

## Minority Ethnic Matters Overview

*MEMO+ is an occasional series of briefing papers on topics of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland. It is produced by the **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities** in partnership with **BEMIS - empowering Scotland's ethnic and cultural minority communities**, and is supported by the **Scottish Government**.*

# “Scotland’s Future” Scottish Government White Paper on Independence: General Information

This MEMO+ is the first of a series that summarises the main points of the Scottish Government White Paper about independence.

Other issues cover Scottish Government proposals for:

Culture & Communications	Energy & Resources	Immigration & Asylum
Defence & Security	Environment & Agriculture	International Relations
Economy & Finance	Equality & Human Rights	Justice
Education & Employment	Health & Wellbeing	Third Sector & Civic Society

### What is a White Paper?

A White Paper is a document produced by the Government that sets out details of their proposed future policy on a particular subject. It is not a consultation and does not set out alternatives, but only gives details of the Government’s intentions for future legislation.

### What is this White Paper about?

On 18 September 2014 there will be a referendum in which voters will be asked the question, “Should Scotland be an independent country?”

The present Scottish Government believes that Scotland should be independent, and is campaigning for voters to vote “Yes” in the referendum. It has produced this White Paper to explain its proposals for the way an independent Scotland would be governed.

The White Paper only presents proposals for what could happen if Scotland becomes an independent country. The White Paper does not provide an independent analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of Scotland becoming an independent country, and does not make any proposals about what should happen if Scotland remains in the UK.

### Why is the Scottish Government in favour of independence?

The present Scottish Government was formed by the Scottish National Party following the elections for the Scottish Parliament in May 2011. It believes that decisions about what

happens in Scotland should be taken by people in Scotland, and not, as at present, by the UK Parliament in London.

It believes that independence would enable it to create better and more joined-up services, so there would be “a more coherent framework for employment and the labour market – one that links education, employability training, welfare, taxation, and health, with action aimed at creating a supportive business environment to foster job creation.”

[Click here](#) for more details about the Scottish Government’s view.

### **Who is responsible for Scottish affairs at the moment?**

At present, some matters, are **devolved** to the Scottish Parliament. Decisions about these are already taken in Scotland. Other areas are **reserved** to the UK Parliament, so decisions about these are made in London (where Scotland has 59 MPs out of 650). The UK Parliament can only pass laws that affect devolved matters in Scotland if the Scottish Parliament gives it permission by means of a Legislative Consent Motion (also referred to as “Sewel Motion”).

Some examples of reserved and devolved issues are:

#### **Reserved to UK Parliament**

Constitutional matters  
Foreign policy  
Defence and national security  
Economics  
Immigration and nationality  
Trade and industry  
Employment legislation  
Social security  
Equal Opportunities policy

#### **Devolved to Scottish Parliament**

Education  
Health  
Local government  
Social work  
Housing  
Economic development  
Law (criminal, civil, courts)  
Police and Fire services  
Equal Opportunities implementation

[Click here](#) to read a full list of matters that are currently reserved to the UK Parliament.

### **Who will be able to vote in the independence referendum?**

- British Citizens who are living in Scotland
- Commonwealth citizens living in Scotland who either have, or do not need, leave to remain in the UK.
- Citizens of other EU countries who are living in Scotland.
- Members of the armed services and Crown personnel serving in the UK or overseas who are registered to vote in Scotland.

For the first time in any UK election, people aged 16 and 17 will be eligible to vote.

### **What will happen after the referendum?**

If there is a majority in favour of independence, Scotland would become an independent country on 24th March 2016.

During the 18 months between the referendum and independence day, the Scottish and UK Parliaments would introduce laws to enable Scotland to become a separate country. The two Governments would have discussions about how to ensure that the transition

would be as smooth as possible, and how to transfer public services to Scotland without there being any gap in service provision.

If there is a majority in favour of independence, the Scottish Government (which would still not yet be independent) would also negotiate with the European Union, the United Nations, and NATO, to enable Scotland to become a member of each organisation in its own right separately from the rest of the UK, after it becomes a fully independent country.

If there is a majority against independence, Scotland will remain part of the UK. However, a number of additional powers, such as the power to vary income tax, would be transferred to the Scottish Parliament under legislation that has already been passed by the UK Parliament.

### **Who would be the Government of an independent Scotland?**

Elections for the Scottish Parliament, which determine which party forms the Scottish Government, are independent of the Referendum. Whatever the outcome of the Referendum, the next elections for the Scottish Parliament are due to be held on 5th May 2016, and the present Scottish Government would remain in power until then.

So if the result of the Referendum is in favour of independence, the current Government would manage the transition to independence, and would still be in power on independence day, 24 March 2016. However, the Scottish Parliament would be dissolved shortly afterwards, and elections would take place on 5th May 2016. The party that wins that election will form the next Government.

If Scotland were to become an independent country, the structure of the Scottish Government would not be very different from at present, but Ministers would have wider responsibilities. The White Paper proposes that there would be nine government departments:

Office of the First Minister	International Relations and Defence
Finance and Economy	Justice, Security and Home Affairs
Health, Wellbeing and Social Protection	Environment, Rural Scotland, Energy
Education, Skills and Employment	Culture, Communications and Digital
Law Officers	

[Click here](#) to read about the responsibilities of each department.

### **The constitution**

The White Paper proposes that if the result of the Referendum is in favour of independence, after Scotland had become an independent country, the new Scottish Government would consult on the preparation of a written constitution, and they see the process of coming together to develop, draft, and approve such a document as an important part of defining the sort of nation that Scottish people want Scotland to be.

The White Paper proposes that if Scotland were to become an independent country, the Queen would remain the head of state, and the currency would remain the pound Sterling.

## Useful Links

- **White Paper: Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland**
  - Full Document <http://82.113.138.107/00439021.pdf>
  - Summary <http://82.113.138.107/00439013.pdf>
- **Scottish Government referendum website**  
<http://www.scotreferendum.com/>
- **UK Government Scotland Office referendum website**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/scotland>
- **Yes Scotland** (Campaign for Scottish Independence)  
<http://www.yesscotland.net/>
- **Better Together** (Campaign for Scotland to remain part of the UK)  
<http://www.bettertogether.net/>
- **BBC Scottish independence: Referendum library**  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-21618252>



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438) <http://www.scojec.org/>



**BEMIS** is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. <http://www.bemis.org.uk/index.html>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.scotlandagainstracism.com/>