



In or out of the EU? That is the question we all now face

Should we stay or should we go? That is the question we are facing with the impending EU referendum, which we now know will take place on Thursday, June 23.

Campaigning has started in earnest with key arguments from both sides already being voiced, but how will you vote? Prime Minister David Cameron has said leaving the EU would be a 'leap in the dark', while others feel that Britain is being held back by its membership.

MICHAEL STEWARD summarises some of the key issues from the 'In' and 'Out' campaigns as the debate ramps up ahead of the big day of voting in the summer.

TRADE

Exit campaigners say that by withdrawing from Europe, the UK frees itself from EU rules and regulations, and as an independent trading nation would be

free to establish bilateral trade agreements with fast-growing export markets such as China, Brazil, Russia and India.

Although those opposed to a so-called Brexit say that leaving would shut the UK out of the EU market, which is worth more than £400 billion a year, and complete withdrawal would see trade barriers erected and tariffs for imports and exports imposed.

ECONOMY

According to a report by Open Europe, an independent think tank, if the UK were to leave the EU, then the worst case scenario is a loss of 2.2 per cent to the UK's GDP by 2030. The estimate is based on the UK failing to strike a trade deal with the rest of the EU and not pursuing a free trade agenda (FTA).

The best-case scenario, assuming the UK strikes a FTA with the EU and opens up fully to trade with the rest of the world on leaving, is that the UK's GDP

would be 1.6 per cent higher by 2030, says Open Europe.

IMMIGRATION

Anti-EU campaigners say that leaving would mean the UK regains control of its borders. Cabinet ministers, including leader of the House of Commons Chris Grayling, warn that if Britain stays in the EU, the population could soar to 80 million and the country will face increasing pressure from migration, which impacts on services. 'In' campaigners believe that immigration has been good for the economy, and that growth forecasts are partly based on high numbers of net EU migration. They say the UK relies on migrant labour and taxes paid by EU nationals to fund services.

JOBS

Britain's biggest businesses, including BT and Marks and Spencer, have signed a letter stating that leaving the EU

would threaten jobs, deter investment in the UK and put the economy at risk.

Brexit campaigners argue that there will be a jobs boom, with less red tape and EU regulations benefiting small and medium-sized companies who do not trade with the EU.

LAW

Withdrawal from the EU would mean Britain regains sovereignty over a wide range of decisions, like agriculture, fisheries policy and home affairs, and would be free of European law and order measures.

Those wanting to remain argue that EU employment law is good for the UK, and that even if the UK leaves, the country will not have complete control over its own affairs.

If Britain continues to want to trade with the EU, then they will have to comply with various European laws.



IN

Alan Dean - Liberal Democrat councillor for Stansted North - IN



"People of my generation need to think about what is

best for the next generation - their children and grandchildren - and that is with the UK as part of the European Union.

"It would be a foolish and regrettable decision to come out of the EU, particularly now, at such a time of political international uncertainty.

"The country would potentially be worse off and people are delusional if they think walking away altogether will solve all the regulatory issues. It is about working together to iron out some of the issues, which is what David Cameron has been trying to do."

Sir Alan Haselhurst - Conservative MP for Saffron Walden - IN



"We have had, for 71 years, peace in western Europe and that strikes me as a plus. I haven't had to look my

children in the eye, and tell them they've got to enlist, and that has been down to coming together as a democratic union and not taking to arms.

"In terms of industry, we didn't join the EU until the 1970s and back then, we were known as the 'sick man' of Europe.

Today, we are a leading economy in Europe and the free movement of labour within the EU has been a hugely significant factor.

"What does it say about our country if we cannot work together as part of the EU?"

Charlie Cornish - chief executive of MAG, owner of Stansted Airport - IN



"The EU has benefitted UK consumers and businesses enormously over the last 25 years by opening up the European aviation market to provide greater competition and choice.

"UK airlines now compete successfully on routes right across Europe, taking full advantage of the 'open skies' created by the EU.

"Inside the EU Britain can

continue to grow, invest and create jobs and I believe it would be in the best interests of the millions of passengers using our airports every year, and the UK economy, for Britain to remain in a reformed Europe."

Howard Rolfe - leader of Uttlesford District Council - IN



"I believe the country is safer and more economically robust within the EU. I have not heard considered explanations as to how the model would work outside, and the risk is considerable.

Easy talk of "greater control" is not substantiated by how we would retain the benefits of the world's largest trading block and our largest trading partner and at the same time gain the independence sought by Brexit supporters.

"I think it is interesting to note that the key members of the cabinet, the other political parties, other nations including the US and, I believe, the Trade Unions and the CBI are all advocating for us to stay in."

UNDECIDED

Kevin Wiseman, sales manager, Perkins Garage, Rayne - Undecided

"Personally, I haven't got a clue at the moment, and I think a lot of people will be in the same boat. I would like to see more information on the topic before I make a decision. My heart is telling me to get out, but my head says are we going to be better off by leaving?"

"I don't think David Cameron has made a persuasive argument, but I'm sure the campaigning will heat up as time goes on.

"As a business, we have not yet had the discussion about how it may affect us."

OUT

John May - Business for Britain, East of England chairman - OUT

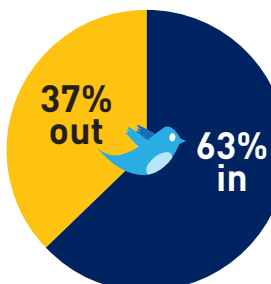


"It is something of a myth that leaving the EU would be a 'leap into the dark'. Many UK businesses do not trade with the EU, yet 100 per cent of it is regulated by the union.

"The safe option is to take control over these decisions and bring them back to the UK.

"We will be saving a lot of money by not being in the EU and our future prospects as a country will be better off."

TWITTER POLL



■ Poll carried out on Dunmow Broadcast Twitter followers.

James Cleverly - Conservative MP for Braintree - OUT



"UK membership to the European Union is hugely expensive and too often hinders Britain's ability to trade across the globe. The EU pursues discriminatory policies that hold us back from reaching our full potential as a nation. We need new trade relationships with the wider world so that Britain can thrive. The only way that will be possible is for the UK to leave and regain control again."