

*Statements by*

# Secretary of State Michael Gove MP and Mayor of London Boris Johnson MP



Why they are campaigning to  
Vote Leave and take back control



**Vote Leave, take control**



*Statement from*

## **Michael Gove MP** Secretary of State for Justice

*20 February 2016*

For weeks now I have been wrestling with the most difficult decision of my political life. But taking difficult decisions is what politicians are paid to do. No-one is forced to stand for Parliament, no-one is compelled to become a minister. If you take on those roles, which are great privileges, you also take on big responsibilities.

I was encouraged to stand for Parliament by David Cameron and he has given me the opportunity to serve in what I believe is a great, reforming Government. I think he is an outstanding Prime Minister. There is, as far as I can see, only one significant issue on which we have differed.

And that is the future of the UK in the European Union.

It pains me to have to disagree with the Prime Minister on any issue. My instinct is to support him through good times and bad.

But I cannot duck the choice which the Prime Minister has given every one of us. In a few months time we will all have the opportunity to decide whether Britain should stay in the European Union or leave. I believe our country would be freer, fairer and better off outside the EU. And if, at this moment of decision, I didn't say what I believe I would not be true to my convictions or my country.

## Two historic statements

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*On Saturday 20 February, Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Justice, announced he was supporting Vote Leave and published a statement.*

*On Sunday 21 February, Boris Johnson MP, Mayor of London, announced he was supporting Vote Leave and published a statement.*

*These two historic statements explain why it's safer to take back control and spend our money on our priorities.*

*They also illustrate something important about our campaign. We want to take back control because of the failure of the EU project but we are pro-European. Europe and the EU are not the same.*

*After we Vote Leave, we will negotiate a friendly new UK-EU Treaty based on free trade and friendly co-operation. We will carry on being part of the free trade zone that stretches from Iceland to the Russian border - but EU law and the European Court will not have ultimate authority.*

*This will not just be better for Britain - it will be better for Europe too. We will use our greater international influence to nurture better international cooperation.*

*Europe yes, EU no*

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**Vote Leave, take control**

I don't want to take anything away from the Prime Minister's dedicated efforts to get a better deal for Britain. He has negotiated with courage and tenacity. But I think Britain would be stronger outside the EU.

My starting point is simple. I believe that the decisions which govern all our lives, the laws we must all obey and the taxes we must all pay should be decided by people we choose and who we can throw out if we want change. If power is to be used wisely, if we are to avoid corruption and complacency in high office, then the public must have the right to change laws and Governments at election time.

But our membership of the European Union prevents us being able to change huge swathes of law and stops us being able to choose who makes critical decisions which affect all our lives. Laws which govern citizens in this country are decided by politicians from other nations who we never elected and can't throw out. We can take out our anger on elected representatives in Westminster but whoever is in Government in London cannot remove or reduce VAT, cannot support a steel plant through troubled times, cannot build the houses we need where they're needed and cannot deport all the individuals who shouldn't be in this country. I believe that needs to change. And I believe that both the lessons of our past and the shape of the future make the case for change compelling.

The ability to choose who governs us, and the freedom to change laws we do not like, were secured for us in the past by radicals and liberals who took power from unaccountable elites and placed it in the hands of the people. As a result of their efforts we developed, and exported to nations like the US, India, Canada and Australia a system of democratic self-government which has brought prosperity and peace to millions.

Our democracy stood the test of time. We showed the world what a free people could achieve if they were allowed to govern themselves.

In Britain we established trial by jury in the modern world, we set up the first free parliament, we ensured no-one could be arbitrarily detained at the behest of the Government, we forced our rulers to recognise they ruled by consent not by right, we led the world in abolishing slavery, we established free education for all, national insurance, the National Health Service and a national broadcaster respected across the world.

By way of contrast, the European Union, despite the undoubted idealism of its founders and the good intentions of so many leaders, has proved a failure on so many fronts. The euro has created economic misery for Europe's poorest people. European Union regulation has entrenched mass unemployment. EU immigration policies have encouraged people traffickers and brought desperate refugee camps to our borders.

Far from providing security in an uncertain world, the EU's policies have become a source of instability and insecurity. Razor wire once more criss-crosses the continent, historic tensions between nations such as Greece and Germany have resurfaced in ugly ways and the EU is proving incapable of dealing with the current crises in Libya and Syria. The former head of Interpol says the EU's internal borders policy is "like hanging a sign welcoming terrorists to Europe" and Scandinavian nations which once prided themselves on their openness are now turning in on themselves. All of these factors, combined with popular anger at the lack of political accountability, has encouraged extremism, to the extent that far-right parties are stronger across the continent than at any time since the 1930s.



Vote Leave, take control

The EU is an institution rooted in the past and is proving incapable of reforming to meet the big technological, demographic and economic challenges of our time. It was developed in the 1950s and 1960s and like other institutions which seemed modern then, from tower blocks to telexes, it is now hopelessly out of date. The EU tries to standardise and regulate rather than encourage diversity and innovation. It is an analogue union in a digital age.

The EU is built to keep power and control with the elites rather than the people. Even though we are outside the euro we are still subject to an unelected EU commission which is generating new laws every day and an unaccountable European Court in Luxembourg which is extending its reach every week, increasingly using the Charter of Fundamental Rights which in many ways gives the EU more power and reach than ever before. This growing EU bureaucracy holds us back in every area. EU rules dictate everything from the maximum size of containers in which olive oil may be sold (five litres) to the distance houses have to be from heathland to prevent cats chasing birds (five kilometres).

Individually these rules may be comical. Collectively, and there are tens of thousands of them, they are inimical to creativity, growth and progress. Rules like the EU clinical trials directive have slowed down the creation of new drugs to cure terrible diseases and ECJ judgements on data protection issues hobble the growth of internet companies. As a minister I've seen hundreds of new EU rules cross my desk, none of which were requested by the UK Parliament, none of which I or any other British politician could alter in any way and none of which made us freer, richer or fairer.

It is hard to overstate the degree to which the EU is a constraint on ministers' ability to do the things they were elected to do, or to use their judgment about the right course of action for the people of this country. I have long had concerns about our membership of the EU but the experience of Government has only deepened my conviction that we need change. Every single day, every single minister is told: 'Yes Minister, I understand, but I'm afraid that's against EU rules'. I know it. My colleagues in Government know it. And the British people ought to know it too: your Government is not, ultimately, in control in hundreds of areas that matter.

But by leaving the EU we can take control. Indeed we can show the rest of Europe the way to flourish. Instead of grumbling and complaining about the things we can't change and growing resentful and bitter, we can shape an optimistic, forward-looking and genuinely internationalist alternative to the path the EU is going down. We can show leadership. Like the Americans who declared their independence and never looked back, we can become an exemplar of what an inclusive, open and innovative democracy can achieve.

We can take back the billions we give to the EU, the money which is squandered on grand parliamentary buildings and bureaucratic follies, and invest it in science and technology, schools and apprenticeships. We can get rid of the regulations which big business uses to crush competition and instead support new start-up businesses and creative talent. We can forge trade deals and partnerships with nations across the globe, helping developing countries to grow and benefiting from faster and better access to new markets.

We are the world's fifth largest economy, with the best armed forces of any nation, more Nobel Prizes than any European country and more world-leading universities than any European country. Our economy is more dynamic than the Eurozone, we have the most attractive capital city on the globe, the greatest "soft power" and global influence of any state and a leadership role in NATO and the UN. Are we really too small, too weak and too powerless to make a success of self-rule? On the contrary, the reason the EU's bureaucrats oppose us leaving is they fear that our success outside will only underline the scale of their failure.

This chance may never come again in our lifetimes, which is why I will be true to my principles and take the opportunity this referendum provides to leave an EU mired in the past and embrace a better future.



*"The EU is built to keep power and control with the elites rather than the people."*

Michael Gove MP



*“That is what we mean by loss of sovereignty - the inability of people to kick out, at elections, the men and women who control their lives.”*

Boris Johnson MP

*Statement from*

## **Boris Johnson MP**

Mayor of London

*21 February 2016*

I am a European. I lived many years in Brussels. I rather love the old place. And so I resent the way we continually confuse Europe - the home of the greatest and richest culture in the world, to which Britain is and will be an eternal contributor - with the political project of the European Union. It is, therefore, vital to stress that there is nothing necessarily anti-European or xenophobic in wanting to vote Leave on June 23.

And it is important to remember: it isn't we in this country who have changed. It is the European Union. In the 28 years since I first started writing for this paper about the Common Market - as it was then still known - the project has morphed and grown in such a way as to be unrecognisable, rather as the vast new Euro palaces of glass and steel now loom over the little cobbled streets in the heart of the Belgian capital.

When I went to Brussels in 1989, I found well - meaning officials (many of them British) trying to break down barriers to trade with a new procedure - agreed by Margaret Thatcher - called Qualified Majority Voting. The efforts at harmonisation were occasionally comical, and I informed readers about euro-condoms and the great war against the British prawn cocktail flavour crisp.

And then came German reunification, and the panicked efforts of Delors, Kohl and Mitterrand to “lock” Germany into Europe with the euro; and since then the pace of integration has never really slackened.

As new countries have joined, we have seen a hurried expansion in the areas for Qualified Majority Voting, so that Britain can be overruled more and more often (as has happened in the past five years). We have had not just the Maastricht Treaty, but Amsterdam, Nice, Lisbon, every one of them representing an extension of EU authority and a centralisation in Brussels. According to the House of Commons library, anything between 15 and 50 per cent of UK legislation now comes from the EU; and remember that this type of legislation is very special.

It is unstoppable, and it is irreversible - since it can only be repealed by the EU itself. Ask how much EU legislation the Commission has actually taken back under its various programmes for streamlining bureaucracy. The answer is none. That is why EU law is likened to a ratchet, clicking only forwards. We are seeing a slow and invisible process of legal colonisation, as the EU infiltrates just about every area of public policy. Then - and this is the key point - the EU acquires supremacy in any field that it touches; because it is one of the planks of Britain’s membership, agreed in 1972, that any question involving the EU must go to Luxembourg, to be adjudicated by the European Court of Justice.

It was one thing when that court contented itself with the single market, and ensuring that there was free and fair trade across the EU. We are now way beyond that stage. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the court has taken on the ability to vindicate people’s rights under the

55-clause “Charter of Fundamental Human Rights”, including such peculiar entitlements as the right to found a school, or the right to “pursue a freely chosen occupation” anywhere in the EU, or the right to start a business.

These are not fundamental rights as we normally understand them, and the mind boggles as to how they will be enforced. Tony Blair told us he had an opt-out from this charter.

Alas, that opt-out has not proved legally durable, and there are real fears among British jurists about the activism of the court. The more the EU does, the less room there is for national decision-making. Sometimes these EU rules sound simply ludicrous, like the rule that you can’t recycle a teabag, or that children under eight cannot blow up balloons, or the limits on the power of vacuum cleaners. Sometimes they can be truly infuriating - like the time I discovered, in 2013, that there was nothing we could do to bring in better-designed cab windows for trucks, to stop cyclists being crushed. It had to be done at a European level, and the French were opposed.

Sometimes the public can see all too plainly the impotence of their own elected politicians - as with immigration. That enrages them; not so much the numbers as the lack of control. That is what we mean by loss of sovereignty – the inability of people to kick out, at elections, the men and women who control their lives. We are seeing an alienation of the people from the power they should hold, and I am sure this is contributing to the sense of disengagement, the apathy, the view that politicians are “all the same” and can change nothing, and to the rise of extremist parties.

Democracy matters; and I find it deeply worrying that the Greeks are effectively being told what to do with their budgets and public spending, in spite of huge suffering among the population. And now the EU wants to go further. There is a document floating around Brussels called “The Five Presidents Report”, in which the leaders of the various EU institutions map out ways to save the euro. It all involves more integration: a social union, a political union, a budgetary union. At a time when Brussels should be devolving power, it is hauling more and more towards the centre, and there is no way that Britain can be unaffected.

David Cameron has done his very best, and he has achieved more than many expected. There is some useful language about stopping “ever-closer union” from applying to the UK, about protecting the euro outs from the euro ins, and about competition and deregulation.

There is an excellent forthcoming Bill that will assert the sovereignty of Parliament, the fruit of heroic intellectual labour by Oliver Letwin, which may well exercise a chilling effect on some of the more federalist flights of fancy of the court and the Commission. It is good, and right, but it cannot stop the machine; at best it can put a temporary and occasional spoke in the ratchet.

There is only one way to get the change we need, and that is to vote to go, because all EU history shows that they only really listen to a population when it says No. The fundamental problem remains: that they have an ideal that we do not share. They want to create a truly federal union, *e pluribus unum*, when most British people do not.

It is time to seek a new relationship, in which we manage to extricate ourselves from most of the supranational elements. We will hear a lot in the coming weeks about the risks of this option; the risk to the economy, the risk to the City of London, and so on; and though those risks cannot be entirely dismissed, I think they are likely to be exaggerated. We have heard this kind of thing before, about the decision to opt out of the euro, and the very opposite turned out to be the case.

I also accept there is a risk that a vote to Leave the EU, as it currently stands, will cause fresh tensions in the union between England and Scotland. On the other hand, most of the evidence I have seen suggests that the Scots will vote on roughly the same lines as the English.

We will be told that a Brexit would embolden Putin, though it seems to me he is more likely to be emboldened, for instance, by the West’s relative passivity in Syria.

Above all, we will be told that whatever the democratic deficiencies, we would be better off remaining in because of the “influence” we have. This is less and less persuasive to me. Only 4 per cent of people running the Commission are UK nationals, when Britain contains 12 per cent of the EU population. It is not clear why the Commission should be best placed to know the needs of UK business and industry, rather than the myriad officials at UK Trade & Investment or the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.



If the “Leave” side wins, it will indeed be necessary to negotiate a large number of trade deals at great speed. But why should that be impossible? We have become so used to Nanny in Brussels that we have become infantilised, incapable of imagining an independent future. We used to run the biggest empire the world has ever seen, and with a much smaller domestic population and a relatively tiny Civil Service. Are we really unable to do trade deals? We will have at least two years in which the existing treaties will be in force.

The real risk is to the general morale of Europe, and to the prestige of the EU project. We should take that seriously.

We should remember that this federalist vision is not an ignoble idea. It was born of the highest motives – to keep the peace in Europe. The people who run the various EU institutions – whom we like to ply with crass abuse – are, in my experience, principled and thoughtful officials. They have done some very good things: I think of the work of Sir Leon Brittan, for instance, as Competition Commissioner, and his fight against state aid.

They just have a different view of the way Europe should be constructed. I would hope they would see a vote to leave as a challenge, not just to strike a new and harmonious relationship with Britain (in which those benefits could be retained) but to recover some of the competitiveness that the continent has lost in the last decades.

Whatever happens, Britain needs to be supportive of its friends and allies – but on the lines originally proposed by Winston Churchill: interested, associated, but not absorbed; with Europe – but not comprised.

We have spent 500 years trying to stop continental European powers uniting against us. There is no reason (if everyone is sensible) why that should happen now, and every reason for friendliness.

For many Conservatives, this has already been a pretty agonising business. Many of us are deeply internally divided, and we are divided between us. We know that we do not agree on the substance, but I hope we can all agree to concentrate on the arguments; to play the ball and not the man.

At the end of it all, we want to get a result, and then get on and unite around David Cameron – continuing to deliver better jobs, better housing, better health, education and a better quality of life for our constituents for whom (let’s be frank) the EU is not always the number one issue.

It is entirely thanks to the Prime Minister, his bravery and energy, and the fact that he won a majority Conservative government, that we are having a referendum at all. Never forget that if it were down to Jeremy Corbyn and the so-called People’s Party, the people would be completely frozen out.

This is the right moment to have a referendum, because as Europe changes, Britain is changing too. This is a truly great country that is now going places at extraordinary speed. We are the European, if not the world, leaders in so many sectors of the 21st-century economy; not just financial services, but business services, the media, biosciences, universities, the arts, technology of all kinds (of the 40 EU technology companies worth more than \$1 billion, 17 are British); and we still have a dizzyingly fertile manufacturing sector.

Now is the time to spearhead the success of those products and services not just in Europe, but in growth markets beyond. This is a moment to be brave, to reach out – not to hug the skirts of Nurse in Brussels, and refer all decisions to someone else.

We have given so much to the world, in ideas and culture, but the most valuable British export and the one for which we are most famous is the one that is now increasingly in question: parliamentary democracy – the way the people express their power.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to vote for real change in Britain's relations with Europe. This is the only opportunity we will ever have to show that we care about self-rule. A vote to Remain will be taken in Brussels as a green light for more federalism, and for the erosion of democracy.

In the next few weeks, the views of people like me will matter less and less, because the choice belongs to those who are really sovereign – the people of the UK. And in the matter of their own sovereignty the people, by definition, will get it right.

# Europe Yes, EU No

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It's safer to take back control  
and spend our money on  
our priorities



Vote Leave

[voteleavetakecontrol.org](http://voteleavetakecontrol.org)