



On **Thursday 23rd June** the UK will go to the polls for a referendum on the biggest decision of a generation- Britain's membership of the EU.

You will be asked:

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?

And given the following options:

Remain a member of the European Union

Leave the European Union

I believe very strongly that Britain is better off within the European Union

What have the experts said?

“Leaving the EU is Britain’s biggest domestic risk” - Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England

“A British exit from the European Union could pose **major challenges for both the United Kingdom** and the rest of Europe” - IMF, World Economic Report 2016

“Very, very bad” – Christine Lagarde, Head of the International Monetary Fund

“You cannot get a better trading relationship with the European Union than the one we already have” - Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies

“I would say on balance of probability it is more likely **we will have less money in our pockets if we vote to leave**” – Martin Lewis, Money Saving Expert

What about the Leave campaign?

“They are feeding out to the British people **a whole galaxy of inaccurate and frankly untrue information**” – John Major, Former Prime Minister

“The NHS is about as safe with them as a pet hamster would be with a hungry python...Michael Gove wanted to privatise it, Boris wanted to charge people for using it and Iain Duncan Smith wanted a social insurance system” -John Major, Former Prime Minister

“The claims about health from the Leave campaign have been shameful. **They have knowingly placed a financial lie at the heart of their campaign**” – Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, former Brexit supporter who will now be voting Remain

Euro Myths Busted

‘Most of our laws are made in Brussels’

The House of Commons Library, a politically neutral source of information, has said the figure is 13.2%, the laws we make jointly at European level are mostly common rules for our common market on consumer protection, environmental standards, workplace rights and fair competition.

‘European laws are made by unelected bureaucrats’

EU legislation can only be adopted if it passes two democratic tests: approval of ministers from elected national governments in the European Council of Ministers and approval of directly elected MEPs in the European Parliament.

The famous “unelected bureaucrats” (The European Commission) only have the right to propose not decide European legislation.

‘Norway and Switzerland enjoy all the benefits despite not being EU members’

Norway and Switzerland both pay into the EU, but have no say in the decisions that affect them.

Norwegians make roughly the same per capita contribution to the EU budget as Britons do currently. If we adopted the Norwegian model the UK government would still be faced with up to 94% of the current costs of EU membership but would have no say in the law-making process, even if the laws would harm British interests.

‘EU Migrants are a drain on the Economy’

EU migrants contribute significantly more to the UK exchequer in taxes than they claim in benefits. Just 5% of EU migrants claim unemployment benefits. EU migrants have actually contributed £20bn to the UK economy

‘Our most important markets are China and the US not the EU’

The EU is the world’s largest single market. The UK sells more to the Netherlands alone than to the whole of China.

‘We can’t control our borders’

We have strict border controls through not being part of the Schengen passport-free area. Thanks to our membership of the EU we can control the border better: at Calais not Dover with shared intelligence.

Within the EU there is a reciprocal right of free movement with almost as many Brits in other EU countries.

Sovereignty

Many proponents of the Leave Campaign centre their argument on the question of British sovereignty and a belief that the EU decision-making process has weakened British parliamentary democracy. This argument ignores the fact that successive UK governments have actively chosen to pool aspects of the country's power in the EU in order to achieve national objectives that would be unachievable from the outside. These include creating the single market, constraining Iran's nuclear programme and helping to design an ambitious EU climate change strategy. Despite the rhetoric from the Leave campaign, the British government still determines the policy areas of most concern to British voters- health, education, pensions, welfare, monetary policy, defence and border security.

If the referendum produces a remain vote the reforms secured as part of the UK 'deal' secured in February 2016 would be implemented. The UK would not be committed to further political integration in the EU and the concept of an 'ever closer union' would not apply to the UK. The UK will also retain its opt-out and opt-in arrangements in measures on policing, immigration and asylum policy and national security will remain the sole responsibility of the UK Government.

Continuing to pool some sovereignty with the EU allows the UK to help in the construction and implementation of joint EU responses to challenges that the UK would be unable to combat alone such as: energy efficiency and climate change, internet security, managing an aggressive Putin's Russia and the fight against terrorism. Even before we joined the European Community in 1973 the UK Parliament did not have absolute sovereignty. To suggest that leaving the EU would restore unlimited sovereignty to the British Government is not rooted in reality.



Immigration

Depending on the nature of any future EU-UK relationship, leaving the EU could have significant implications for the rights of UK citizens to travel to and live in EU member states and for EU nationals wishing to come to the UK. It has also been said that if the UK were to negotiate a relationship with the EU similar to Switzerland, the UK may find that it does not have any greater scope to control EU immigration to the UK than it did as an EU member state.

The UK already maintains its own border controls. It is not part of the internal border-free Schengen Area, and border force officers conduct checks on EU travellers crossing UK ports of entry as well as British citizens and non EU nationals.

Immigration is a complex matter that requires a multidimensional solution. To think that leaving the EU would produce a quick fix to such a complicated issue is neither realistic nor viable.

Rights for British workers and consumers

Membership of the EU has given vital rights to British workers.

The EU's rules protect consumers, British workers and the environment. Workers are given protections such as:

- a guaranteed minimum of 4 weeks paid holiday, plus public holidays
- rights to maternity and parental leave
- equal treatment for part time workers
- Equal treatment for agency workers after 6 months
- comprehensive protection on health and safety in the workplace



British consumers are protected when buying goods from anywhere inside the EU, including:

- the right to return unwanted goods and be promptly refunded, recently extended from 7 to 14 days
- the right to return faulty good bought online
- If you buy something online and the items turn out to be faulty you now have at least two years to request repairs or replacements free of charge
- protect wildlife

Defence



Membership of the European Union is vital to the UK's defence and security. Our closest allies, including the US, have made it clear that the NATO alliance will be weakened and UK security compromised if we leave the EU. The UK and Europe are confronting a shared set of strategic threats which require a collective response: both Russia's aggression and international terrorism are most effectively resisted at a European level. It would be naïve of us to think that NATO allies would not see our rejection of a shared life within the European Union as having implications for our status in NATO.

Our European partnerships have facilitated innovations in strategically important military technology. The Typhoon Eurofighter is a particularly salient example of how working together with our European partners creates jobs and improves our defence and security. The defence and aerospace industries have confirmed that a decision to leave the EU and lose access to the common market would harm the UK's high-tech sector and put jobs at risk.

Acting through the EU means a larger aid budget, the promise of access to the largest consumer market in the world and a louder political voice. If the UK no longer co-ordinated its policy with members states, it would lose access to these shared tools. However, many UK actions are taken in conjunction with the US rather than the EU.

Of course all countries within the Union are bound by EU rules; they are rules that Britain helped to write. The EU exists to promote freedom, democracy and the rule of law. The question is to remain in the European Union that has brought unparalleled peace and prosperity to our nation and our continent or whether to walk off into a cold and entirely unpredictable future; to choose co-operation or isolation.

Wales

Wales has access to considerable funding opportunities from the EU, notably from the Common Agriculture Policy and Structural Funds, estimated to be worth **£4 Billion** to Wales for the period 2007-2013. EU membership has also given Wales a direct representative voice in the EU institutions and in the EU decision-making process, which would be affected by UK leaving.

In Bridgend, the transformation of Porthcawl Harbour was made possible by a **£1m** EU fund. Porthcawl is also in line to be a beneficiary from a new EU funded Welsh Government tourism programme, this will aim to build on **£27.7 million** of EU funds with match funding and private investment to create a total pot of about **£85 million**. The Porthcawl Marina Centre for Excellence is one of 10 projects that could benefit from the scheme. The project is currently being assessed to decide how much it should receive.

Major improvements have been made to Bridgend town centre in an effort to make it more attractive to tourists and businesses looking to move into the area. The investment also provided a local space that residents can be proud of. This was achieved partly through EU funding of more than **£3.5m**.

EU funds are directly supporting growth, jobs, creating sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits for people, businesses and communities in Bridgend.

Directly as a result of EU funds in Bridgend there have been

- **995** enterprises assisted
- **540** enterprises created
- **1,935** jobs created
- **4,135** people helped into work
- **2,130** people helped into further learning
- **12,500** qualifications gained

Farmers in Wales share in another **£200m** of EU payments a year, which would be lost if the UK opts to leave.

Ask yourself would the UK government would be willing to send additional money to Wales in the event of Brexit?



Steel

For the Steel industry leaving the EU would mean operating under World Trade Organisation rules. The British Steel industry would incur tariffs when selling into the EU. Currently the EU amounts to 2/3rds of UK Steel exports meaning tariffs are likely to be a significant amount of money. Brexit would also mean the loss of 27 anti-dumping measures that the EU has put in place. This would leave the UK steel industry even more vulnerable to Chinese dumping than it already is. The EU are leading an investigation into Chinese dumping which is something the UK government have not done. The problem for British steel is not Europe, but a British government that have acted to frustrate EU action on

- Reform of the Lesser Duty Rule (UK is the leader of moves against this reform)
- Market Economic Status – The UK government have been China's cheerleader in chief for MES, this is part of a deal to get Chinese finance here at the expense of steelworkers and the steel industry
- The UK Government turned down GAF funding (Globalisation Adjustment Fund set up in 2006 to express EU solidarity with workers affected by mass redundancies triggered by shifting world trade patterns) that would help support steel communities after job losses

The fact is that the UK steel industry is in crisis because of a Tory government that has singularly failed to stand up for British steel and not because of the EU.

Trade

The **EU is the UK's most important trading partner**. In 2015 it accounted for 44% of UK goods and services exports and 53% of UK imports. Britain receives on average £26.5 billion worth of investment every year from other EU countries which means that both UK jobs and businesses, large and small, are dependent on trade with Europe.

It is predicted that future EU trade could create 790,000 more jobs in Britain by 2030 through opening up emerging and modern markets in areas such as digital services, energy and tourism. Large companies from all over the world choose to build offices and factories in the UK because they see Britain as a gateway to the European single market. From car manufacturing to high-tech industry to financial services, global investment creates vital jobs all over the country. Leaving risks investors taking their businesses and jobs elsewhere.

Britain's EU membership allows us full access to a market with 500 million consumers. The UK is stronger negotiating deals with global superpowers like China and the USA as part of the EU trading block than it would be on its own. Additionally many of the problems facing modern Britain; climate change, terrorism, cross-border crime are tackled better when working as part of the European Union.

Europe is central to British jobs and prosperity. Britain needs a strong voice at the decision making table. If we leave the EU Britain will still have to follow the EU's rules when we do business there. Countries such as Norway, which is not part of the EU, have to adopt nearly all EU law in return for access to the Single Market.

Ford Motors, one of the UK's leading foreign investors and one of Bridgend's biggest employers has warned of the risks of Brexit. Jim Farley, Ford Europe's Chief Executive, has said "We believe the UK staying as a member of a reformed EU is the best way of maintaining stability and avoiding uncertainty in the trading environment". Although not explicitly answering the question of whether there was a Brexit contingency plan in place Mr Farley did say, "Should a vote to leave lead to a significant deterioration in the UK's business conditions and trade environment then that could impact business decision-making, including potential future investment."

Ford Motors is one of the constituency's biggest employers with a 2,000 strong work force. We need to secure these jobs for the people of Bridgend which we cannot do if we vote leave.

Finally...

I am aware that for many people this is an emotive decision. Anxiety about the pace of change within Europe, external terrorist threats and a fear of losing national identity lead some to want to vote leave.

No one could suggest that France, Germany, Poland etc. have lost their national identity so the fear of British identity being lost is not viable.

I hope that the information I have provided is helpful to your decision-making on **Thursday 23rd June**

Still undecided? For more information go to <https://fullfact.org/europe/>



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