

What is the EU Referendum?

Times are changing in the United Kingdom (UK). For the first time since the UK joined the **European Union (EU)**, the general public now need to make an important **decision** on whether to stay in the EU, or to leave it, and it is not an easy decision to make.

What is the EU?

The EU is a group of different countries in Europe that are part of a club. There are rules that you have to follow to be in the club but you do get rewards if you are a member. To be a member of the EU, the United Kingdom have to pay money, which is usually collected from all the working people in the UK through **taxes**. The EU then collects all the membership money from the different countries and uses it to help make it easier for those member countries to buy and sell goods from each other.

The EU has its own **parliament** and its own money which is known as the **Euro (€)**. Britain is one of a handful of countries in the EU that do not use the Euro as a **currency** as they have **opted** out.



A map of Europe showing members of the European Union.



Euro coins that are used in many EU countries as currency.

The European Union has its own flag. There are 12 stars used as it is a number not linked to any particular country for any particular reason. There was not originally 12 members when the flag was agreed on.



Why is there a European Union?

The beginnings of an EU were formed after World War II at a **conference** in 1948, where it was agreed that the countries in Europe should work together rather than against each other. Many years later, after many **treaties** were created, the European Union was formed in 1993. Since then, more and more countries in Europe have become members of the EU and currently, in 2016, we have 28 countries, representing 508 million inhabitants!

Member countries included are Austria, Italy, France, Portugal and Poland, amongst many others. These countries all feel it is a huge benefit to be a part of the EU club.

The EU has five top aims that each member country must try to help achieve. These are listed below.

The Five Aims of the European Union:

1. Promote economic and social progress.
Help people earn enough money and get treated fairly.
2. Speak for the European Union on the international scene.
By working as a group the EU hopes that Europe will be listened to more by other countries.
3. Introduce European citizenship.
Anyone from a member state is a citizen of the EU and gets four special rights.
4. Develop Europe as an area of freedom, security and justice.
Help Europeans to live in safety, without the threat of war.
5. Maintain and build on established EU law.
Make laws that protect peoples' rights in the member countries.

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What is the EU Referendum? – 3b – Text

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What is a referendum?

A referendum is the name given to a general vote open to everyone of voting age that is put forward by the government. If an adult has registered to vote then they are able to make a decision on what they want to happen. The voting will take place in buildings that are known as **polling stations**. For one day only, these normal buildings will become places where citizens can decide on the future of the UK. Polling stations try to be as local as possible and will include places like church halls, schools and other community buildings. They are run by volunteers who make sure everything is kept secret. A **ballot paper** is the slip of paper that gives the choices for the vote. The voter must choose one choice by putting a cross next to it and place the ballot paper into a sealed box. The box is only opened when it is time to count the votes.

If an adult (a person 18 or over) wishes to vote on the day, they will go to their local polling station, collect a ballot paper and make their choice, so it is important that they have the right information beforehand so that they can make their own decision on what is best for the UK.

Why are we having an EU referendum?

The UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, promised to hold an EU referendum if he won the **General Election**. He felt we needed to make a decision by calling a vote on staying or leaving the EU because so many people were not happy about being in the EU. The UK has been a member of the EU since 1975 and many **politicians** felt that we, as a **nation**, had not had a say in what is going on in the EU. David Cameron met with the other EU member countries to try and make a deal in order to **persuade** Britain to stay. In this deal, the Prime Minister agreed that if the UK stays in the EU, we should have special **allowances**, and that he hoped that this would solve some of the things that UK citizens do not like about being in the EU. Now the government have decided that it is the people in the UK that should make the final decision.

Many people have had difficulty deciding on whether we should stay in the EU or leave it because there are strong arguments for and against. There will be a lot of news about the referendum right up to the voting day on June 23rd because politicians want to persuade people as much as possible that their side is right. We know that the Prime Minister wants us to stay in the EU, but there are other important people that have been **campaigning** to leave the EU too. Even the **US President**, Barack Obama got involved and he is not allowed to vote in the referendum as he is not a UK citizen!

Referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union	
Vote only once by putting a cross <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in the box next to your choice	
Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?	
Remain a member of the European Union	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave the European Union	<input type="checkbox"/>

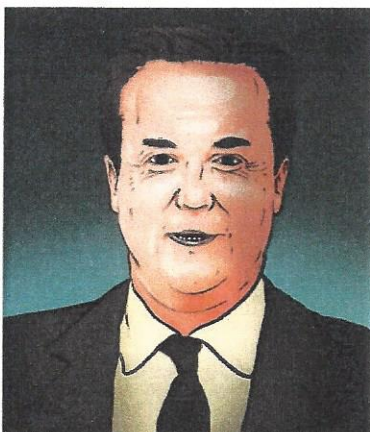
The ballot paper that adults will complete at the polling station.

There has been two major campaigns in order to persuade the public to vote to stay or to vote to leave. They are known as the 'Britain Stronger in Europe' campaign and the 'Vote Leave' campaign.

These campaigns are run by many well-known and trusted politicians as well as famous people, such as sports stars.

Some **polls** have been taken already to try and work out which way the public will vote on the 23rd June. So far the polls have been evenly split, meaning that just as many people want Britain out of the EU as the number that want Britain to stay in.

We will just have to wait for the results after the vote on the 23rd June 2016 to find out.



David Cameron, PM, wants the UK to stay in the EU.