



# The EU Referendum: What does it all mean?

Inc. Theological Reflection



This document is to try and help ordinary people figure out this EU referendum. It is specifically aimed at those who want to get a better understanding of what the Referendum is about and what issues are being discussed. It will try to cover most of the issues relating to the general questions of whether to **REMAIN** in the EU or whether to **LEAVE** the EU.

This is a complicated issue, but I will try to set out as clear as possible both sides of the arguments so that you are able to work out how you are going to vote on **23rd JUNE 2016**.

The last part of this booklet will look at the issues theologically and what impact a vote could have either way on the Church and it's Mission.

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Cllr Andy Fitchet



## The EU: The Basics

The EU is a union of 28 countries. It has a population of 508 Million people and 24 official languages. It is governed by the European Parliament. Every country elects Members of the European Parliament (MEP) to represent them.

The EU gives rights to all its member states to travel, work and live in any other EU nation. It also allows member states to trade with each other without any taxes or fees for doing so. The EU ensures each member state is upholding the rule of law and allows member states to work together closely to combat international crime, climate change, financial policy and other areas.

### What countries are in the EU?

**Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.**

There are many places for more info on the EU, here are some good ones:

[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)—website of the EU

[www.the-eu-and-me.org.uk](http://www.the-eu-and-me.org.uk)

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887)

## The UK Referendum: The W's

**Who can vote? *Everyone living in the UK over 18.***

**What question will I be asked?:**

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

**When? *Thursday 23rd June 2016, 7am–10pm***

**Where? *At your local Polling Station, just like any election—contact your local council to find out yours.***

**Why?**

David Cameron, UK Prime Minister, in the run up to the 2015 UK General Election promised that if the Conservative Party won a majority then he would hold a referendum asking whether people wanted to stay in or leave the EU before the end of 2017. After months of negotiations with other EU nations a deal was reached and the date has been set: Thursday 23rd June 2016.

***What ‘deal was reached?’***

David Cameron wanted to get changes in the EU in four areas: Britain will be exempt from closer political integration, protection for the Pound (£), Changes to EU migrant benefits and power for nations to stop EU laws—all of which he got.

# Issues at stake

## Live. Work. Play.

All members of the EU have the right to live, work and travel within the other member states of the EU. If living in any EU nation, this means treatment as if you were a native of that country, including access to that countries welfare and help system.

All EU members are able to travel freely, without need of passport (unless flying) or visa to access any EU country or cross borders into other nations. EU members are also soon able to text, phone and message people across the EU for the same cost as in their home nation.

### Arguments for and against.

**For:** Gives UK citizens flexibility to live and work across Europe or retire there. 1m Brits have retired in Spain with ease because of being in the EU. If people come to the UK and after 3 months aren't working or supporting themselves they can be sent back to their home country,

### Against:

We have little to no control over who comes to the UK from EU Countries and that means we have very tight rules on who can come from outside the EU.

# Issues at stake

## Money & Investment

In 2013 the UK trade with the EU was £364bn compared to its trade with China which was £43bn. Not all of that trade would be lost but it would be hit by tariffs and costs that are not there now.

As the Centre of European Reform puts it:

‘The alternatives to EU membership are unsatisfactory: they either give Britain less control over regulation than it currently enjoys, or they offer more control but less market access...while membership of the EU is as much about broader, political questions as economics, the economic case for staying in the Union is strong.’

Arguments for and against.

**For:** £66m a day is invested in the UK because of our EU membership. £3bn a year is given to farmers. Our contribution to the EU budget is only 0.5% of our total UK budget. Universities and research bodies, such as research about cancer, receive £1bn a year in funds from the EU. Wales and NI are net gainers from the EU and their farming and rural communities would be impacted on a massive scale if we left the EU

**Against:** In 2015 we contributed £8.5bn to the EU budget which could be spend on other things, such as Education, NHS or our Armed Forces.

# Issues at stake

## Shared History & Peace

The shared European project was set up in the aftermath of World War Two as a way of trying to bring peace and stability to a region that has a history of fighting each other. We have an shared history with our European Neighbours. All of our Monarchs from 1066 have not been 'British' but of French, Spanish and German decent. Our gene-pool as Brits is made up of Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Vikings, and Normans, all who came from the continent. All nations within Europe have their own history and culture and traditions, none of which have been eroded by belonging in the EU. All these countries still hold to their national identity and in the last 40 years of the UK being in the EU, so have we. This will not change if we continue in the EU.

### Arguments for and against.

**For:** Our values of freedom, democracy and the rule of Law are shared by all of our EU neighbours and are upheld and strengthened when we stand and work together for them. We are more powerful together against threats, such as Russia, ISIS/Daesh and North Korea. Europe has not seen mass war in over 70 years, this is thanks to the EU and our working together economically and politically.

**Against:** We have a different history to that of the rest of the EU, one which makes us different. We were able to be a successful independent nation before, we can be again.

# Issues at stake

## Jobs

Best guesses are that roughly 1 in 10 jobs in the UK are linked to trade and our involvement with the EU. Will all of these disappear? No. Will some? Yes. 1,400,000 UK nationals live and work in the EU. There are people that have a false understanding of what would happen if we left the EU. No-one who is here legally in the UK now would be or are able to be forced to leave the UK.

EU maintains the right for workers to have paid holiday, paternity & maternity leave, sickness benefits and the right to strike.

Arguments for and against.

**For:** Many of these jobs that are linked to the EU could be lost. The owners of BMW & Rolls-Royce, Nissan and other manufacturers have already warned they may move their business to another EU nations if we leave. Workers would be less protected with their workers rights and negotiating a new trade settlement with the EU may take up to 10 years.

**Against:** Companies may threat to leave, but they also may not leave, as we could negotiate a new trade settlement with the EU.

# Issues at stake

## A Global Village

We live in a world that is closer than ever, you can access the entire world (almost) from a 5" phone in your hand. This shows no sign of changing any time soon. The world we live in is truly a global village. Our world is getting closer, now is not the time to pull up the shutters and pretend it is not happening. If we move to a model like Switzerland or Norway, who are not in the EU, like them we would have to abide by all EU rules to trade with them yet with absolutely no say over what rules are implemented. Travel, work and life is now spread across the globe with families living all over the world, this will only increase not decrease.

### Arguments for and against.

**For:** Now is not the time to 'pull-up the drawbridge' but to work closely with our EU partners and others. With people living across the world, it makes more sense to be closer as nations and not further apart. The ease of moving people, business' and lifestyles across 28 nations is good for people and good for business.

**Against:** We would have more freedom to work with other nations, such as commonwealth nations because we could negotiate independently.

# Theology

## What does this have to do with the Church?

### Mission

Europe as a continent has a church that is declining and a culture that is becoming more and more detached from the stories of Scripture. For some this is a sad loss, for others this is an exciting mission opportunity. BMS World Mission have mission workers in 8 EU countries and the Church Mission Society (CMS) have workers in 6 EU countries, European Christian Mission (ECM) have 191 workers across Europe. Being part of the EU means that Mission agencies and churches can send workers and partner with organisations in a much easier way than they can with countries in Asia, South America or Africa. The cost of mission is reduced due to the ease of travel, shared currency in many places, no need for visas, cheaper healthcare, cost of communications and the cost of schooling for any children. The question is, does being a member of an organisation like the EU help or hinder the churches call to 'make disciples of all nations' Matthew 28:19

### Justice and Social Action

Europe faces its greatest challenge with the number of people travelling to Europe to seek a better life. Currently best estimates suggest that over a million people arrived in Europe in 2015 to seek asylum. 3500 people are living in 'the Jungle' in Calais as they attempt to reach the UK for work and a better life. Many churches have sent parcels and people to the continent to help by providing food, clothing and shelters to people who arrive with nothing except the clothes they left with. The free movement of people in the EU has made this sort of response much easier. UK residents can travel to any EU nation for 3 months without the need to register themselves as living, after this they must show how they intend to live and work in the country.

The church has wanted to affirm that all people are made in the image of God. How then do we as a church help to affirm the humanity of all people when debating this issue?

# Theology

"We are always better together so I will be voting to remain" said a friend to me. I understood where my friend was coming from and at points in the past I would have argued something similar myself. However in recent times I have found myself increasingly uncomfortable with this view. Whether it is down to my study of Baptist Ecclesiology and our preference for the local, or a rediscovery of the Babel story, I am now less than convinced that we are always better together, when together means big faceless arrogant organisations. Any organisation that doesn't have an awareness of human frailty and sin is capable of disproportionate damage in our world. When nothing is impossible for humanity, the consequences are often horrific. A degree of scattering seems the most merciful option. Now I am aware that this argument could lead to a radical individualism of which I would despair. But what all human gatherings and organisations require is a sense of humility, an idea of our limits, a conception of fallenness. I am not sure that the EU in its current shape would meet this criteria and so find myself unable to be apologist for the idea that "We are always better together" *Jonny Fillis, Baptist Minister*

There will be, no doubt, arguments fought on either side which seem in the least to lack grace. It is my view that Christians should be consistent in the way in which they talk about people and should always refrain from attacking people as people but rather tackle issues. For me, the issues the church needs to think about in this referendum are in these 4 areas: Mission, Pastoral Care, Justice & Social Action and Church Cooperation.

**Please pass this on to anyone who  
you think it may help, after you have  
read it yourself!**

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