

Campaigning and registering for EU Referendum campaigners

This document is for campaigners who want to know about the rules on campaigning for the referendum on UK membership of the EU and how to register as a referendum campaigner

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Translations and other formats

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Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk

Terms and expressions we use

We use '**must**' when we refer to a specific legal or regulatory requirement. We use '**should**' for items we consider to be minimum good practice, but which are not legal requirements. You do not have to follow this guidance, but if you do, you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law.

Our approach to enforcement

The Commission regulates political funding and spending in a way that is effective, proportionate and fair. We are committed to providing those we regulate with a clear understanding of their regulatory obligations through our guidance documents and advice service. If you are unsure of how any of the rules apply to you, please call us for advice. We are happy to help, so please get in touch.

We use advice and guidance proactively in order to secure compliance. And we take enforcement action, using our investigatory powers and sanctions, where it is necessary and proportionate to do so in order to meet our enforcement aims and objectives.

If you do not comply with legal or regulatory requirements you or your organisation may be subject to civil or criminal sanctions. You can find more information about the Commission's approach to enforcement at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/enforcement

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Campaigning and registering for EU Referendum campaigners

This document explains:

The rules on campaigning at the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union and how to register as a campaigner.

The document covers:

- campaigners at the referendum
- registering as a campaigner
- roles and responsibilities for registered campaigners
- using imprints
- designated campaign groups

Related documents:

- [Pre poll reporting for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Donations for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Loans for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Designation process for the EU Referendum](#)
- [Timetable and reporting deadlines at the EU Referendum](#)

Expert papers:

- [Splitting spending](#)

Summary

Under the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) as amended by the European Union Referendum Act 2015 (the Act), there are rules about what referendum campaigners can do in the run-up to referendums.

This document takes you through key information on the rules on campaigning and how to register as a campaigner.

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Introduction

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA), we have certain statutory responsibilities in relation to the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU.

Our objectives for the referendum are:

- it should be well-run and produce results that are accepted
- there should be integrity and transparency of campaign funding and spending

The guidance reflects the rules in PERPA as amended by the European Union Referendum Act 2015. The Act provides that the government may make changes to the rules in regulations. If this happens, we will update our guidance and webpages with the changes.



Important

The Act does not specify the length of the designation period, the length of the referendum period or the dates on which those periods will start. The government must make regulations that set out the length of the referendum period and the start date. We will update our [website](#) when these regulations are made.

Campaigners at referendums

We encourage active participation by campaigners as part of a healthy democracy. During the referendum, individuals or organisations can campaign for a particular outcome. These campaigners will be subject to certain rules on spending and donations.

Organising a campaign

You can find out more about organising a campaign in [Referendum campaign 'dos' and 'don'ts'](#). This document also includes good practice suggestions to help you with your campaign.

When you need to register with us

You must not spend more than £10,000 on campaigning during the referendum period unless you have prior to doing so registered with us to become a 'registered campaigner'.

If you do not register, or are not eligible to register, you cannot spend more than £10,000 on campaigning during the regulated referendum period.

You can apply to register as a campaigner from 1 February 2016.

As part of your application, you must provide certain details about yourself or your organisation. You must also tell us which side of the debate you are campaigning for.

You can register as a campaigner either [online](#) or by completing form [EUR1](#).

Registered political or non-party campaigners need to register separately as campaigners for the referendum.

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We will not register a campaigner that has a name that is offensive or obscene. We may decide that a name is offensive or obscene if it:



- contains offensive language or terminology
- links something generally accepted to be offensive with a particular group of people

This is a legal requirement for unincorporated associations only. UK-registered political parties will already have met this test when registering with us as a party.

The benefits and responsibilities of registering with us

Registering as a campaigner gives you:

- a spending limit above £10,000
- access to the electoral register to help your campaign within the UK and Gibraltar
- the right to appoint agents (i.e. representatives) to attend postal vote opening sessions, polling stations and the counting of votes
- responsibility for recording and reporting certain donation, loans and referendum spending

For more information on spending limits see:

- [Spending for EU Referendum Campaigners](#)

Who can register as a campaigner?

Only the following types of individuals or organisations can register as campaigners:

- an individual who is resident in the UK or registered on a UK electoral register
- an individual registered on the Gibraltar electoral register
- a UK- registered political party or a political party established in Gibraltar
- a UK-registered company which is incorporated in the EU and carries on business in the UK
- a Gibraltar-registered company which is incorporated in the EU and carries on business in Gibraltar
- a UK-registered or Gibraltar-registered trade union
- a UK-registered or Gibraltar-registered building society
- a UK-registered limited liability partnership which carries on business in the UK
- a Gibraltar-registered limited liability partnership which carries on business in Gibraltar
- a UK-registered friendly, industrial or provident society
- a UK-based unincorporated association that carries on the majority of its business or other activities in the UK
- a Gibraltar-based unincorporated association that carries on the majority of its business or other activities in Gibraltar
- a body incorporated by Royal Charter
- a UK charitable incorporated organisation
- a Scottish partnership which carries on business in the UK

For information on Gibraltar Political Parties see:

- [Gibraltar and the EU Referendum](#)

For more information on governments or public bodies campaigning at the referendum see:

- [Public bodies and EU Referendum Material](#)

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Charities

Charities can register as referendum campaigners if they are eligible to register and the rules on the referendum will apply in the same way to charities as for all other campaigners.

However, referendum campaigning, or political activity must be undertaken by a charity only in the context of supporting the delivery of its charitable purposes. Before you decide to register as a campaigner you should read the guidance on campaigning and political activity issued by your charity regulator to ensure that as a charity you can properly undertake referendum campaigning in accordance with charity law.

For more information please contact your charity regulator:

- [Charity Commission for England and Wales](#)
- [Office of the Scottish Charity regulator](#)
- [The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland](#)

How to register as a campaigner?

If you want to register, you can make an online application by visiting [PEF Online](#). Alternatively, you can register with us by filling in [Form EUR1](#) and posting it to us. We can also accept a scanned copy of the form by [email](#).

Registration usually takes five working days. We will consider the information you have provided and confirm in writing when your registration is in force.

Roles and responsibilities for registered campaigners

Responsible person

All registered campaigners must have a 'responsible person'. This person is responsible for making sure that the campaigner's finances comply with the rules on spending, donations and loans.

If a political party (unless a minor party) registers as a campaigner, their registered treasurer will be their 'responsible person'. Individual registered campaigners will be responsible persons for their own campaigns. All other campaigners will need to register a responsible person with us.

You cannot act as responsible person for more than one campaigner.

Agents at the referendum

The rules on appointing agents at a referendum will be in regulations published by the government. The information below is based on the draft conduct rules published by the government. These rules may change. We will advise campaigners if this happens on our [website](#).

Referendum agents

Referendum agents can appoint people to attend postal vote opening sessions, polling stations and the counting of votes. There will be a deadline for the appointment of referendum agents. The relevant dates will be published in the guidance on the timetable and reporting deadlines at the EU Referendum.

For more information see this document:

- [Spending for EU Referendum campaigners](#)

 Important

For more information see this document:

- [Timetable and reporting deadlines at the EU Referendum](#)

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Postal voting agents

Postal voting agents can observe the opening of returned postal votes.

Polling agents

Polling agents can access polling stations to check that voting procedures are followed correctly.

Counting agents

Counting agents observe the counting process (at a local level) on behalf of a campaigner to check that the count is undertaken properly and the votes are correctly counted.

Referendum finance and spending

Pre-poll reporting for referendum campaigners

In the run up the referendum, registered campaigners (other than registered political parties but including minor parties) must report certain donations and loans to us. This is called pre-poll reporting and you can find more information on the rules [here](#).

Registered campaigners must submit pre-poll reports by certain deadline dates, setting out what donations they have received and loans they have entered into on or after 1 February 2016 that are over £7,500. This includes loans entered into before the campaigner registers. Spending on referendum campaigning before the start of the referendum period does not count towards your spending limit.

The date from which the reporting requirements will apply, the start of the referendum period, and the reporting deadlines, will be set out in regulations made by the government. We will advise campaigners when this happens on our [website](#). You should keep accurate records of your donations that you use or intend to use on referendum campaigning (whether before or during the official referendum period) so that you can comply with this reporting requirement.

For more information see these documents:

- [Pre-poll reporting for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Spending for EU Referendum Campaigners](#)
- [Donations for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Loans for EU Referendum campaigners](#)

Political parties

UK-registered political parties do not need to complete pre-poll reporting. This is because parties that register as campaigners must continue reporting donations and loans to us every quarter as usual.

UK-registered political parties and parties established in Gibraltar that are not UK-registered cannot make donations to other registered campaigners, except to designated lead campaign groups.

Gibraltar based political parties can register under several categories of campaigners. More information can be found in our [factsheet on Gibraltar and the EU Referendum](#).

Reporting after the referendum

All registered campaigners including political parties must report their campaign spending after the referendum.

Registered campaigners (except political parties) must also include details of certain donations and loans in their campaign spending return. We publish the returns on our [website](#).

Registered campaigners' responsibilities

There are rules on checking, accepting and reporting donations before the referendum. There is a formal campaign period called the referendum period when the rules on spending will apply. This time period will be set out in regulations. Once the dates have been announced we will publish a timetable on our [website](#).

Referendum campaign spending

Under the legislation, you must follow the rules and limits on campaign spending in the run up to the referendum. You must also record your spending and report it to us.

Referendum spending means spending on certain types of items and activities for the purposes of your campaign.

For more information see this document:

- [Spending for EU Referendum campaigners](#)

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Campaign donations and loans

There are rules about accepting donations or loans for referendum spending.

Donations include money, goods, property or services given to a campaigner without charge or on non-commercial terms or sponsorship.

Loans include securities, guarantees and credit facilities such as credit cards and overdrafts.

You can only accept donations or enter into loans with a value of more than £500 for referendum spending during the referendum period from certain, mainly UK and Gibraltar based sources. We call these 'permissible sources'.

Before you accept a donation you must take all reasonable steps to check that the source is permissible. If you have not returned a donation within 30 days of receiving it, you will be deemed to have accepted it, so you will need to have completed these checks within that time. You should also carry out these checks before accepting any donation received before you register as a campaigner.

If the donor is not permissible, you must return the donation within the same 30-day period.

You must not enter into a loan with a lender who is impermissible, so permissibility checks should be carried out before you do so.

 Important

For more information see this document:

- [Donations for EU Referendum campaigners](#)

Using imprints

What is an imprint?

An imprint is added to referendum material that is published during the referendum period to show who is responsible for its production. It helps to ensure that there is transparency about who is campaigning at a referendum.

What must you include?

On printed material such as leaflets and posters, you must include the name and address of:

- the printer, and
- the promoter

The promoter is the person who has caused the material to be printed. If you are registered with us as a referendum campaigner, this may be the person notified to us as the 'responsible person', or someone authorised by them to incur spending.

If the promoter is acting on behalf of a person or organisation, you must also include the person's or organisation's name and address.

You can use either home or office addresses.

It is an offence not to include an imprint on printed campaign material which is made available to the public during the referendum period.

Example of an imprint

A standard imprint on campaign material should look like this:

Printed by T Collins Printing Ltd, 22 Thornfields Avenue, Stockport. Promoted by J Smith on behalf of the Campaign Group, both of 110 High Street, Manchester.

There are restrictions on the information which can be issued by public bodies during a referendum. See this document:

- [Public bodies and the EU Referendum](#)

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Where do you put the imprint?

If your material is a single-sided document – such as a window poster – or where most of the information is on one side, you must put the imprint on the face of the document.

If it is a multi-sided document, you must put it on the first or last page.

If it is in a newspaper or periodical, the name and address of the printer of the newspaper or periodical must appear on the its first or last page, and the name and address of the promoter (and of any person on whose behalf the material is being published, if not the promoter) must appear in the advertisement.

Websites and other electronic material

As good practice, we recommend that you should put an imprint on electronic material, such as websites and emails. The imprint should include the name and address of the promoter and the organisation on whose behalf it has been produced. You should include an imprint unless the size or format of the campaign material would mean that the imprint is not legible.

Where it is not reasonably practicable to place the full imprint on the campaign material you should consider how to provide some other means for the material to be associated with you.

Designated lead campaign groups

A designated lead campaigner is the lead campaign group for one side of the debate. It will act as the lead campaign group on behalf of those campaigning for that outcome

Under PPERA we will be designating a lead campaigner for each outcome at the referendum. PPERA sets out a statutory test we must apply when assessing applications to be a lead campaigner. Registered campaigners can apply to us to become designated as the lead campaigner

If designated lead campaign groups are appointed for both outcomes they have the benefit of a higher spending limit of £7 million, sending information to voters free of charge, referendum campaign broadcasts, free use of certain public rooms and a grant from us.

If a lead campaign group is appointed on only one side of the referendum then that campaigner has a higher spending limit of £7 million, can send information to voters free of charge and has free use of certain public rooms but does not receive the grant of up to £600,000 or the referendum campaigner broadcasts.

Designation process

The designation timetable will be set out in regulations. Once the dates have been announced we will publish a timetable on our [website](#).

Where there is one applicant for an outcome we shall designate unless we are not satisfied that they adequately represents those campaigning for that outcome. Where there are two or more we will designate whichever of the applicants appears to us to represent to the greatest extent those campaigning for that outcome.

If we consider that no campaigner adequately represents those campaigning for an outcome, we cannot designate a lead campaign group for that outcome.

For more information see:

- [Designation process for the EU Referendum](#)

How we can help

You can find more information in the guidance documents we have suggested in this document, or you can view our full range of guidance and up-to-date resources on our website.

You can contact us on one of the phone numbers or email addresses below. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

Call us on:

- **England:** 0333 103 1928
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Scotland:** 0333 103 1928
infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Wales:** 0333 103 1929
infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Northern Ireland:** 0333 103 1928
infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Visit us at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

We welcome feedback on our guidance – just email us at:
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk