is called the Council of Portuguese Communities, and is composed of 100 members elected by Portuguese expatriates who are registered in the Portuguese consulates.⁶

9. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Information dissemination on overseas absentee voting is generally conducted by the country's national electoral commission and its diplomatic missions and consulates abroad. Announcements about overseas absentee voting are published in foreign newspapers and propagated among the expatriate communities. The United States has its Federal Voting Assistance Program, which is designed to assist American absentee voters out of the country and in the military. Politically affiliated organizations such as Democrats Abroad and Republicans Abroad conduct information drives to increase awareness about absentee voting among overseas Americans.

In the case of the Philippines, significant interest and participation in overseas absentee voting was generated through the efforts of non-governmental organizations and Filipino communities abroad, which took an active part in the passage of the overseas absentee voting law.

Most of the countries that are the subject of this study also benefit from the information and education campaigns initiated by non-governmental organizations. There appears to be a positive relationship between the amount of effort expended on information and education campaigns on increasing awareness of the opportunity for overseas absentee voting and the actual number of registrants and voters in elections.

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⁴ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 23.

COMPARATIVE TABLE ON OVERSEAS ABSENTEE VOTING

Country	Qualification of Overseas Voters	Who/what may be voted	Voting Method	Voting Period	Deadline for Receipt of Ballots	Voting Statistics
Australia 645,000 ⁷ estimated overseas voters	A citizen ⁸ , age 18, registered voter, who must have left Australia only in past 6 years. ⁹	Members of Parliament, State and Territory elective positions if allowed by State/Territory law, referenda	Voting in person Postal voting	48 hrs. from declaration of nominations until election day; From receipt of postal ballot until election day	Up to 13 days after election day	63,016 ¹⁰ in 2001 elections or 9.77% of estimated number of overseas voters
Canada	A citizen, age 18, registered voter, and outside Canada for less than 5 consecutive years ¹¹	Federal positions, referenda	Postal voting	From receipt of postal ballot	6:00 p. m. on election day in Canada	Not available (N. A.)
Germany	A citizen, age 18, registered voter, who must have left Germany within past 25 years	Members of Parliament, Representatives to European Parliament	Postal voting	From receipt of postal ballot	6:00 p. m. on election day in Germany	36,936 (1998) 37,026(2002) ¹²
Indonesia 1.36 m (est. overseas population) ¹³	A citizen, age 17 ¹⁴ , and a registered voter	President, Vice-President, Members of Parliament for electoral district of Jakarta	Voting in person Postal voting	Election day	Election day	N. A. except for The Netherlands where turn-out was 77% ¹⁵
Italy 3.5 m (est. overseas voters)	A citizen, age 18 ¹⁶ , and a registered voter	Members of Parliament, 12 Deputies and Senators for the Single Global Overseas Constituency, referenda, Members of General Council of Italians Abroad, Representatives to European Parliament	Postal voting	From receipt of postal ballot up to 10 th day before election day in Italy	4:00 p. m. local time of Thursday prior to election day	459,545 or 21.8% turn-out in 2003 referendum ¹⁷
Lithuania 11,784 registered overseas voters	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter	President, Members of Parliament, Representatives to European Parliament, referenda	Voting in person Postal voting	Not less than 10 days	Election day	45.75% ¹⁸ 46.38%
Moldova	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter	President, Members of Parliament, referenda	Voting in person	Election day	Election day	N. A.

⁷ The Southern Cross Group, Enrolment and Voting in Australian Federal Elections for Australian Citizens Overseas (2002), p. 6 available at <http://www.southern-cross-group.org>.

⁸ British subjects who are registered voters in a Commonwealth electoral roll as of January 25, 1984 may vote.

⁹ Annual extension of registration as an overseas absentee voter is allowed.

¹⁰ Overseas citizens accounted for only 14% of votes cast. Bulk of votes cast by those temporarily abroad during election period.

¹¹ The 5 year restriction does not apply to: (a) members of Canadian forces posted abroad; (b) employees in the public service of Canada or one of its provinces posted outside of Canada; (c) employees of international organizations where Canada is a contributing member; and (d) persons living with (a), (b), and (c).

¹² http://www.destatis.de/presse/deutsch/wahl2002/statement_22_01.htm.

¹³ Asian Migrant Yearbook (2002-2003), p. 159.

¹⁴ A citizen who is married or has been married may vote even if not yet 17 years old.

¹⁵ 1,855 voted out of 2,400 registered Indonesian voters in The Netherlands for the April 2004 elections.

¹⁶ Only Italian citizens who are 25 years old are allowed to vote for senators.

¹⁷ Ministry of Interior, available at <http://cedweb.mininterno.it:8880/votanti/> and Ministry for Overseas Italians, available at http://www.ministeroitalianinelmondo.it/0004Gli_i/0020Le_Com/0063Gli_It/

¹⁸ 5,391 voted out of 11,784 registered overseas voters in the first round of the 1997 Presidential elections. Overseas voter turnout was 46.38% in second round.

New Zealand 850,000 (est. overseas population)	A citizen or permanent resident, age 18, and a registered voter ¹⁹	Representatives to Parliament, political parties for proportion of seats in Parliament, referenda	Voting in person Postal voting Fax voting	From receipt of postal ballot	Election day except postal ballots delivered to Overseas Returning Officers on day prior to elections ²⁰	11,387 overseas votes cast in 1999 general elections ²¹
Philippines 7.76 m (est. overseas population) ²²	A citizen ²³ , age 18, and a registered voter	President, Vice-President, Senators and Party-List Representatives to Congress	Voting in person Postal voting	30 days for land-based voters; 60 days for seamen	Election day	65% ²⁴
Poland	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter	President, Members of Parliament, Representatives to European Parliament, referenda	Voting in person	Election day	8:00 p. m. local time on election day	N. A.
Portugal 4.6 m (est. number of overseas Portuguese)	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter	President, 4 Representatives to Parliament, Representatives to European Parliament, Members of Council of Portuguese Communities	Voting in person Postal voting	3 days including election day for presidential elections; from receipt of postal ballot for parliamentary elections	7:00 p. m. on election day	N. A.
Russia	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter ²⁵	President, Members of Parliament, referenda	Voting in person	Election day	Election day	N. A.
Spain	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter	Members of Parliament, Representatives to European Parliament, local elective positions, referenda, Members of Councils of Spanish Residents	Postal voting	From receipt of postal ballot	Day prior to election day in Spain	N. A.
Thailand	A citizen, age 18 on January 1 in year of election, and a registered voter ²⁶	Members of Parliament	Voting in person Postal voting	Variable subject to discretion of embassy or consulate	6 days before election day in Thailand	39.53% (2000) 35.7% (2001) ²⁷
Ukraine Up to 7m overseas Ukrainians	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter. ²⁸	President, Members of Parliament, referenda	Voting in person	Election day	Election day	25.24% (1999) 42.52% (2002) ²⁹

¹⁹ Must have been in New Zealand within the past 3 years (for citizens) or within the past 12 months (for permanent residents). This rule does not apply to: (a) public servants or military personnel; (b) heads of missions or posts; (c) officers or employees of the New Zealand Trade Development Board; & (d) spouse, child or child of the spouse accompanying (a), (b), or (c).

²⁰ Allowed to be counted up to 10 days after the elections.

²¹ http://www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/reports/2000/election_e9_1999e9_partX.html.

²² The Department of Foreign Affairs estimated that the maximum estimate for overseas voter registration is 975,000 based on conditions of law.

²³ Filipino citizens who have acquired permanent resident status in another country are not allowed to vote unless they execute an affidavit declaring that they

have not applied for a foreign citizenship and that they shall resume actual physical permanent residence in the Philippines not later than 3 years from the date

of approval of their registration as an overseas absentee voter.

²⁴ 233, 092 votes cast abroad out of 364, 187 registered overseas absentee voters for the May 2004 elections.

²⁵ An oral application to register and vote on election day is allowed.

²⁶ A naturalized Thai citizen can vote only after 5 years from date of naturalization.

²⁷ 10,302 overseas votes were cast out of 26,058 registered overseas voters in 2000; 14,521 voted abroad out of 40,690 registered overseas voters in 2001.

²⁸ Must have crossed the Ukrainian border legally.

²⁹ 30,598 overseas votes were cast out of 121,201 registered overseas voters in 1999; 21,315 voted abroad out of 50,133 registered overseas voters in 2002.

United Kingdom	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter in UK within the last 15 years. ³⁰	Members of Parliament, Representatives to European Parliament, local and devolved assembly elections ³¹	Postal voting Proxy voting	From receipt of postal ballot Election day	10:00 p. m. of election day in U. K.	N. A.
USA 2-3 m. (est. number of voting age overseas Americans)	A citizen, age 18, and a registered voter	General, special, primary and run-off elections for federal offices such as the Office of the President, Vice President, or of Senator or Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, Congress; State and local offices, as may be provided by State laws.	Postal voting Fax voting E-mail voting ³²	From receipt of postal ballot	Subject to State laws; up to 15 days after election in some States	37% ³³

³⁰ Citizens, now of voting age who left UK as minors, are allowed to register if parent/guardian was a registered voter in past 15 years.

³¹ Crown Servants and employees of British Council allowed to vote in local and devolved assembly elections.

³² Missouri and North Dakota allowed e-mail voting by military voters in combat zones during 2004 elections.

³³ In the 2000 elections, the voting participation rate among non-federally employed US civilians living overseas was 37% , The voting rate among federal civilian employees overseas was 65% and the voting participation rate among the Uniformed Services was 69%.

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