

2014 European Parliamentary general election

Campaign spending report

December 2014

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1 Introduction

About our role and this report

1.1 The Electoral Commission is an independent body which reports directly to the UK Parliament. We regulate political party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections. We put voters first by working to support a healthy democracy, where elections and referendums are based on our principles of trust, participation, and no undue influence.

- **Trust:** people should be able to trust the way our elections and our political finance system work
- **Participation:** it should be straightforward for people to participate in our elections and our political finance system, whether voting or campaigning; and people should be confident that their vote counts
- **No undue influence:** there should be no undue influence in the way our elections and our political finance system work

1.2 This report provides an overview of the campaign spending and donations rules at the 2014 European Parliamentary election. It also provides links to more information about how much was spent at the election and donations given for the purpose of meeting campaign spending at these elections.

1.3 If you also want to obtain information on the conduct of the election and regulatory issues arising during the polls, read our [full report on the administration of the election](#)¹.

About these elections

1.4 At the 2014 European Parliamentary elections, political parties, candidates and non-party campaigners spent a total of just over £10.8 million.

1.5 There were 31 political parties contesting 70 seats across Great Britain and 10 contesting three seats in Northern Ireland. Three political parties, No2EU, Britain First and Communities United Party did not meet the statutory deadline for providing a return. These failures to meet the deadline are being considered in line with the Electoral Commission's enforcement policy which is available on our [website](#).

¹ The Electoral Commission, *The European Parliamentary elections and local government elections in Northern Ireland May 2014: Report on the administration of the 22 May 2014 elections* (July, 2014)
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/169867/EP-and-local-elections-report-May-2014.pdf

1.6 Political parties spent a total of £8,440,434 in England, £955,815 in Scotland, £499,971 in Wales and £296,651 in Northern Ireland. There were no individual candidates contesting these elections in Great Britain. Candidates in Northern Ireland spent a total of £391,466.

1.7 As of 15 December 2014, five non-party campaigners who were registered with the Commission submitted spending returns after the election. All of these non-party campaigners submitted their spending returns on time. These non-party campaigners spent a total of £187,173 in England, £16,460 in Scotland, £11,177 in Wales and £3,224 in Northern Ireland. They received a total of £127,400 in reportable donations².

1.8 More information on campaign spending and the funding of political parties and non-party campaigners can be found on our website. This contains visualisations that allow you to interrogate what political parties and non-party campaigners have reported to us. For example, how much they spent on campaigning at this and previous European Parliamentary elections. You can find these visualisations via the links below:

- Campaign spending by [political parties](#) at the election
- Campaign spending by [non-party campaigners](#) at the election
- Donations to [political parties](#)
- Loans to [political parties](#)

1.9 You can also get the raw data submitted to us via [PEF Online](#), our online database.

1.10 Our regulatory work at these polls in the six months before polling day (22 November 2013 and 22 May 2014) included:

- **Registering** 47 new political parties, of which six went on to contest the European elections.
- **Publishing and updating** written guidance for candidates and agents, political parties and non-party campaigners.
- **Delivering training** sessions for candidates, political parties and their staff on the rules at these polls.
- **Providing advice** in response to over 1,400 enquiries from political parties, candidates and non-party campaigners.
- **Undertaking campaign and campaigner monitoring** to ensure the rules were being followed; and taking regulatory action where necessary³.

1.11 Information about alleged breaches of the rules and any sanctions we have imposed can be found on our [website](#).

² On Thursday 23 September the Commission published the details of spending by parties and non-party campaigners that spent less than £250,000 at the European Parliamentary elections. The total amount of spending reported by non-party campaigners has been amended following checks to their spending returns. One non-party campaigner submitted a return unnecessarily, making the previously published figure higher than it should have been.

³ For more information on why we monitor read our risk policy [Prioritising Our Regulatory Activity](#) and our [Enforcement Policy](#) for information on when take regulatory action.

2 Campaign spending and donation rules

Overview

Political parties and non-party campaigners

2.1 The 2014 European Parliamentary general election (EPE) was the third of these polls where political parties and non-party campaigners campaigned under the framework of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA). The framework sets limits on campaign spending by political parties and non-party campaigners in the run-up to the poll, which is known as the “regulated period”. At the 2014 EPE, the regulated period for political parties and non-party campaigners ran for four months before the day of poll, between 23 January and 22 May 2014.

2.2 Every political party contesting seats and all non-party campaigners incurring regulated spending at these polls had to submit a return to the Commission after the election. These spending returns had to detail all of their regulated spending, including invoices and receipts for payments they made over £200 in value. Political parties and non-party campaigners had to submit their spending returns before the following deadlines:

- Within three months of polling day, 22 August 2014, for those spending under £250,000
- Within six months of polling day, 22 November 2014, for those spending over £250,000

2.3 Any political party or non-party campaigner spending over £250,000 during the regulated period had to have their spending return independently audited.

2.4 As well as controls on spending, there are also rules governing the funding of campaigners. In Great Britain, political parties and non-party campaigners could only accept donations over £500 if they came from “permissible sources”⁴. Political parties entering into commercial loan agreements over this amount were only allowed to do so with “permissible lenders”⁵. Political parties contesting the election in Northern Ireland could

⁴ The list of permissible donors includes individuals registered on a UK electoral register including overseas electors and those leaving bequests, most UK-registered companies, political parties registered in Great Britain, UK-registered trade unions, UK-registered building societies, UK-registered limited liability partnerships (LLP) that carry on business in the UK, UK-registered friendly societies, UK-based unincorporated associations that carry on business or other activities in the UK.

⁵ The Electoral Commission, *Overview of loans to political parties (GB)*
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/102264/to-loans-rp.pdf

also accept donations and loans from certain permissible Irish sources⁶. Commercial loans to non-party campaigners are not currently regulated.

2.5 More details on the spending limits and reporting requirements for political parties and non-party campaigners can be found in the section below.

2.6 A list of the political parties contesting seats in Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the descriptions they used on the ballot paper can be found in the Appendix.

Candidates

2.7 Separate from the rules on political party spending, there were also rules on how much candidates could spend at these elections.

2.8 In Great Britain, individual candidates – those who weren't standing for a political party – were regulated under The European Parliamentary Elections Regulations 2004 (as amended). Spending promoting candidates on a political parties' list was regulated under the rules for political parties.

2.9 In Northern Ireland, all candidates, whether standing as independents or on behalf of a political party, were regulated under The European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

2.10 The regulated period for candidates ran from Monday 14 April⁷ until 22 May 2014. Candidates could only accept donations over £50 towards their campaign if the contributions came from a permissible UK source. There are currently no rules about commercial loans to candidates at European Parliamentary elections.

2.11 There were no individual candidates in Great Britain at the 2014 EPE. There were 10 candidates standing for political parties in Northern Ireland.

⁶ The Electoral Commission, *Overview of donations to political parties (NI)* http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/131373/to-donations-rp-ni.pdf and The Electoral Commission, *Overview of loans to political parties (NI)* http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/131375/to-loans-rp-ni.pdf

⁷ The regulated period for candidates standing in the combined South West region (which includes Gibraltar) started from 10 April 2014.

Political parties

Spending

2.12 The spending limit for each political party in the regulated period was based on how many seats they were contesting.

2.13 For the 2014 election, the limit was £45,000 multiplied by the number of seats they were contesting in that particular part of the UK.

| Part of the UK | Total number of seats | Maximum spending limit |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| England | 60 | £2,700,000 |
| Scotland | 6 | £270,000 |
| Wales | 4 | £180,000 |
| Northern Ireland | 3 | £135,000 |

2.14 Visit our [website](#) and [PEF Online](#) for more details on how much political parties spent at these polls during the regulated period.

Donations and loans

2.15 In Great Britain and Northern Ireland, donations and loans over £7,500 in value to political parties' headquarters, or over £1,500 in value to their local branches ("accounting units") have to be reported to us on a quarterly basis. In Great Britain, we are required to publish information on donations and loans to political parties to improve transparency in the political process. We do this by publishing the information via [PEF Online](#), our online database.

2.16 Political parties in Northern Ireland must report donations and loans in the same way as in Great Britain. However, this information is currently kept confidential under provisions in the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, due to concerns that disclosing the names of those who made contributions to parties in Northern Ireland could cause intimidation or threats to personal safety.

2.17 In March 2014 Parliament passed the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014, which allows the UK Government to provide for more transparency on party funding in Northern Ireland. The Government is currently considering secondary legislation that would give effect to these provisions.

Candidates

Spending and donations

2.18 The spending limit for individual candidates at the 2014 election was £45,000 multiplied by the number of seats available in the area they were contesting. Details of any donations over £50 they received towards this spending had to be included in their spending return after the poll.

2.19 In Great Britain individual candidates' spending returns have to be submitted to the appropriate Regional Returning Officer within 50 days of the result being declared. The returns would then be available for inspection for 12 months from the date of their receipt and copies would be available on request for a small fee. However, no individual candidates contested this election in Great Britain.

2.20 In Northern Ireland, candidate spending returns had to be submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer within 50 days of the result being declared. The returns are available for inspection for 12 months from the date of their receipt and copies may be obtained for a small fee. The 10 candidates standing in Northern Ireland all stood on behalf of political parties.

Non-party campaigners

Spending

2.21 Non-party campaign spending was regulated if it was incurred for the purpose of meeting "election material" that was distributed during the regulated period (23 January to 22 May 2014). This is material (e.g. leaflets, adverts and websites) that could reasonably be regarded as intended to influence who voters voted for at the election.

2.22 If a non-party campaigner wanted to spend over £10,000 in England during the regulated period on election material, or £5,000 in any of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, they had to register with the Commission. Registering with the Commission gave them access to higher spending limits.

2.23 For the 2014 election, the spending limits for registered non-party campaigners were:

| Part of the UK | Spending limit |
|------------------|----------------|
| England | £159,750 |
| Scotland | £18,000 |
| Wales | £11,259 |
| Northern Ireland | £6,750 |

2.24 Visit our [website](#) and [PEF Online](#) for more details on how much registered non-party campaigners spent on election material at these polls during the regulated period.

Donations

2.25 Donations over £7,500 in value towards non-party campaigners' regulated spending had to be reported to us in the spending returns submitted to the Commission after the election. Non-party campaigners also had to report the total value of all other donations over £500 they received towards regulated spending.

2.26 There were no rules on commercial loans to non-party campaigners at these elections.

Visit [PEF Online](#) for more details on donations given for the purpose of meeting regulated spending by non-party campaigners.

Appendix

List of parties standing candidates in Great Britain and their descriptions used on the European Parliamentary election ballot papers

| Party Name | Descriptions used on the ballot paper in the different electoral regions of Great Britain |
|---|---|
| 4 Freedoms Party (UK EPP) | Europe's Leading City Europe's Leading Party |
| An Independence from Europe | UK Independence Now |
| Animal Welfare Party | For People, Animals and the Environment |
| Britain First | Defending the Union 2014 Remember Lee Rigby |
| British National Party | Because we make Britain Better Fighting Unsustainable Housing Because We Care Re-elect Nick Griffin |
| Christian Peoples Alliance | |
| Communities United Party | |
| Conservative Party | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig / Welsh Conservatives For a real change in Europe Scottish Conservatives Vote No to Independence |
| English Democrats | I'm English, NOT British, NOT European Putting England First! |
| Europeans Party | Modern United Europeans |
| Green Party / Green Party / Plaid Werdd | Green Party Stop Fracking Now |
| Harmony Party | Zero-immigration, Anti-EU, Pro-jobs Zero-immigration, More Jobs, Anti-Globalization |
| Labour Party / Labour Party / Llafur | |
| Liberal Democrats | Liberal Democrats Scottish Liberal Democrats |
| Liberty Great Britain | Faithful to tradition, revolutionary in outlook. |
| National Health Action Party | Patients not Profits |
| National Liberal Party - True Liberalism | National Liberal Party - Self-determination for all! |
| NO2EU | Yes to Workers' Rights Yes to Workers' Rights / Ie I Hawliau'r Gweithwyr |
| Pirate Party UK | The Pirate Party UK |

| | |
|---|--|
| Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales | Plaid Cymru - Cymru'n Gyntaf / Plaid Cymru - Wales First |
| Scottish Green Party | |
| Scottish National Party | Make Scotland's Mark in Europe |
| Socialist Equality Party | Join the fight for social equality! |
| Socialist Labour Party / Plaid Lafur Sosialaidd | |
| The Peace Party - Non-violence, Justice, Environment | |
| The Roman Party.AVE | |
| The Socialist Party of Great Britain | World Socialist Movement |
| UK Independence Party (UKIP) | UK Independence Party (UKIP) |
| We Demand A Referendum Now | RE-ELECT NIKKI SINCLAIRE MEP |
| Yorkshire First | A voice for the region |
| YOURvoice | yourvoiceparty.org.uk |

List of parties standing candidates in Northern Ireland and their descriptions used on the ballot paper at the European Parliamentary elections

| Party Name | Description |
|--|---|
| Alliance - Alliance Party of Northern Ireland | Alliance Party |
| NI21 | Aspire to Better |
| Green Party | Green Party |
| Sinn Féin | Sinn Féin |
| Conservative and Unionist Party | NI Conservatives |
| SDLP (Social Democratic & Labour Party) | SDLP (Social Democratic & Labour Party) |
| Traditional Unionist Voice – TUV | Traditional Unionist Voice - TUV |
| Democratic Unionist Party - D.U.P. | Democratic Unionist Party - D.U.P. |
| Ulster Unionist Party | Ulster Unionist Party |
| UK Independence Party (UK I P) | UK Independence Party (UKIP) |