

EU referendum: Campaigner update

July 2015

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The UK Government has committed to hold a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union by the end of 2017. The exact date of the referendum is not yet known.

The Bill setting out how the referendum will be run and the rules campaigners must follow is currently being considered by the UK Parliament.

We are the regulator of political funding and spending. Our objective is

to ensure integrity and transparency of campaign funding and spending for voters.

We register campaigners and regulate their spending at referendums.

Once the Bill becomes law we will publish a full suite of guidance for campaigners.

Until then, we will publish a series of updates to keep you informed.

About this update

This update is based on the European Union Referendum Bill ('the Bill'). The UK Parliament has agreed the principles of the Bill and is considering amendments therefore some of the information provided in this update may change. We will highlight any changes to the Bill in future updates.

This first update covers:

- A summary of our role at the referendum
- Basic information about the referendum
- Where you can find out more information

Our role at referendums

We are responsible for:

- commenting on the wording of the referendum question
- registering campaigners
- appointing lead campaign groups
- regulating campaign finance
- raising awareness of the referendum and how to take part
- reporting on the referendum

You can find out more about our role and administration of the referendum at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

What is the question?

The question proposed in the Bill is:

'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?'

One of our statutory duties is to report on the intelligibility of the question. We will be publishing our assessment report in September 2015. The report will be available at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

When will the campaign period start?

In the run up to a referendum, there is a formal campaigning period called the 'referendum period'. We do not currently know when the referendum period will begin. The Bill provides for this period to be set once the Bill becomes law.

During the referendum period, the rules on campaign spending and donations and loans will apply and be regulated by us.

Who can campaign?

Anyone can spend up to £10,000 on campaigning during the referendum period.

If you want to spend more than this, you must register with us. Once registered, you must comply with the rules on spending, donations and loans.

Only certain mainly UK-based individuals and organisations can register.

You must register separately as a referendum campaigner even if you are already registered with us as a political party or a non-party campaigner.

We will open the register of campaigners when the Bill comes into force.

Appointment of lead campaigners

One lead campaigner can be appointed to represent each referendum outcome. Registered campaigners will be able to apply to us to be appointed as the lead campaigner for the outcome they support.

Lead campaigners have certain additional benefits such as a higher spending limit than other registered campaigners.

We must appoint lead campaigners that represent those campaigning for the outcome they support. If there is more than one suitable applicant for an outcome, we must appoint the one that represents the campaigners to the greatest extent.

We will publish guidance to explain how campaigners can apply to be a lead campaigner.

Spending limits

Registered campaigners will be subject to limits on the amount they can spend campaigning during the referendum period.

The limits for political parties are set according to the party's share of the vote at the last UK Parliamentary general election.

The Bill currently sets the limits as follows:

Lead campaigner	£7m
Political parties with:	
>30% share of the vote	£7m
>20-30% share of the vote	£5.5m
>10-20% share of the vote	£4m
>5-10% share of the vote	£3m
<5% share of the vote	£700k
Other registered campaigners	£700k

Donations and loans

Under the Bill, donations and loans to registered campaigners are regulated.

Registered campaigners will only be able to accept donations or loans over £500 from certain 'permissible' sources, mainly UK-based.

We will publish a suite of guidance to help campaigners comply with the rules on spending, donations and loans.

Reporting requirements

Registered campaigners will be required to submit a number of reports before the referendum, called 'pre-poll reports', providing information on the donations they receive and loans they enter into that are over £7,500 in the lead up to the referendum.

After the referendum, registered campaigners will be required to submit a campaign spending return which will include details of the spending they incurred campaigning at the referendum and all donations and loans they accepted over £7,500 (or add up to over that amount from the same source).

Where you can find more information

We are always happy to give prospective campaigners advice on how to comply with the rules. Please contact us on 0333 103 1928 pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Alternatively use the email addresses below.

- England:
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Scotland:
infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Wales:
infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Northern Ireland:
infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk

For other information about the referendum

On our website, www.electoralcommission.org.uk, you can find:

- more information about our role in referendums
- our key principles for running referendums
- our approach to assessing referendum questions
- our findings on the referendum question
- briefings on the Bill explaining our position on provisions where appropriate
- [guidance](#) on key roles at referendums