

## Publicly funded bodies and the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU

Conduct of the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU is governed by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) as amended by the European Union Referendum Act 2015.

Our objectives for the referendum are that:

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

Under PERA, there will be restrictions on the material that UK and devolved government ministers, government departments, local

authorities and certain bodies receiving public funds can publish about the referendum from 27 May 2016 to polling day 23 June 2016.

The restrictions relate to publishing general information about the referendum as well as about the issues and arguments for or against the UK remaining or leaving the EU. The restrictions also apply to material designed to encourage people to vote.

This factsheet explains the restrictions, and where you can find out more information.

## When do the restrictions apply?

The restrictions apply from the 27 May 2016 until the end of polling day, 23 June 2016.

These dates are based on regulations introduced by the government and are subject to parliamentary approval. If these dates change we will update our [website](#).

## What do the restrictions cover?

The restrictions cover any material, made available to the public or a section of the public, in any form and by whatever means which:

- provides general information about the referendum – including material that doesn't support one outcome or the other
- deals with any of the issues raised by the referendum question
- gives arguments for or against a particular outcome
- is designed to encourage people to vote at the referendum

The restrictions do **not** cover:

- material made available to persons in response to specific requests for information or to persons specifically seeking access to it
- the issue of press notices

- anything done by or on behalf of:
  - a designated lead campaigner
  - the Electoral Commission including Counting Officers and Regional Counting Officers acting in this capacity
- information about the holding of the poll, such as the date of the referendum or the location of polling stations

The UK government is under a legal duty to publish a report providing information on the outcome of the negotiations between member states and about the membership of the EU before the 15 April 2016.

Publication of these reports is not covered by the restriction on publishing material.

## Who is covered by the restrictions?

- UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland government ministers
- UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland government departments
- the Government of Gibraltar and Gibraltar government departments
- local authorities
- any other person or body whose expenses are mainly or wholly paid out of public funds (including Gibraltar public funds) or by a local authority excluding the BBC, Sianel Pedwar Cymru or the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation

## What about other organisations?

Anyone else can publish material about the referendum during this 28 day period.

Anyone publishing material that supports a referendum outcome must comply with the rules on campaigning and spending at the referendum. You can find our guidance for campaigners on our [website](#).

## What happens if you think there is a breach of the restrictions?

The Electoral Commission has no powers under PPERA to sanction bodies who do not comply with these restrictions.

However, we will monitor and take all reasonable steps to secure compliance with the restrictions. This includes providing advice and guidance and, where appropriate, referring a matter to the appropriate body.

If you have concerns that a body may have breached these restrictions, you should make a complaint to the appropriate organisation listed below. If you are not sure which organisation to contact, or if the organisation is not listed in the table, please contact us for advice.

To make a complaint you should contact:

	Contact
UK government ministers and government departments	Cabinet Office <a href="mailto:proprietyandethicsteam@cabineoffice.gov.uk">proprietyandethicsteam@cabineoffice.gov.uk</a>
Scottish government ministers and government departments	Cabinet Secretariat <a href="mailto:CabinetSecretariat3@gov.scot">CabinetSecretariat3@gov.scot</a>
Welsh government ministers and government departments	Complaints Advice Unit 02920 801378 <a href="http://gov.wales/contact_us/makeacomplaint/?lang=en">http://gov.wales/contact_us/makeacomplaint/?lang=en</a>
Northern Ireland Executive	Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service's office <a href="mailto:hocs@ofmdfmni.gov.uk">hocs@ofmdfmni.gov.uk</a>
Local authorities	Contact the relevant local authority

# 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 or email us on:

- England: 0333 103 1928  
[pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)
- Scotland: 0333 103 1928  
[infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk)
- Wales: 0333 103 1929  
[infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk)
- Northern Ireland: 0333 103 1928  
[infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk)