

## Public awareness for EU Referendum: Our plans and how you can help

17 May 2016

### Overview

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This briefing provides an update on the Electoral Commission's public awareness campaign ahead of the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union.

The main focus of the Commission's campaign is an 8-page [voting guide](#) which is being sent to every UK household. The guide has been tested with the public and contains important information people have told us will help them to participate, including:

- Who can vote
- How to register to vote and options for casting your vote
- The question and an image of the ballot paper
- A page each for the lead campaign organisations

This briefing includes information that may be useful when talking to voters about the referendum and explains how you can help get people registered.

We are encouraging everyone to put a link to the online registration site on their websites and social media and to keep it there until the deadline to register to vote in the referendum which is midnight on Tuesday 7 June.

To help you spread the message, we have created a [partner guide](#) with a wealth of template resources and social media posts for you to share with your constituents to make sure they don't miss the chance to have their say.

Please note that there has been some confusion among voters around the need to register separately for the EU Referendum, which is of course not the case. It would be really helpful if you could ensure in all your messaging around voter registration that you actively remind people that they do not need to re-register if they are already registered to vote.

## Public Awareness Campaign – ‘You Can’t Miss It’

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Following a successful campaign ahead of the elections in May 2016, during which nearly 1.2 million applications to register were made, the Electoral Commission launched its national public awareness campaign for the EU Referendum on Sunday 15 May.

A recent survey by the Commission found that one fifth of survey respondents claim they are either not registered to vote, or they are unsure if they are registered to vote in the referendum. Ahead of the EU Referendum, we want to make sure as many people as possible understand that they need to be registered if they want to vote, and how they go about doing so.

The main message in our campaign is ‘You can’t miss it’. In our [TV](#), radio, press and digital advertising we are promoting the [EU Referendum Voting Guide](#) which will be distributed to every household in the UK during the week commencing 16 May. You are of course welcome to share the electronic

version of the guide with your constituents. A range of languages and accessible formats will be [published on our website](#) over the next two weeks.



The Electoral Commission's voting guide

## Overseas Voters – ‘#ReferendumReady’

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The Electoral Commission is also running a digital registration campaign specifically targeted at overseas voters. A survey of UK citizens living overseas that we carried out revealed that half of respondents don't know that they can now register online to vote in the UK.

To help you spread the voter registration message among your overseas constituents, we have created a suite of campaign resources which is [available on our website](#).

A focal point of the overseas campaign was on #ReferendumReady Day on 10 May, with activity carried out online and in the press. Some embassies and consulates organised local events in-country in addition to the promotional activity they are already undertaking to promote voter registration.

While the registration deadline for all electors is 7 June, the Electoral Commission has been encouraging UK citizens living overseas to register to vote by 16 May to leave plenty of time for them to apply for a postal vote and then be able to receive

and return it to the UK. Now that this date has passed, we are still encouraging overseas electors to register, but are advising them to consider voting by proxy.

For those that have applied early to vote by post, the process should run more smoothly for the referendum as postal votes will be sent out earlier than usual, giving overseas voters further time to receive, complete, and return their ballot pack to the UK.

To register as an overseas voter, UK residents overseas must have previously been registered in a UK constituency within the last 15 years.

## Work with Local Authorities and Partner Organisations

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Our public awareness work also involves providing template resources for Electoral Registration Officers, Counting Officers and Regional Counting Officers to use locally as part of their public engagement work.

We are also working with a range of partners to support both the voter registration and voter information elements of the campaign. This will allow us to reach audiences not impacted by our mass media activity, and groups that our research tells us tend to be under-registered, such as home-movers, people of no fixed address, disabled people and people from BME communities.

## How You Can Help

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There are some very practical steps you and your offices can take to support the aims of the Commission's public awareness campaign.

### **Below are six ideas for how you and your offices can get involved:**

- **Use social media** – Posting on your social media channels is a great way to raise awareness of the need to register to vote and to point people to more information on how to cast their vote. Below are some example tweets that you would be welcome to use, and there are more in our [partner guide](#) as well as a range of [infographics](#) you can post-
  - Don't miss out on voting at #EURef. Find out how at <http://bit.ly/1mzppQs> #youcantmissit
  - The #EURef is on 23 June. Will you be voting? Find out if you're eligible to vote at <http://bit.ly/1mzppQs> #youcantmissit
  - On holiday 23 June? Apply for a postal or proxy vote for the #EURef Go to <http://bit.ly/1mzppQs> #youcantmissit

- **Add a link to your website** - Something as simple as putting a link to our voter information site ([www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)) on your website is a good way of encouraging your constituents to register.
- **Include an e-mail signature** – Adding an [e-banner](#) with a link to our voter information site ([www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)) to your e-mails is a good way to raise awareness. This can be set up in your automated responses, for example.
- **Put up a poster** - It is quick and easy to put up a poster in your constituency office or other advice surgery venues. Posters can be [downloaded from our website](#).
- **Raise our campaign at local meetings** – It is also worth highlighting the campaign and voter registration through any forums or partnerships that meet in your local community. For example, you could add registering to vote as an item on a future agenda
- **Include an article in your e-newsletter** – Information and messages around registration could be dropped into an e-bulletin or newsletter.

It's always a good idea to link any promotional activity you carry out to key milestones in the campaign, such as those listed below-

- **31 May** – One week until registration deadline
- **7 June** – Last day to register
- **16 June** – One week until polling day (make sure you know how to vote)
- **23 June** – Polling day (make sure you know where/how to vote)



An example of our infographics for use on social media

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For further information, please contact **Lisa Camps** in our Public Affairs team on 020 7271 0619 or [lcamps@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:lcamps@electoralcommission.org.uk).