

Moravian Women's Association

Home and Overseas Paper – June 2016

The EU Referendum – Thursday 23 June - are you “In” or “Out”?

What is happening?

A referendum is being held on Thursday, 23 June to decide whether Britain should leave or remain in the European Union.

What is a referendum?

A referendum is basically a vote in which everyone of voting age can take part, normally giving a "Yes" or "No" answer to a question. Whichever side gets more than half of all votes cast is considered to have won.

Why is a referendum being held?

Prime Minister David Cameron promised to hold one if he won the 2015 general election, in response to growing calls from his own Conservative MPs and the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who argued that Britain had not had a say since 1975, when it **voted to stay in the EU in a referendum**. The EU has changed a lot since then, gaining more control over our daily lives, they argued. Mr Cameron said: *"It is time for the British people to have their say. It is time to settle this European question in British politics."*

What is the European Union?

The European Union - often known as the EU - is an economic and political partnership involving 28 European countries. It began after World War Two to foster economic co-operation, with the idea that countries which trade together are more likely to avoid going to war with each other. It has since grown to become a "single market" allowing goods and people to move around, basically as if the member states were one country. It has its own currency, the euro, which is used by 19 of the member countries, its own parliament and it now sets rules in a wide range of areas - including on the environment, transport, consumer rights and even things like mobile phone charges.

What will the referendum question be?

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

What does Brexit mean?

It is a word that has become used as a shorthand way of saying the UK leaving the EU - merging the words **Britain** and **exit** to get Brexit, in a same way as a Greek exit from the EU was dubbed Grexit in the past.

Didn't David Cameron try and change the rules of the UK's EU membership?

Yes, the main points of the deal he negotiated are:

- **Migrant welfare payments** - Migrant workers will still be able to send child benefit payments back to their home country, but the benefits low paid workers from other EU nations can claim when they take a job in the UK will be cut, (critics say it will make little difference to the numbers arriving)
- **Keeping the pound** - Mr Cameron has said Britain will never join the euro
- **Safeguards** for Britain's large financial services industry to prevent eurozone regulations being imposed on it
- **No move towards "ever closer union"** with other EU member states - one of the core principles of the EU.

Who wants the UK to leave the EU?

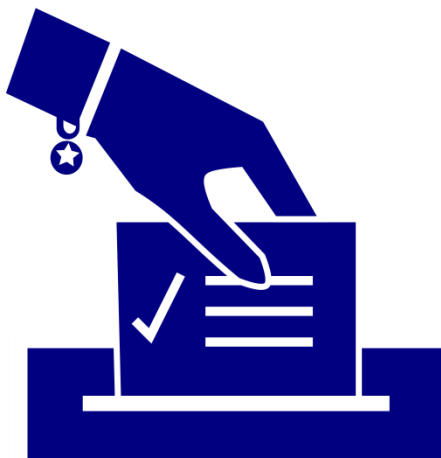
The British public are fairly evenly split, according to the latest opinion polls. The UK Independence Party, which won the last European elections, and received nearly four million votes - 13% of those cast – in the last general election, campaigns for Britain's exit from the EU. About half of Conservative MPs, including five cabinet ministers, several Labour MPs and the Democratic Unionist Party are also in favour of leaving.

Why do they want the UK to leave?

They believe Britain is being held back by the EU, which they say imposes too many rules on business and charges billions of pounds a year in membership fees for little in return. They also want Britain to take back full control of its borders and reduce the number of people coming here to work. One of the main principles of EU membership is "*free movement*", which means you don't need to get a visa to go and live in another EU country. They also object to the idea of "*ever closer union*" and what they see as moves towards the creation of a "*United States of Europe*".

So would Britain be better in or out – how will you vote?

It depends which way you look at it - or what you believe is important. Leaving the EU would be a big step - arguably far more important than who wins a general election - but would it set the nation free or condemn it to economic ruin?



Naomi Hancock – (most of the information in this paper has come from the BBC)

