

Situations and procedures

The designation process

This document is for referendum campaigners who want to know more about the process of designation of lead campaign groups at the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union.

Updated 3 March 2016

The designation process

PEF Online
EUR2

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Translations and other formats

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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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The designation process

This document explains:

The process for designation of lead campaign groups at the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union.

The document covers:

- designated lead campaign group benefits
- how lead campaign groups are designated
- the statutory tests
- the designation period and processes
- how you apply to be a lead campaign group

Related documents:

- [Campaigning and registering for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Spending for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Timetable and reporting deadlines at the EU Referendum](#)

Forms and explanations:

- [Form EUR1 – Application to register as a campaigner in a referendum](#)
- [Form EUR2 – Application for lead campaign group status at the EU Referendum](#)

Summary

Under the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) as amended by the European Union Referendum Act 2015 (the Act), the Electoral Commission can appoint lead campaign groups for each side of a referendum campaign or for one side only.

Registered campaigners can apply to be designated lead campaign groups.

This document sets out the principles of designation and gives an overview of the designation decision process.

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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

What are designated lead campaign groups?

During the referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, registered referendum campaigners can apply to become designated lead campaign groups.

One lead campaign group can represent each side of the referendum debate. They act as the lead campaign group on behalf of those campaigning for that outcome.

We welcome all applications, including those from umbrella organisations formed by campaign groups working together.

Under our statutory role we must make sure that the lead campaign groups adequately represent those campaigning for each outcome. We can designate a lead campaign group for both referendum outcomes or one outcome or we can decide not to designate a group for an outcome if they do not meet the statutory test.

See the following guidance for more information:

- [Campaigning and registering for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Spending for EU Referendum Campaigners](#)

Lead campaign group benefits

Lead campaign groups have certain benefits in addition to those given to registered campaigners. These include:

- a higher spending limit of £7 million
- one free distribution of information to voters
- the use of certain public rooms
- referendum campaign broadcasts
- a grant of up to £600,000, to be used for certain spending including the administration costs associated with setting up and running a referendum campaign and the costs associated with the TV broadcasts and free mailing to voters that they are entitled to as lead campaigners

We will work with the designated lead campaign groups to help them access these benefits.

In addition to the statutory benefits, lead campaign groups can have:

- a dedicated page in the Commission's public information booklet which will be distributed to all households in the UK (in both English language and bilingual English/Welsh language versions)
- the inclusion in the booklet of a link to a page on the campaigner's website, which should include their opinion on what will happen in the event of either referendum result

If a lead campaign group is appointed on only one side of the referendum then that campaigner does **not** receive the grant of up to £600,000 or the referendum campaigner broadcasts, the content in the Commission's public awareness booklet or the link in the booklet to the campaigner's website.

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You must send the booklet page, website link and website content with your application form by 31 March. The content needs to be provided in the format specified so please read the [instructions](#).



This is **not** part of the application process and will not be taken into account when we consider applications.

Lead campaign group responsibilities

Lead campaign groups, must follow the same rules as all registered campaigners. In addition, any spending incurred while working with a non-lead campaigner will count towards the spending limit of the lead campaigner only.

See the following guidance for more information:

- [Working together for referendum campaigners](#)
- [Spending for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Donations for EU Referendum campaigners](#)
- [Loans for EU Referendum campaigners](#)

How are lead campaign groups designated?

Under PPERA, we designate lead campaigners. We must apply certain statutory tests when designating lead campaign groups in the run up to the EU Referendum.

All registered campaigners can apply to us to become a lead campaign group. We assess campaigners based on the statutory tests. The tests are:

- if there is only one applicant for an outcome, the Commission shall designate an applicant unless it is not satisfied that it adequately represents those campaigning for that outcome
- if there is more than one applicant for an outcome, the Commission shall designate whichever of the applicants appears to the Commission to represent to the greatest extent those campaigning for that outcome

We can designate for one side of the debate only or for neither side if we receive no applicants for an outcome or if we are not satisfied that any of the applicants adequately represent those supporting a particular outcome.

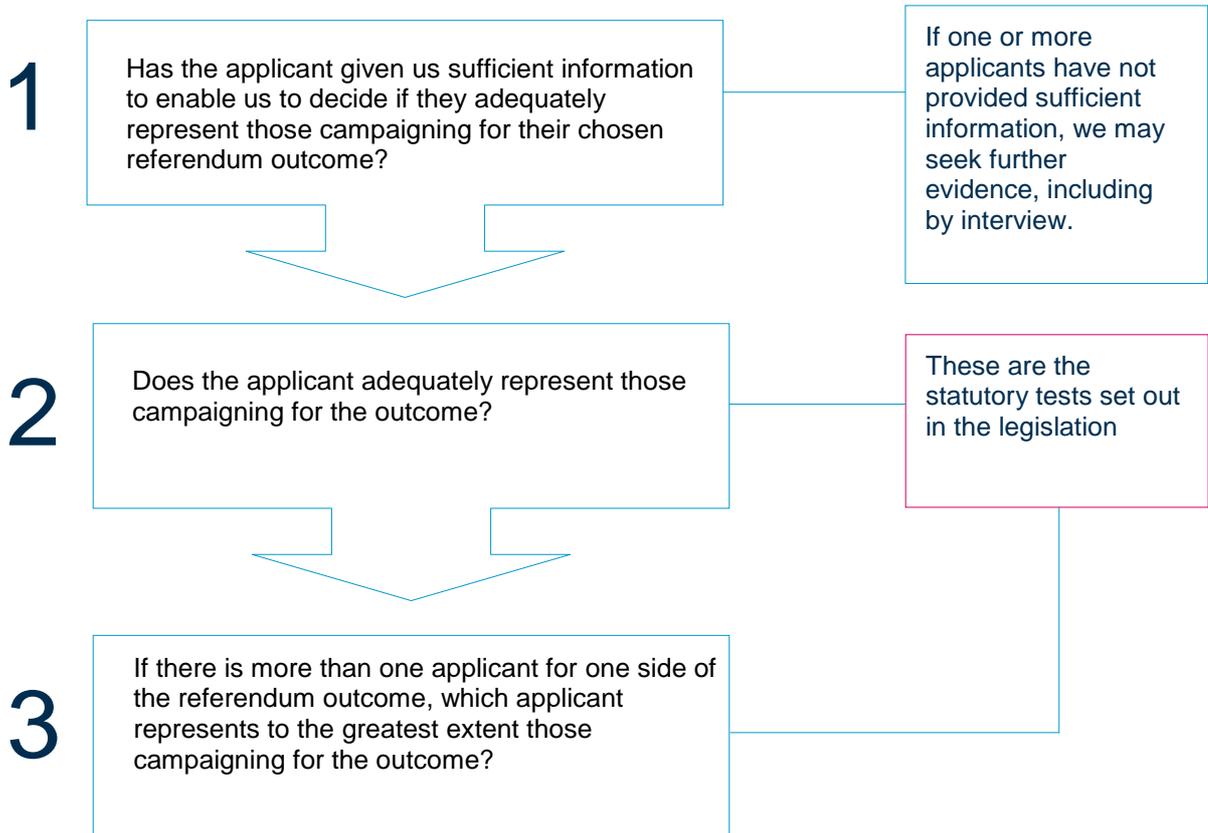
For more information on how you can apply to be a lead campaign group please see page 11.

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How do we apply the statutory tests?

We have developed a three-stage decision making process to designated lead campaigner groups, as shown below. This helps us to reach a decision in accordance with the statutory tests.

The three-stage decision process



The designation period

The period of time in which we receive applications, make the designation decision and the final campaign period up to polling day is called the designation period.

The chart below shows an overview of the three separate phases of the designation period. This consists of the application period, a designation period and a final campaign period before the poll.

Commencement of registration provisions in the Act	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Polling day 23 June 2016
Campaigners can register with us	Registered campaigners can apply to be designated organisations	Commission makes designation decision	Designated organisations can use their lead campaigner benefits	
1 February	4 March – 31 March	1 April - 14 April	15 April 2016	

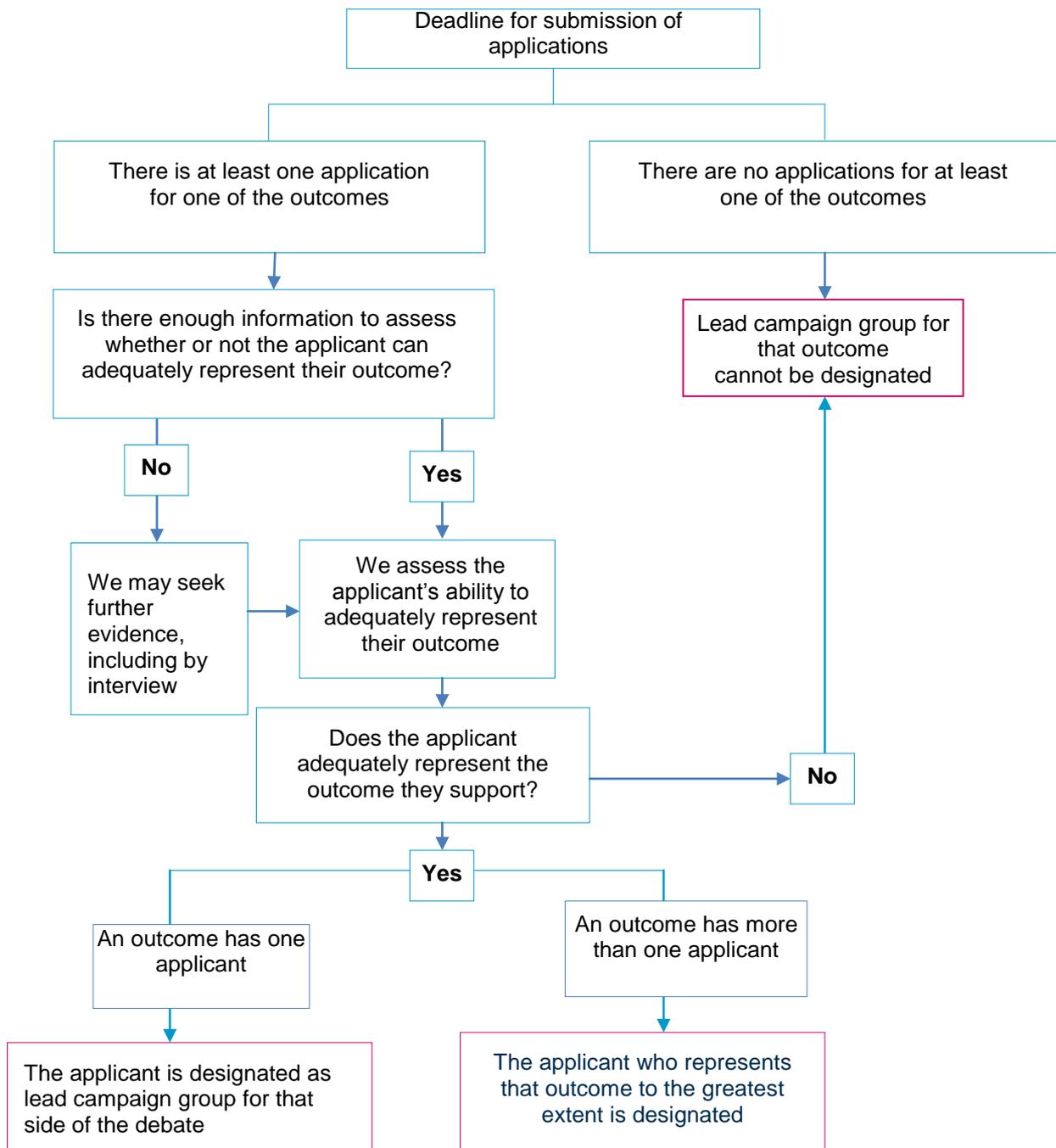
Phase 1 is the period of time during which registered campaigners can apply to be a designated lead campaigner. It runs from 4 March until 31 March 2016.

Phase 2 starts after the closing date for applications on 1 April and runs until 14 April 2016. If there is only one applicant for an outcome and they meet the statutory test then they will be appointed. If there is more than one applicant for one side of the referendum outcome, we will assess which applicant represents to the greatest extent those campaigning for the outcome. We may decide to seek further evidence from applicants, including by interview. We will inform all applicants of our decision.

Phase 3 is where the lead campaigners are designated and are entitled to use the benefits of lead campaigners and lasts until polling day. It runs from 15 April until 23 June 2016.

An overview of the designation decision making process – phase 2

During phase 2 of the designation period we review campaigner applications against the statutory tests.



How do you apply to be a lead campaign group?

You can download the application form to apply to be a lead campaigner group here: [EUR2 - Application for lead campaign group status at the EU Referendum](#). We have also published detailed [information](#) about how we will assess applicants against the statutory test. We will publish this alongside the application form.

The application process will seek information to assess whether campaigners meet the statutory test and will include seeking information in the following areas:

- your organisation's objectives and how they fit with the referendum outcome you support
 - the breadth of support amongst campaigners for the appointment of lead campaigner. We may ask you to include details and statements of those who support your application
 - how you plan to represent other campaigners for the same outcome including how you would engage with them
 - how you intend to convey your campaign message across to voters across the UK and Gibraltar including how you will make use of the lead campaign group benefits. You may wish to consider how you will communicate with different groups of voters such as different age groups (including younger voters), voters with disabilities, ethnic communities and those not using English as their first language
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- how you intend to deliver on your campaign objectives including how you plan to fund your campaign and how you will make use of both the higher spending limit and the publically available funding

Your application form should provide the information requested as succinctly as possible. Although additional pages on the application form are available, it is unlikely that you will need to use many additional pages in written response to each criterion in order to provide sufficient information to support your application for designation.

In addition to the application form, you should include evidence to support your application. All evidence should be attached and clearly referenced in your application.

When we have made our decision, we will publish all applications, in the interests of transparency. However, we will not publish personal contact details or information about your campaign plan and strategy.

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
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