

Caitlin Lindenberg

From: FOI
Sent: 17 March 2016 17:10
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FOI 13/16 - UK citizens living overseas

Dear [REDACTED]

Our Ref: FOI 13/16

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 clarified 17th February 2016.

The Commission aims to respond to requests for information promptly and has done so within the statutory timeframe of twenty working days.

Your request is in bold below followed by our response.

You have requested:

Please provide details for:

1. In the last 7 years for how much money the commission has spent advertising or otherwise promoting and encouraging UK citizens living overseas to register and vote in referendums and or elections. I would like this information broken down to relate to each election or referendum and to specifically identify the amount allocated for the AV referendum in 2011.

2. How much money the commission has allocated/budgeted for advertising or otherwise promoting and encouraging UK citizens living overseas to register and vote for the forthcoming EU referendum to be held in 2016/2017.

3. What data the commission hold as to the likely voting intentions or attitudes of UK citizens living overseas to the EU referendum and/or the EU.

4. Any memo, notes, emails or other documents relating to the commissions campaign to advertise or otherwise promote and encourage UK citizens living overseas to register to vote in the EU referendum.

Our response is as follows:

1. Our response to point 1 is set out in the table below. There are some years where there has been no public awareness spend on reaching UK citizens as they were not eligible to vote in any elections or referendums in that year. UK citizens living overseas are eligible to vote in UK and European Parliamentary elections only, not local or Police and Crime Commissioner elections, or elections to devolved assemblies. Franchise for referendums is set in the enabling legislation for that referendum.

Only polls in which overseas citizens were eligible to vote are listed. In 2009 we ran an additional campaign aimed at overseas citizens outside our normal campaign period. We

ran campaigns aimed specifically at under-registered groups outside election periods until 2009.

The figures are for media spend only (for example digital display adverts or radio spots) unless stated otherwise. This is because in most cases we have not specifically separated out our creative and production costs for overseas from other parts of the campaign. Media spend gives the clearest indication of the extent of a campaign since creative development costs do not necessarily reflect the reach of a campaign.

Year	Campaign	Overseas media spend
2015	UK General Election	£119,000
2014	European Parliamentary Election	£52,000
2013	n/a	n/a
2012	n/a	n/a
2011	Parliamentary Voting System Referendum	£26,000
2010	UK General Election	£47,000
2009	Additional autumn micro-campaign aimed at overseas	£75,000
2009	European Parliamentary Election	£30,000

2. Our budget for media for the overseas campaign we are running for the EU Referendum is **£238,200**.

You will notice that this is higher than in past campaigns. This is because UK citizens living overseas are not eligible to vote in any of the elections in May 2016 so, unlike for domestic voters, we will not be doing any registration activity aimed at this group for the May 2016 elections and we want to compensate for that. We also know from research that only a very small minority of those eligible are registered overseas and our recent experience of the campaign we ran ahead of the 2015 General Election – the first since the introduction of online voter registration in summer 2014 – suggests that there is the potential for a significant number of additional electors to register if they are made aware that they can and the ease of doing so.

The campaign is digital, targeting UK citizens living overseas. This is because of the lessons we have learnt from past campaigns that this is a significantly more effective way of reaching this group, compared to other activities such as radio stations and publications aimed at expats. We will also be working with partners to raise awareness of registration requirements and gather information through expat networks.

We will be advertising on Facebook, as this is a highly effective channel for targeting specific groups of people. We will also be using additional website banner advertising in order to reach those not on social media with our message.

We are already being supported by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and, via the FCO, staff in consulates and embassies. We held an Overseas Voter Registration Day in February to raise awareness about overseas UK citizens' voting rights during the referendum, which involved online and PR activity by the Commission and others to encourage overseas UK citizens to register to vote as soon as possible.

3. We do not collect any information on the voting intentions of any group. We run public awareness campaigns to encourage registration and provide information on how to vote.

4. The information requested in this point is extremely extensive and it would be likely to take us significantly above the cost limit in the Freedom of Information Act to provide everything that this covers. We are committed to being as transparent as possible, however, and if the information in points 1 and 2 above is not sufficient for your purposes could you please provide further clarification regarding any specific information you are looking for so we can establish how best to assist you?

I trust that this information satisfies your request. The Commission strives to be an open, transparent authority, but in some circumstances we cannot responsibly release requested information, and we ask for your understanding in this regard.

If you are not satisfied with this response, please note that the Commission operates a review procedure, details of which can be found on the Commission website at: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/freedom-of-information-requests/how-do-i-make-an-foi-request>

Please also note that if you have exhausted all internal Commission review procedures and you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of this procedure can be found on the ICO website: <http://www.ico.gov.uk>

Paul O'Malley
Information Adviser (Records Management)

The Electoral Commission

3 Bunhill Row

London EC1Y 8YZ

Tel: 020 7271 0554

Fax: 020 7271 0665

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Putting voters first

 Please consider the environment before printing this email.