

Situations and procedures

# UK Parliamentary General Election 2015 (GB and NI)

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This document is for political parties  
campaigning at the UK Parliamentary  
General Election in 2015

Updated February 2015

Forms you might need:

RP11 (GB/NI)

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## Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version, please contact us:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: [publications@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto: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 requirements.

You do not have to follow this guidance, but if you do, it will assist you in complying with the law.

## Our approach to enforcement

The Commission regulates political funding and spending. 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.

Wherever possible, we use advice and guidance proactively in order to secure compliance. And we regulate in a way that is effective, proportionate and fair.

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](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/enforcement)

# UK Parliamentary General Election 2015 (GB and NI)

## Who this document is for:

Political parties who want to know about the main rules they need to follow when contesting the UK Parliamentary General Election. This document covers both Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Please note that this document has been updated to reflect the changes made by The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014.

## The document covers:

- the regulated period
- spending limits
- reporting requirements
- reporting deadlines

## Related documents:

- [Overview of party campaign spending](#)
- [Overview of regulated periods](#)
- [Introduction to being a party treasurer](#)
- [Overview of donations and loans to parties \(GB\)](#)
- [Overview of donations and loans to parties \(NI\)](#)

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## Summary

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) there are rules on spending and fundraising that political parties have to follow in the run-up to elections.

This document explains the main rules for the UK Parliamentary General Election to be held in 2015.

It covers the regulated period, spending limits, reporting requirements and the deadlines. The rules on the regulated period were changed in January 2014.

# Introduction

Under PPERA, there are rules on fundraising and spending that political parties must follow in the run-up to certain elections.

This guidance provides information on the regulated period, spending limits, reporting requirements and deadlines for the UK Parliamentary General Election to be held on 7 May 2015.

You should read this guidance alongside the related documents we refer to. They provide important information which will help you follow the rules.

## Important

This guidance and the related documents we refer to apply to political parties only. The rules for candidates are different, and we issue separate guidance for candidates and their agents contesting the UK Parliamentary General Election.

If your party is fielding a single candidate at the General Election, the candidate rules will apply, provided that all of the activity takes place in the constituency where the candidate is standing for election.

Our guidance for candidates and agents contesting the General Election is available here:

[Guidance for candidates and agents: UK Parliamentary General Election](#)

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## The Regulated Period

Campaign spending is what your party spends on activities to promote the party or criticise other parties during a particular period in the run-up to the election.

This period is called the 'regulated period'. Where we use the term regulated period we mean the time when the spending limits and rules apply.

### If your party is contesting the UK Parliamentary General Election **only**

The regulated period for the 2015 UK Parliamentary General Election begins on **23 May 2014** and ends on polling day, **7 May 2015**. This has been changed by the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014.

### If your party is contesting the UK Parliamentary General Election **and** The European Parliamentary Election

The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 has also changed the combined regulated period for registered political parties contesting the European Parliamentary Elections being held on 22 May 2014 and the UK Parliamentary general election due to be held on 7th May 2015.

More information about regulated periods is available in our guidance document:

[Regulated Periods for Political Parties: 2014-15](#)

If your party is contesting the 2014 European Parliamentary Elections, you can find out more about the rules in our election specific guidance documents:

[European Parliamentary Election 2014](#)

### The position **now**

The Act means that the regulated periods are not combined for these two elections. The regulated period for the European Parliamentary Elections started on 23rd January 2014 and will end on 22 May 2014. The regulated period for the UK Parliamentary General Election starts on 23rd May 2014 and will end on 7 May 2015.

### The position **before** the Act came into force

The regulated period for the European Parliamentary elections in 2014 began on 23 January 2014. If your party is only campaigning in this election, it would have ended on 22 May 2014. If your party is planning on contesting both the European Parliamentary elections and the UK Parliamentary general election on 7 May 2015, the rules meant that there would have been a combined regulated period. This would have begun on 23 January 2014 and would have ended on 7 May 2015, and different rules and spending limits would have applied.

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## The spending limit

How much you can spend in the regulated period depends on how many candidates are standing for your party in the election.



Important

### Parties standing candidates in Great Britain:

Your party's spending limit is whichever the greater is of:

**Either:**

Part of GB	Spending limit
England	£810,000
Scotland	£120,000
Wales	£60,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£990,000</b>

**Or:**

£30,000 x the number of seats your party is contesting in Great Britain. Each part of Great Britain has a separate limit based on the number of seats your party is contesting in each part.

Part of GB	Number of seats
England	533
Scotland	59
Wales	40
<b>Total:</b>	<b>632</b>

If your party is only standing one candidate at the General Election, all campaign spending will count against the candidate's spending limit.

Our candidates and agents guidance for the UK Parliamentary General Election is available here:

[Guidance for candidates and agents: UK Parliamentary General Election](#)

## Parties standing candidates in Northern Ireland

The spending limit is £30,000 x the number of seats your party is contesting. There are 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland.

### Examples of how to calculate your party's spending limit

#### Example 1:

Your party is contesting 200 constituencies in England, 20 constituencies in Scotland and 10 constituencies in Wales. Your spending limit will be the greater of either the limits for England, Scotland and Wales in the table above, or:

Part of the UK	Spending limit	
	Variable limit	Fixed limit
England	£6,000,000 (200 x £30,000)	£810,000
Scotland	£600,000 (20 x £30,000)	£120,000
Wales	£300,000 (10 x £30,000)	£60,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£6,900,000 (230 x £30,000)</b>	<b>£990,000</b>

Your spending limit is £6,900,000 because this is **greater** than the fixed amount shown in the first table.

#### Example 2:

Your party is contesting 12 constituencies in Northern Ireland. Your spending limit will be:

$$\text{£30,000} \times 12 = \text{£360,000}$$

#### Important

Separate spending limits apply to your campaigning in different parts of the UK.

For more information about managing your campaign spending, please see our guidance:

[Overview of party campaign spending](#)

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## Splitting campaign spending

You must allocate spending in Great Britain between England, Scotland and Wales on the expenditure return. This means that you must split spending between the parts of Great Britain, and make sure that you stay within the spending limit for each part.

Where the spending relates wholly to one part of the UK, you should allocate it there. Where spending relates substantially to one part, you should allocate it entirely to that part, even if there is a minor overlap into another part.

### Example 1:

You distribute a newspaper mainly in Wales, with a small percentage distributed in adjoining English counties. The cost of this newspaper should be allocated entirely to Wales.

If your spending relates to more than one part of the UK, you will need to divide it between them in proportion to the number of Parliamentary seats in each of England (533), Scotland (59), Wales (40), and Northern Ireland (18).

For more information see our expert guidance on splitting campaign spending [here](#).

**Example 2:**

You spend £90,000 on a national advertising campaign. You should first divide it by 650 (the total number of Parliamentary seats in the UK). Then, to get the proportions, multiply it by 533 (for the English proportion), 59 (for the Scottish proportion), 40 (for the Welsh proportion) and 18 (for the Northern Ireland proportion).

$$£90,000 / 650 = £138.46$$

Part of UK	Calculation	Proportion
England	533 x £138	£74,000
Scotland	59 x £138	£8,000
Wales	40 x £138	£6,000
Northern Ireland	18 x £138	£2,000

The constituency figure of £138 has been rounded to the nearest pound and the figures for the proportions have been rounded to the nearest £1000.

You may need to split some costs between activity that counts as campaign spending and activity that does not. For example, if a number of leaflets are paid for, and some are distributed before the regulated period begins, the cost of those leaflets will not be controlled and will not count towards your spending limit. The cost of any of the leaflets that are distributed after the regulated period begins will count against your spending limit. You may also need to split spending between spending by the party and spending by individual candidates.

You may also need to split the cost of items and services between activities which count as campaign spending and those that don't.

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## The combined spending limit

### The position **now**

There is no combined spending limit. Each election has its own spending limit. If you spend less than the limit for the European Parliamentary elections, you cannot carry forward the balance on the UK Parliamentary election.

### The position **before** the Act came into force

There was a combined spending limit for the European Parliamentary election and the UK Parliamentary General election. This meant that the spending limit for the European Parliament elections applied to that election. If you spent less than the limit for the European Parliamentary elections, you could have spent the balance on the UK Parliamentary election in the corresponding part of Great Britain or Northern Ireland. The total spending by or on behalf of your party on both campaigns could not exceed the combined limit

# Reporting to us

Political parties contesting the UK Parliamentary General Election must report the details of their fundraising and campaign spending to the Electoral Commission.

## Donations and loans:



Under PPERA, donations are a gift of money, good or services with a value of more than £500. Political parties in GB can only accept donations from mainly UK based sources. There are different rules for parties in NI. Similar rules apply to loans that parties enter into.

If the value of the donation or loan exceeds certain thresholds, or if it is from an impermissible source, the party must report the details to us on a quarterly basis.

We issue guidance on managing donations and loans which is available on our [website](#).

During the **general election period**, you must also make a weekly report of any reportable donations the party has received, or reportable loans that have been entered into. If your party contests the general election and does not receive any reportable donations or loans, you must still complete a weekly report indicating that you have not received any donations or loans.

The general election period begins when Her Majesty's intention to dissolve Parliament is announced. We will contact all parties to let them know when the general election period is due to start. This information will also be available on our [website](#).

This is an additional requirement to the quarterly report of donations and loans, which parties must continue to provide throughout the regulated period.

Our guidance on managing donations and loans for parties in NI/GB is available here:

[Overview of donations to parties \(GB\)](#)

[Overview of donations to parties \(NI\)](#)

Forms for weekly reporting of donations and loans are available here:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/party-or-campaigner/guidance-for-political-parties>

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## Campaign spending



The deadline for reporting your campaign spending will depend on how much you have spent.

You will need to complete and return a [campaign spending return](#) to us by the following dates:

### **If you have spent under £250,000**

The deadline for reporting spending **under** £250,000 is **7 August 2015**.

### **If you have spent over £250,000**

The deadline for reporting spending **over** £250,000 is **7 November 2015**.

To find out more about managing your campaign spending, see our overview of [party campaign spending](#)

You will need to include a report from an independent auditor with your completed form, if you have spent over £250k.

Event	Date	Process
Regulated period begins*	23 May 2014	Start recording your spending.
Deadline for applications to register a political party	27 February 2015**	Get your application to register a new party, or to change your party's details, in by this date.
Polling day and end of Regulated Period	7 May 2015	
Deadline to receive invoices	8 June 2015	Make sure you've received all your invoices from your suppliers by this date
Deadline to pay invoices	7 July 2015	Make sure you've paid all your invoices before date. You'll need a court order if you haven't.
Deadline to submit campaign expenditure return	7 August 2015	You have until this date to submit your spending return, if you spend <b>less</b> than £250k
Deadline to submit campaign expenditure return (>250k)	7 November 2015	You have until this date to submit your spending return, if you spend <b>more</b> than £250k

\*This date has been changed by the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014

\*\* This date was changed on 5 February 2015

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## 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.

If it's easier, you can also 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:** 020 7271 0616  
[pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)
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