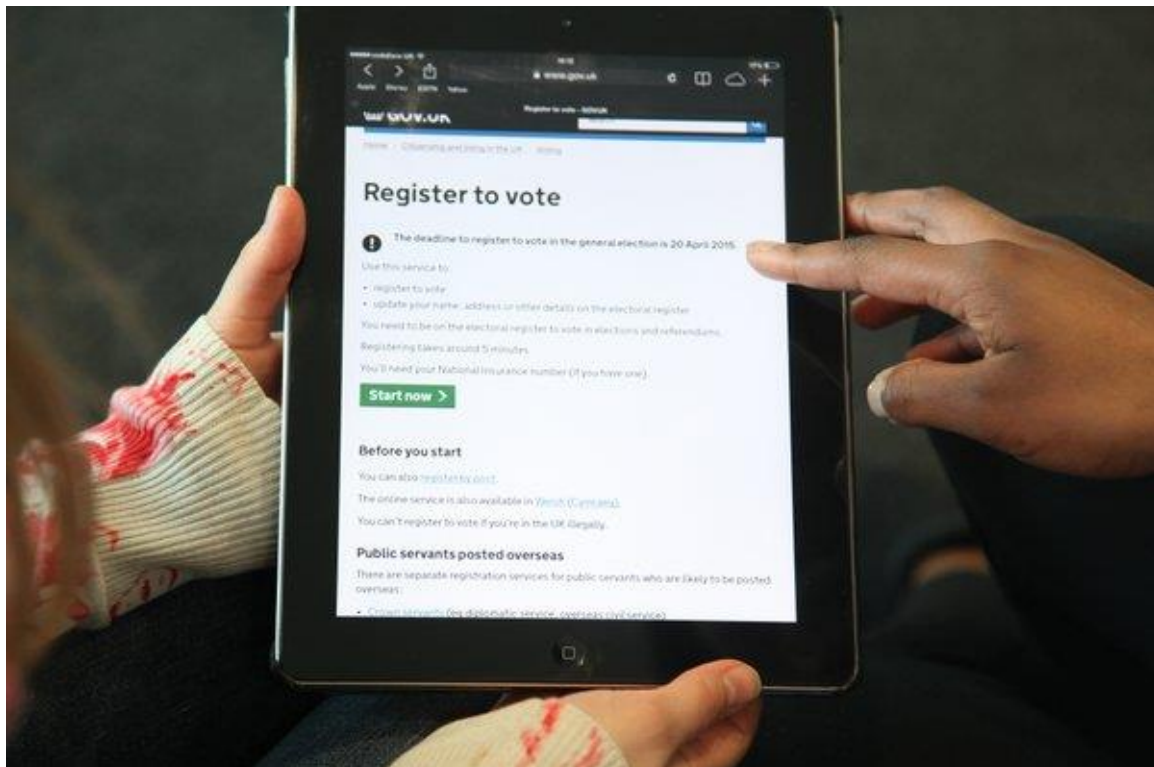




British Embassy
Beijing

For immediate release

**Calling all UK expats:
Don't miss out on the EU referendum, register your vote now!**



From February 4th 2016, the British Embassy Beijing will be supporting a global campaign lead by the Electoral Commission to encourage UK nationals to register their vote as early as possible, ahead of the EU Referendum.

Out of the 5.5 million UK citizens living overseas, just over 100,000 registered to vote in the 2015 UK Parliamentary Election. Many expats don't realise they are eligible to vote in the UK whilst living overseas, missing out on having their opinion count in setting the future direction of their country.

The British Embassy in Beijing is launching a campaign to encourage Brits living in China to register their vote, ahead of the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union.

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As part of the campaign, February 4th 2016 will be heralded as *Overseas Voter Registration Day*. Marked all over the globe, UK residents overseas will be encouraged to register their vote online. Registration is now easier than ever via a simplified online system, and can be done in just a few minutes at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Deputy Head of Mission, Martyn Roper, leading the campaign forward in China, stated: "Our aim is to ensure that as many UK nationals as possible across China realise they are eligible to vote and to encourage them to register now, ahead of the EU referendum."

The referendum is due to take place by 31 December 2017, and with the date of the referendum as yet unknown UK nationals are encouraged to waste no time in making sure they may be able to vote in the poll.

Here are five things UK nationals need to know about registering as an overseas voter:

1. UK nationals who have been registered to vote in the UK within the last 15 years can register as an overseas elector, to be able to vote in UK Parliamentary General Elections, UK-wide referendums, and European Parliamentary elections.
2. It is important to remember that if you are not registered, you can't vote in the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union when it takes place.
3. You will need to know your National Insurance number and date of birth, and have your passport to hand, if you have one. If you don't have a National Insurance number you can still register, but you may have to supply more information to show who you are.
4. You have to sign an annual declaration once you are registered to vote to renew your registration every year. So if you were registered to vote for the 2015 General Election, you will have to renew your registration or register again.
5. You can choose how you wish to vote. You can vote by post, by proxy (voting by appointing someone you trust to vote on your behalf), or even in person at your polling station should you be returning back to the UK. If you choose to vote by post, remember to allow enough time for the documentation to be sent to you from the UK and for you to send it back.

Overseas Voter Registration Day is also the perfect opportunity for expats to encourage other UK national friends, family or colleagues to go online to register. Everybody's vote matters! #ovrd #UKexpats #PassItOn #YourVoteMatters

Ends

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For further information contact Megan Copeland/Campaigns Manager, at the British Embassy in Beijing on 010 5192 4245 or megan.copeland@fco.gov.uk.

Notes to editors

1. The EU Referendum is scheduled to happen before the end of 2017 and will decide whether the UK remains in or exits from the EU.
2. There have been two relatively recent estimates of the total number of UK citizens living abroad: one by the Institute for Public Policy Research, in 2010 put the number at 5.5 million; whilst another one by the World Bank, in 2010, estimated it to be 4.7 million.
3. Figures from the Office for National Statistics - which are based on electoral registers show that there were overseas voters on the UK electoral registers at the time of the 2015 UK Parliamentary General Election.