

The  
Electoral  
Commission

# Media regulation and UK elections

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# The Electoral Commission

## Outline

- Print media
- Broadcast media
- Due impartiality
- Paid political advertising
- Party election broadcasts

# The Electoral Commission

## Print media

- Soft touch regulation
  - Press Complaints Commission
  - comment, conjecture and fact
- Tradition of partisan press

The Sun  
9 April 1992



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## Broadcast media

- BBC is the public service broadcaster
  - established under royal charter
  - accountable to license payers and Parliament
- Licensing and regulation of independent media
  - Independent Television Commission
  - Radio Authority
  - Office of Communications (OFCOM)

# The Electoral Commission

- Due impartiality
- Statutory requirement to achieve 'due impartiality' in programme services
  - Detailed guidance in programme codes and producers' guidelines
  - Applies at all times - not just elections
  - Doesn't mean equality of airtime
  - Coverage of minor parties
  - Impartiality can be achieved over a series of programmes

# The Electoral Commission

## Due impartiality (continued)

- Constituency reports – major party candidates invited to participate; all candidates listed
- Media analysis suspended during voting period, including opinion poll reporting

# Guidance for programme makers



RADIO  
AUTHORITY

News and  
Current Affairs Code  
and Programme  
Code

taste  
welfare of children  
editorial independence  
creativity  
impartiality  
fairness  
privacy

**PRODUCERS' GUIDELINES**

The BBC's values and standards

**BBC**



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## Paid political advertising

- Prohibition on political advertising in broadcast media
- Widespread support for this ban to continue
  - campaign spending
  - party fund-raising
  - level playing field
- European Convention on Human Rights

# The Electoral Commission

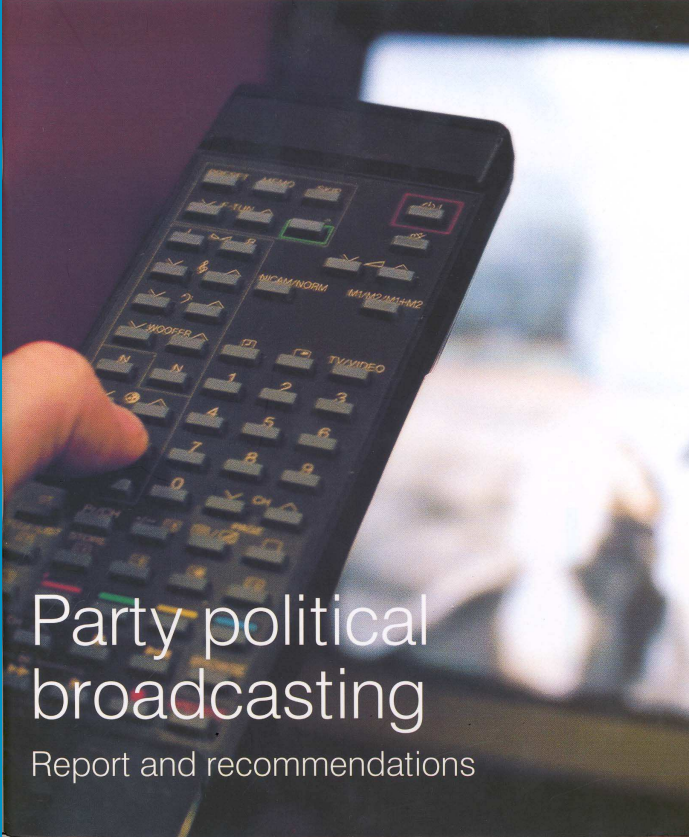
## Party election broadcasts

- BBC and main independent broadcasters obliged to carry party election broadcasts
- Airtime provided free of charge
- Regulators responsible for determining allocation, in consultation with The Electoral Commission
- Qualification for a broadcast: any party contesting one-sixth of seats
- Major parties: a series of broadcasts
- Public scepticism but a significant campaign tool

More  
information

January 2003

The  
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Commission



Party political  
broadcasting  
Report and recommendations

The  
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[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)