

# Should Britain Leave The EU

2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum

*arrangements for continuing British membership of the EU, before holding a referendum on whether the UK should remain in or leave the EU. The Conservative Party*

The 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, commonly referred to as the EU referendum or the Brexit referendum, was a referendum that took place on 23 June 2016 in the United Kingdom (UK) and Gibraltar under the provisions of the European Union Referendum Act 2015 to ask the electorate whether the country should continue to remain a member of, or leave, the European Union (EU). The result was a vote in favour of leaving the EU, triggering calls to begin the process of the country's withdrawal from the EU commonly termed "Brexit".

Since 1973, the UK had been a member state of the EU and its predecessor the European Communities (principally the European Economic Community), along with other international bodies. The constitutional implications of membership for the UK became a topic of debate domestically particularly regarding sovereignty. A referendum on continued membership of the European Communities (EC) to try and settle the issue was held in 1975, resulting in the UK remaining a member. Between 1975 and 2016 as European integration deepened, subsequent EC/EU treaties and agreements were ratified by the UK Parliament. Following the Conservative Party's victory at the 2015 general election as a main manifesto pledge, the legal basis for the EU referendum was established through the European Union Referendum Act 2015. Prime Minister David Cameron also oversaw a renegotiation of the terms of EU membership, intending to implement these changes in the event of a Remain result. The referendum was legally non-binding due to the ancient principle of parliamentary sovereignty, although the government promised to implement the result.

Official campaigning took place between 15 April and 23 June 2016. The official group for remaining in the EU was Britain Stronger in Europe while Vote Leave was the official group endorsing leaving. Other campaign groups, political parties, businesses, trade unions, newspapers and prominent individuals were also involved, with both sides having supporters from across the political spectrum. Parties in favour of remaining included Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party; while the UK Independence Party campaigned in favour of leaving; and the Conservative Party remained neutral. In spite of the Conservative and Labour Party's official positions, both parties allowed their Members of Parliament to publicly campaign for either side of the issue. Campaign issues included the costs and benefits of membership for the UK's economy, freedom of movement and migration. Several allegations of unlawful campaigning and Russian interference arose during and after the referendum.

The results recorded 51.9% of the votes cast being in favour of leaving. Most areas of England and Wales had a majority for Leave, and the majority of voters in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Greater London and Gibraltar chose Remain. Voter preference correlated with age, level of education and socioeconomic factors. The causes and reasoning of the Leave result have been the subject of analysis and commentary. Immediately after the result, financial markets reacted negatively worldwide, and Cameron announced that he would resign as prime minister and leader of the Conservative Party, which he did in July. The referendum prompted an array of international reactions. Jeremy Corbyn faced a Labour Party leadership challenge as a result of the referendum. In 2017, the UK gave formal notice of intent to withdraw from the EU, with the withdrawal being formalised in 2020.

Brexit

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Brexit officially took place at 23:00 GMT on 31 January 2020 (00:00 1 February 2020 CET). The UK, (which joined the EU's precursor, the European Communities (EC) on 1 January 1973), is the only member state to have withdrawn from the EU, although previously the territories of Algeria (formerly part of France) left in 1976 and Greenland (part of the Kingdom of Denmark) left the EC in 1985. Following Brexit, EU law and the Court of Justice of the European Union no longer have primacy over British laws but the UK remains legally bound by obligations in the various treaties it has with other countries around the world, including many with EU member states and indeed with the EU itself. The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 retains relevant EU law as domestic law, which the UK can amend or repeal.

The EU and its institutions developed gradually after their establishment. Throughout the period of British membership, Eurosceptic groups had existed in the UK, opposing aspects of the EU and its predecessors. The Labour prime minister Harold Wilson's pro-EC government held a referendum on continued EC membership in 1975, in which 67.2 per cent of those voting chose to stay within the bloc. Despite growing political opposition by a minority of UK politicians to further European integration aimed at "ever closer union" between 1975 and 2016, notably from factions of the Conservative Party in the 1980s to 2000s, no further referendums on the issue were held.

By the mid 2010s, the growing popularity of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), as well as pressure from Eurosceptics in his own party, persuaded the Conservative prime minister David Cameron to promise a referendum on British membership of the EU if his government were re-elected. Following the 2015 general election, which produced a small but unexpected majority for the governing Conservative Party, the promised referendum on continued EU membership was held on 23 June 2016. Notable supporters of the Remain campaign included Cameron, the future prime ministers Theresa May, Liz Truss, and Keir Starmer, and the ex-prime ministers John Major, Tony Blair, and Gordon Brown; notable supporters of the Leave campaign included the future prime ministers Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak. The electorate marginally voted to leave the EU with a 51.9% share of the vote, with all regions of England and Wales except London voting in favour of Brexit, and Scotland and Northern Ireland voting against. The result led to Cameron's sudden resignation, his replacement by Theresa May, and four years of negotiations with the EU on the terms of departure and on future relations, completed under a Boris Johnson government, with government control remaining with the Conservative Party during this period.

The negotiation process was both politically challenging and deeply divisive within the UK, leading to two snap elections in 2017 and 2019. One proposed deal was overwhelmingly rejected by the British parliament, causing great uncertainty and leading to postponement of the withdrawal date to avoid a no-deal Brexit. The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020 after a withdrawal deal was passed by Parliament, but continued to participate in many EU institutions (including the single market and customs union) during an eleven-month transition period during which it was hoped that details of the post-Brexit relationship could be agreed and implemented. Trade deal negotiations continued within days of the scheduled end of the transition period, and the EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement was signed on 30 December 2020. The effects of Brexit in the UK are in part determined by the cooperation agreement, which provisionally applied from 1 January 2021, until it formally came into force on 1 May 2021.

Patrick Minford

*Should Britain leave the EU? An Economic Analysis of a Troubled Relationship (2005). "The Economists for Brexit predictions are inconsistent with the*

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was a notable member of the Economists for Brexit group which, in opposition to the consensus view of economists, advocated the UK leaving the European Union and claimed large economic benefits.

Potential re-accession of the United Kingdom to the European Union

*Following a 2016 referendum, the United Kingdom exited from the European Union at the end of January 2020. Since leaving the EU, numerous polling organisations*

Following a 2016 referendum, the United Kingdom exited from the European Union at the end of January 2020. Since leaving the EU, numerous polling organisations have conducted surveys to gauge public opinion on rejoining the organisation. The trend of the poll data shows that, over time, support for Brexit has waned, while public opinion in the UK has gradually moved in favour of rejoining the EU (totally or partially, such as joining the European single market).

Campaigning in the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum

*Leave campaigning group: Vote Leave The Remain Campaign was led by Britain Stronger in Europe, a cross-party lobbying group that was declared as the official*

Campaigning in the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum began unofficially on 20 February 2016 when Prime Minister David Cameron formally announced under the terms of the European Union Referendum Act 2015 that a referendum would be held on the issue of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. The official campaign period for the 2016 referendum ran from 15 April 2016 until the day of the poll on 23 June 2016.

Opinion polling for the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum

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The referendum on EU membership took place on 23 June 2016. Opinion polling for the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum was ongoing in the months between the announcement of a referendum and the referendum polling day. Polls on the general principle of the UK's membership of the European Union were carried out for a number of years prior to the referendum.

Opinion polls of voters in general tended to show roughly equal proportions in favour of remaining and leaving. Polls of business leaders, scientists, and lawyers showed majorities in favour of remaining. Among non-British citizens in other EU member states, polling suggested that a majority were in favour of the UK remaining in the EU in principle, but that a similarly sized majority believed that if the UK were only able to remain in the EU on renegotiated terms then it should leave.

Vote Leave

*Leave throughout the referendum campaign. On 15 June 2016, Vote Leave presented its roadmap to lay out what would happen if Britain left the EU. The blueprint*

Vote Leave was a campaigning organisation that supported a "Leave" vote in the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum. On 13 April 2016 it was designated by the Electoral Commission as the official campaign in favour of leaving the European Union in the Referendum.

Vote Leave was founded in October 2015 by political strategists Matthew Elliott and Dominic Cummings as a cross-party campaign. It involved Members of Parliament from the Conservative Party, Labour Party and the sole UKIP MP, Douglas Carswell along with MEP Daniel Hannan and Conservative peer Lord Lawson. Labour MP Gisela Stuart served as chairman and Leader of the Vote Leave Campaign Committee as Co-

Convenor with Michael Gove MP, of the Conservatives. The campaign was also supported by a number of prominent politicians; including outgoing Mayor of London Boris Johnson, who became a key figurehead for the Vote Leave campaign. A number of Vote Leave principals, including Douglas Carswell, Michael Gove, Bernard Jenkin and Anne-Marie Trevelyan, were also members of the influential IPSA resourced European Research Group.

Vote Leave co-operated with Labour Leave, Conservatives for Britain and Business for Britain throughout the referendum campaign.

At the referendum held on Thursday 23 June 2016, the majority of those who voted, voted for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, which was equivalent to a 51.9% share of the vote (a 3.8% margin); which set into motion the steps to be taken for British withdrawal from the European Union. In September 2016, Change Britain was formed to act as a successor organisation.

On 23 June and over the following days, both Vote Leave and its rival organisation, "Britain Stronger in Europe", were excoriated by sections of the media and academia for a campaign described by the Electoral Reform Society as "dire", which left the public seriously lacking proper information. On 17 July 2018, Vote Leave was fined £61,000 and referred to police for breaking electoral spending laws.

#### United Kingdom membership of the European Union

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The United Kingdom (along with the British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar) was a member state of the European Union (EU) and of its predecessor the European Communities (EC) – principally the European Economic Community (EEC) – from 1 January 1973 until 31 January 2020. Since the foundation of the EEC, the UK had been an important neighbour and then a leading member state, until Brexit ended 47 years of membership. During the UK's time as a member state two referendums were held on the issue of its membership: the first, held on 5 June 1975, resulting in a vote to stay in the EC, and the second, held on 23 June 2016, resulting in a vote to leave the EU.

#### EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

*The EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) is a free trade agreement signed on 30 December 2020, between the European Union (EU), the European Atomic*

The EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) is a free trade agreement signed on 30 December 2020, between the European Union (EU), the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and the United Kingdom (UK). It provisionally applied from 1 January 2021, when the Brexit transition period ended, before formally entering into force on 1 May 2021, after the ratification processes on both sides were completed: the UK Parliament ratified on 30 December 2020; the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union ratified in late April 2021.

The agreement, which governs the relationship between the EU and the UK after Brexit, was concluded after eight months of negotiations. It provides for free trade in goods and limited mutual market access in services, as well as for cooperation mechanisms in a range of policy areas, transitional provisions about EU access to UK fisheries, and UK participation in some EU programmes. Compared to the UK's previous status as an EU member state, on 1 January 2021 the following ended as they are not incorporated in the TCA or the Brexit withdrawal agreement: free movement of persons between the parties; UK membership in the European Single Market and Customs Union; UK participation in most EU programmes; part of EU–UK law enforcement and security cooperation such as the access to real time crime data; defense and foreign policy cooperation; and the authority of the European Court of Justice in dispute settlement (except with respect to the Northern Ireland Protocol).

In addition, two other separate treaties were negotiated, signed, and ratified in parallel around the same time by the UK and the EU/Euratom: an agreement on exchange of classified information and another on cooperation in the field of nuclear energy.

#### Allegations of unlawful campaigning in the 2016 EU referendum

*University and the Cambridge University Psychometric Centre. Links between Leave.EU and Cambridge Analytica. The relationship between Leave.EU and Eldon Insurance*

Several allegations of unlawful campaigning in the 2016 EU referendum have been made. Some allegations were dismissed by the investigating bodies, but in other cases wrongdoing was established, leading to the imposition of penalties. Sanctions have included the levying of the maximum fine possible upon Facebook for breaches of data privacy.

Several institutions have investigated the allegations: the Information Commissioner's Office (regarding the handling of personal data); the Electoral Commission (regarding penalising breaches of electoral law); the National Crime Agency; the Metropolitan Police, and Crown Prosecution Service (regarding criminal prosecution); the UK Parliament; the European Parliament; and the Venice Commission; there have also been private prosecutions.

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