

# The Rt Hon Norman Lamb

Member of Parliament for North Norfolk

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Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE  
Chair  
UK Statistics Authority  
1 Drummond Gate  
London  
SW1V 2QQ

15<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Dear Mr Dilnot,

As you will have seen, Vote Leave, the officially designated campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, has repeatedly claimed that over £350 million a week, or £18.8bn a year, is sent by the UK to Europe.

Vote Leave claim that if Britain were to leave Europe this money could be repatriated and spent in its entirety on the NHS.

This is the principal claim on a poster that has been unveiled today. Other examples are below.

“Britain sends over £350 million to the European Union each week”.

Vote Leave website [[http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/balance\\_sheet](http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/balance_sheet)]

“The safer option is to Vote Leave, stop sending £350 million a week to Brussels, and spend that money on our priorities instead.”

Vote Leave website [<http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/cost>]

This claim has been repeatedly used by the campaign, even though it has been shown to be inaccurate by independent fact-checkers. Just today the BBC has said, “Leaving the EU would not give the UK an extra £350 million a week to spend on the NHS”. [Reality Check: Would Brexit mean extra £350m a week for NHS?, 15 April 2016]

The £350 million figure is false because it includes funds which are returned to the UK, but also the UK rebate, which is in fact never sent to the EU.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has contradicted the figure, stating that the net contribution it is £5.7 billion [The Institute for Fiscal Studies The budget of the European Union: a guide, April 2016, p.1], not £18.8 billion as Vote Leave claims. The IFS have also said that using contribution figures “without the UK’s rebate having been deducted” is “less sensible”. The Institute for Fiscal Studies The budget of the European Union: a guide, April 2016. P.40

Using European Commission figures, the average annual UK net contribution 2010-2014 was £7.1bn (European Commission Financial Report 2014, [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/financialreport/2014/foreword/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/financialreport/2014/foreword/index_en.html)) clearly far short of the claims made by Vote Leave.

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The Office of National Statistics show an average UK contribution 2010-2014 of £8.9bn. I have outlined this below.

**Balance (UK net position with EU institutions)** ONS Pink Book, 2015

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/bop/united-kingdom-balance-of-payments/2015/rft-chapter-09.xls> (see tab 9.9)

2010 – £7.225bn

2011 – £7.543bn

2012 – £8.536bn

2013 – £11.271bn

2014 – £9.872bn

Average – £8.889bn

This evidence conclusively shows that the £350 million figure is factually incorrect and I believe it is being used to purposefully mislead.

I am writing to request that you please confirm that the Vote Leave claim that £350 million is sent to the EU is factually incorrect.

Our concern is that this is being presented as an official statistic, when in fact there is clear and independent evidence to show that it is wrong.

Given the UK Statistics Authority's role to "promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good" and to "ensure good practice in relation to official statistics", I believe this falls within your remit.

I hope that you will confirm that this is this figure is incorrect.

Yours sincerely,



**Rt. Hon. Norman Lamb**

**Member of Parliament for North Norfolk**