

## The EU Referendum: What you need to know

### When?

- The Conservative General Election manifesto included a pledge to hold a referendum on EU membership **by the end of 2017**
- It is expected be held on **23rd June**. As the Prime Minister has to give 16 weeks' notice, in line with the EU Referendum Act, we will know whether the referendum will be held on this date by **March 3rd**.
- The Government has ruled out 5th May (the date of the local/devolved assembly elections).



### Timetable

- **February 18-19: EU Summit** - This is the key summit at which Cameron will hope to finalise his deal. Currently, Ministers have agreed not to challenge the PM on his renegotiation efforts until a final deal has been agreed.
- **March 3** - If a referendum is to take place on June 23rd, it must be announced by March 3rd.
- **March 17-18: EU Summit** - If Cameron fails to agree a deal in February, it is expected he will use this Council summit to finalise his efforts. A referendum could take place in the autumn if announced shortly after this point.
- **June 23: possible polling day** - The likely date of the referendum, although today (03/02/16) the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have written to the Prime Minister calling on him not to hold the referendum in June.  
**Purdah:** 28 days before the referendum, purdah rules will come into force. The Government originally hoped they would be allowed to communicate a position on the referendum in the run up to polling day. However, following widespread opposition from MPs they have abandoned this position, but did manage to secure that Ministers will be able to conduct routine EU business in this period.
- **June 23-24: EU Summit** - A further EU Council meeting will be held on these dates. If Cameron has to wait until this date to secure a deal, the earliest a referendum could be held would be October.

### Referendum Question

The Electoral Commission amended the original question, which was interpreted by many as leaning towards the status quo, to "*Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?*"



## Campaign Groups

- [Britain Stronger in Europe](#) - The main cross-party 'in' group. It is headed by former Marks and Spencer Chairman, Lord Rose. Members of their board include: Lord Mandelson, Danny Alexander, Damian Green, Karren Brady and Caroline Lucas. Will Straw is their Executive Director.
- [Vote Leave](#) - A cross party campaign that grew out of Business for Britain. It is headed by former Conservative adviser (to Michael Gove) Dominic Cummings, and Matthew Elliott, who ran the successful No2AV campaign.
- [Leave.EU](#) - This group is funded by the UKIP donor Arron Banks and other business people. It is competing with Vote Leave for official designation as the lead campaign.

There are numerous other campaign groups and groupings of MPs campaigning either for or against EU membership. Examples include: the [Conservative Europe Group](#) (Chaired by Neil Carmichael MP), [Grassroots Out](#) (featuring prominent figures Peter Bone MP, Kate Hoey MP and Nigel Farage MEP) and the [Labour In for Britain Campaign](#) (Chaired by Alan Johnson MP).

## The draft settlement (so far...)

In his [letter](#) to the European Council published on 2nd February, Donald Tusk, President of the Council, outlined the measures included in the package and described that they fall into four baskets: economic governance; competitiveness; sovereignty; and social benefits and free movement.

**Migration and welfare benefits:** An 'emergency brake' has been agreed, i.e. if there is excessive strain on the welfare system, in-work benefits could be denied to EU workers for four years. The EU has agreed that it would be justified to trigger an 'emergency brake' if the UK votes to stay in.

**Analysis:** It is highly debateable as to how much of an effect this would have in reducing the number of migrants entering the UK, a key concern of the public and of those likely to vote to leave the EU.

**Sovereignty:** Clear legal statement agreed that UK is not committed to further political integration and that the 'ever closer union' phrase cannot be used to integrate the EU further. A so-called 'red-card' mechanism has been included, in which, if 55% of national Parliaments agree, they could effectively block or veto a Commission proposal.

**Analysis:** Many believe it is highly unlikely that the 'red-card' would ever be used. A weaker 'yellow-card' was only ever used twice. In 2008, William Hague [mocked](#) the 'red-card' idea in the House of Commons.

**Competitiveness:** The wording of the draft settlement includes language that commits the EU to strengthen the internal market and cut excessive regulation.

**Analysis:** This was an uncontroversial demand of Cameron's and the EU has been saying for a long time that they want to work towards greater integration of the single market.

**Economic governance:** Tusk has stated that measures to further deepen the economic and monetary union will be voluntary for member states whose currency is not the Euro.

**Analysis:** This aspect is still lacking a great deal of detail and it is likely that this could be a particularly contentious area amongst European leaders. Cameron is hoping to gain safeguards that will protect the City's interests as the Eurozone integrates further and also ensure that the UK will not have to contribute to Eurozone bailouts.