

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers



In the following pages there are a number of Questions (Q) and statements (S) and responses to these, which are designed to help campaigners gain insight into how to respond to Leavers who make the statements or put the questions.

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S The EU is corrupt. Its accounts have never been signed off.

* **Actually, the Court of Auditors has signed off every year since 2007, with a few notes of minimal errors.**

Those errors do not reflect corruption; rather, errors made by member states in the implementation of the budget. The UK is one of the sources of error, as acknowledged by the Public Accounts Committee Parliament.

Most of the EU budget is implemented by the member states – esp. farm support and structural funds, which make up around 80% of the budget. The radio programme 'Farming Today' regular features farmers complaining that the UK government is incapable of paying agricultural subsidies correctly and on time.

For more detail: <https://fullfact.org/europe/did-auditors-sign-eu-budget/> which is a British website with no particular axe to grind.

S: "Brussels bullying" / "should show flexibility, compromise"

- **Simply: why should they? It's the UK which is proposing to exit; not the EU which is expelling us.**

Deborah Meaden view (Twitter, 5 Sept): "*the EU has been immensely clear, patient and constant in the negotiations. That's 27 countries with a United front versus the Government party's in-fighting.*" This is not like haggling at a street market. Calls for the EU to "evolve its position" and show "flexibility, goodwill, determination" are simply cherry-picking. The EU could never accept that: The Four Freedoms are indivisible.

The EU negotiators' responsibility is to protect the interests of the 27 other members, and the principles of the Union.

The EU27 are also standing solidly with the Irish Republic over the border issue (GFA).

We had respect, then lost it through a process including the **foreign secretary** telling them to "*whistle for it*", MPs comparing officials to concentration camp commandants, attempting to roll back on agreements already made, and then acting aggressively as EU27 tried to assist you. The Brexit minister threatens almost fortnightly to withhold the agreed financial settlement.

May just said she "*would never accept*" the thing she agreed to in writing in December. She took 15 months to make a proposal, and then when it came it was composed of elements that had already been ruled out as unimplementable or unacceptable by EU27. They explained why, after May pressed on with it anyway, she is now claiming they have not explained why.

The EU27's alleged "humiliation" of her in Salzburg followed her rather aggressive presentation which again merely repeated her, already rejected, plan.

EU27 went out of their way to accommodate the ridiculous DUP clown show, and to package the financial settlement as we wanted it, to get May the 'sufficient progress' she desperately needed politically.

The UK has been concerned during negotiations about preserving the Union of the UK, and about 'taking control of its borders, laws and money'. The EU has exactly the same concerns, and it is very clear to EU leaders that:

it cannot delegate to any third party the job of collecting its customs duties as the Chequers Plan would require it to

it cannot split the Four Freedoms of the internal market (which Britain designed!) without weakening its main economic advantage over the rest of the world

it cannot abandon Ireland, and its commitment to the peace agreement, which is the member state likely to suffer most from Brexit - perhaps as much as UK - without sending a terrible signal to all the other 'small countries' from Norway to Cyprus, via Denmark, the Baltic States, Luxemburg, Slovakia, Slovenia etc that they don't matter to the future of Europe.

We can't expect the EU to compromise its legal base to accommodate a country which has said that it wants to leave the club.

Q Won't BREXIT mean we take control over our own Laws?

- **"Brussels" does not tell us what to do – we help to make laws which apply across the EU.**

It is inaccurate to claim that the EU or "Brussels" imposes laws on us. There are some laws that we and our 27 fellow members, all independent sovereign States, decide to enact in common because it makes sense. For example, to ensure the single market operates fairly, or to combat climate change or terrorism.

A better term would be "EU-wide laws". These laws are agreed in the Council of Ministers, composed of democratically elected representatives of the member States, and must also be approved by the MEPs who are directly elected by European citizens. They are then enacted by the national sovereign Parliaments.

Official EU voting records show that the British government has voted 'No' to laws passed at EU level on 56 occasions, abstained 70 times, and voted 'Yes' 2,466 times since 1999. In other words, UK ministers were on the "winning side" 95% of the time, abstained 3% of the time, and were on the losing side just 2%. (And that included restraint on bankers' bonuses.)

Bear in mind that EU member States can also enact laws applicable only in their countries. E.g. France has a 'good Samaritan' law, the UK does not (yet). The UK has enacted the Equality Act 2010, smoking ban, and many other laws.

Conversely, the areas in which the EU makes law (and the British Government is always involved in these decisions) are strictly limited by the Treaties. In many areas the EU cannot make policy decisions e.g. in education where the EU is limited to programmes like Erasmus, in defence and most of social policy.

S Asking for another vote is subverting the will of the people, expressed in the original referendum. This is not democratic.

- **Democracy is a process, not a single moment. The people are allowed to change their mind as circumstances change. We know a lot more now than we did in June 2016.**
- **Not seeking a "second referendum" but a first *informed* vote, once it is much clearer what is actually on offer. Then the People get to accept it or say "no thanks".**
- **To follow the will of the people, first find out what it is – now. Also, the make-up of the electorate has changed.**

More on this subject

Do you mean what the people were led to believe two years ago? Or do you mean the will of the people knowing what they know now?

In the 2016 referendum people were led to believe various things: leaving the EU would improve their situation, the NHS would get more money, millions of Turkish immigrants wouldn't flood the country. Since then – starting the morning after – the misleading claims, and outright lies (Turkey), have unraveled and we know about the Leave campaign's proven illegal overspending and coordination, dark ads exploiting dodgily obtained data, and probable foreign interference.

The facts as presented at the referendum were often lies. Now we have hard facts about what is not possible in the negotiations, the slowing of investment, threats to the car industry, the Irish border, a £40bn divorce bill, no £350m extra a week for the NHS, EU doctors + nurses leaving in droves... We didn't know these things in 2016.

We all revise our views as we find out more: e.g. from "My team's new manager is brilliant." to, a string of bad results later, "Useless – get him out!". **Keynes** famously said "*When the facts change I change my mind. What do you do?*". The facts about Brexit have changed, and everyone should be allowed to consider the new facts and express an opinion.

"Most voters could not have known how they saw things developing during and after the negotiations on exiting; e.g. the difference between a "hard" or a "soft" Brexit, the relative merits and demerits of the "EEA model" as opposed to the "Canada model" or the "no deal model", or indeed any other exit model. The electorate was sold a myth. May's apparent fixation on "respecting" the verdict of the electorate is therefore misguided, unnecessary and dangerous."

[LSE blog 26sept]

New young voters are strongly pro-EU. Older voters were 60% Leave, but many have so to speak 'departed'. The balance continues to shift. Analysis by InFacts.org published in The Independent 17sept18 demonstrates that there will be a Remain majority of voters by mid-January 2019, even on cautious assumptions e.g. that nobody has changed mind and turnout would be the same. So there is no mandate for any kind of Brexit.

Q Do we keep having votes?

Whether you voted Leave or Remain, Brexit was not supposed to be like this. New facts have proven that it is impossible to get what people thought they were going to get. A vote confirming acceptance of Brexit – or rejection in favour of the status quo – surely is desirable. It's about informed consent – like before agreeing to surgery or exchanging contracts to buy a house.

In 2016 a narrow majority voted Leave. Now it is for the government to go back to the People saying "You said you wanted to leave the EU. This is the best outcome we have been able to get. Do you accept it? Or do you prefer to stay as we are, i.e. in the EU?" That is grown up government, and true democracy.

"You can't undermine democracy with more democracy." [David Lammy 26sept]

The whole point of democracy is that people can express their preferences when policies or the facts change.

If the 'will of the people' is still to leave, a vote would reaffirm that. If you think it would not so reaffirm, then you accept that Brexit is no longer the Will of the People. Suppose there is a 'final say' vote, in which the People vote to stop Brexit and remain in the EU. May we assume you would 'respect' that? So what's the objection to holding that vote?

Calling a further vote two years later, in the hope of a better result, is exactly what PM did in 2017 (snap general election). Inconsistent then to object to a first informed vote.

What do you think is the agenda of those who insist the 2016 result must stand? A deep commitment to democracy – or opportunism, trying to freeze forever a result that suits their real plans?

S Not enough time to hold a vote anyway

"I've been speaking to EU diplomats ... They are adamant that if the British people want a People's Vote, the door is always open and we would be granted the time to do so."

Chuka Umunna 18 sept cf. Barnier *"The door remains open."*

S Let's have a General Election instead

Could only happen after a People's Vote, that Remain won, leading to implosion and split of the Tory party.

No chance of a majority in Parliament (two thirds required under Fixed Term Parliaments Act) for an early election.

Anna Soubry: *"If, as seems likely, parliament becomes gridlocked over Brexit, the only credible way out that I can see will be a people's vote. The idea that Conservative MPs would instead vote with Labour to bring down the government is a fantasy."* [reported in Guardian, 22sept 2018]

S We could take advantage of great economic opportunities

- **Fantasy. The opportunities are there for us now, as an EU member. But not if we leave.**
- **On the contrary, UK would suffer serious damage – already begun.**

We have to recognise that Britain is no longer an Empire or a superpower. We can't expect other countries to do as we wish, just because we feel entitled to that.

We are, however, an unusually influential country (or were until a couple of years ago), because of our global connections, pragmatism and creativity.

"Britain does not dream of some cosy, isolated existence on the fringes of the European Community. Our destiny is in Europe, as part of the Community." **Margaret Thatcher**, Bruges speech 20sep 1988

All the Brexiteers' thinking on future economic opportunities is derived from some vague idea that once free of EU regulation, enterprise could flourish in a end of the 19th century manner. This is nonsense. Economic opportunities arise from an expanding economy and cooperation across international borders of entrepreneurs, scientists and researchers. Look at the incredible mix of nationalities involved in the development of Silicon Valley. Brexit and the Government's proposed immigration policy would severely limit the economic opportunities of the UK. Already EU scientists are leaving to return to the safety of the Continent.

By the way the UK has always attracted a far higher share of EU R & D funding than its size would suggest.

Government's own (DExEU) impact assessments: any kind of Brexit would have negative effects, worst in Northeast. Sectoral analysis gradually emerging reinforces that. And now there is a Minister for Food Supplies.... for the first time since WW2.

Institute for Fiscal Studies analysis, 18oct 2018: the warnings derided as 'Project Fear' of a downturn in GDP turn out to have been a bit off on the timing, but right on the impact. Instead of an initial hit followed by some recovery, there has been gradual decline: GDP 2% = £40bn lower than if Remain had won.

Christiane Lagarde, Head of IMF, 17sept18: *any Brexit would be bad, 'no deal' worst of all.*

"Leaving the EU would not guarantee a rosy economic future for the UK. Brexiteers need to beware of succumbing to 'irrational positivity'." **Liam Fox**, 10 Sept 18

"The UK economy as a whole is set to grow at a snail's pace. Brexit uncertainty continues to weigh heavily on many firms, as most of the practical questions facing trading businesses remain unanswered. The drag effect on investment and trade would intensify in the event of a 'messy' and disorderly Brexit."

Adam Marshall, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce 17 Sept 18

University of Sussex survey (Sept 18) of a thousand UK companies – making up in value terms a fifth of all UK manufactured goods exporters, employing 1.1 million workers and generating £52bn worth of UK exports per year – showed almost 30% have already lost business directly through the threat of Brexit – and a third have already experienced a Brexit-driven fall in investment.

Boris Johnson, 11 Sept 18, said that Mrs May's Chequers plan would mean *"abandoning our seat around the table in Brussels and continuing to accept the single market legislation. That seems to me to be a particular economic risk in Chequers and makes it substantially worse than the status quo."*

Yes: the best course for the country is to stop scapegoating the EU and foreigners, stay in the EU – and set about fixing the very real issues, like housing and job security, which rightly make people angry, but are all home-grown and not down to EU membership.

Q How can we control Immigration if we stay in the EU?

- **EU Freedom of Movement is only one part of 'immigration'.**
- **It benefits the UK, as PM and others acknowledge.**
- **We have control – 3-month rule (if govt bothered to enforce it)**
- **And it enables Brits to live, work, learn, love in other EU countries.**

Immigration is more than FOM

"Immigration" means several different flows: from other EU countries, from outside the EU (e.g. India), refugees, asylum seekers. Misleading to bundle them all together. Numbers coming from other EU members have always been lower than those from the rest of the world. A lot of the resentment about immigration has nothing to do with our membership of the EU.

People moving from elsewhere in the EU is not really "immigration", but relocation or recruitment. FOM gives UK employers access to a huge pool of talent. *"The recently adopted EU Posted Workers Directive bans employers in e.g. the UK from bringing in people from elsewhere in the EU and paying them less than their Brit workers."*

Migration from the EU has generally been about young people who want to work. There has been little immigration from people bringing in their families. As they work they pay taxes. As they are young they don't use a lot of services which are used by older folks.

All serious academic analysis shows that they produce a positive economic and financial balance for the UK. A significant part of UK economic growth has been achieved because we have had the benefit of the EU labour market.

Some of the worst Vote Leave scaremongering focused on Turkish immigration, suggesting that Turkey was about to join the EU and that 76 million Turks might come to the UK. Turkey has been trying to join the EU for decades. At the current rate Turkey's accession date will be around the year 3000. Since 2016 we've seen its president crackdown on opposition and the media, with EU talks now in the deep freeze.

FOM benefits the UK

Theresa May stated again 21 Sept that other EU nationals here are welcome, needed and we want them to stay.

Migration Advisory Committee report 18sept:

- Migration has no or little impact on unemployment, wages and has reduced prices.
- The latest data show that EU 'migrants' contribute on average £2300 a head more, annually, than they receive in any sort of benefits. That's a lot more than the average Brit.

Several sectors of our economy depend on such workers: e.g. seasonal fruit+veg pickers, hotels, restaurants, construction. They are also a vital element of NHS staffing.

The threat of Brexit chokes that off. Cf Independent 13 sept 18 reporting findings of Open University research: unemployment remains at a 40-year low of 4.1%, the UK has a skills shortage, giving firms few options when it comes to hiring. Meanwhile, net migration from the EU has dropped to a four-year low. Over 40% of business leaders struggle to make up the shortfall in skilled workers, and expect a financial hit.

"Welcoming high skilled immigration is key to the success of #GlobalBritain." **Boris Johnson** quoted on BBC News website 4 Sept

We have a unique situation in that a legacy of having such a large Empire (now the Commonwealth) is that many different nationalities want to come to the UK. The UK has benefitted from immigration for centuries. The EU only contributes a part of the total immigration numbers.

S EU migrants come here to scrounge

It was the UK's choice to not implement a 7-year partial or full migrant break in order to prepare for fresh immigration from new EU countries. Almost all other countries did so.

Even with that failure, considerable EU powers already exist to manage migration. It is legally possible to register & track all migrants, ensure they are entirely financially and medically self-supporting, prevent and/or prosecute benefit fraud and return home any migrants who are not economically active.

Furthermore, Cameron secured an "emergency brake" to suspend Welfare Payments to migrants if necessary - powers which are now lost.

Other EU countries use these powers which might explain their reluctance to fix something that is not broken.

Successive UK governments have failed to understand or have been unwilling to use these significant existing powers.

Under the EU Treaty (art.7), other EU nationals can only stay here for three months, unless they are in work or can support themselves including health insurance. We have all along had 'control'. But our Home Office (T. May proprietor) chose not to enforce that rule.

Q Wouldn't Brexit mean we save money going to Europe which could be used for the NHS?

- **Ah, the big lie on the big red bus....**
- **In fact we get a discount and cashback.**

We do not "send £350 million a week to Brussels". Head of Statistics UK called that claim out as wrong. We pay roughly £9 billion net to the EU each year: under 1% of total UK Government spending.

Our contribution is net of a special rebate. Lots of EU money is spent on UK projects, regional development, and farm support. The EU also funds private enterprises and research institutions.

After Brexit the UK government would instead have to pay subsidies to agriculture, research etc which by itself would absorb a substantial share of the £9 bn supposedly saved.

The economic loss caused by leaving the EU would be considerably more than our net contribution. Brexit has already led to the loss of business (which pays a substantial proportion of total taxation) and is leading to investment stalling affecting future growth.

The EU's budget is only 1% of EU members' total GDP. UK Government spending by contrast is around 41% of UK GDP. In other words the EU budget is very small in relation to national budgets. The UK's net contribution to the EU budget in 2017 was around £8.6 bn – under 1% of overall UK government spending of around £750 bn

Since the referendum it has become clear that Brexit would hit our economy, meaning less money for the NHS, not more. The loss of jobs because of Brexit would reduce the tax take available to the government. Already jobs have been lost in the City and through European agencies (EMA) relocating out of the UK. Even Jacob Rees-Mogg, an arch leaver, has moved some of his funds operation to Ireland to remain in the EU.

We are still in the EU, but the proposal to exit is already costing the public purse £500m a week, according to the Centre for European Reform think tank. If economic growth and investment hadn't been depressed, the budget deficit would now be just 0.1% of GDP and austerity would be over. We could already be cutting taxes and pushing up spending on priorities such as the NHS, rather than merely promising them for the future with money we won't have.

Q Surely BREXIT will enable us to make our own trade deals?

- **In what way(s) would that be better**

We can trade with the world now, thanks to free trade agreements negotiated by the EU on behalf of member States. Replacing them would take years.

Britain never stopped being global. Being in the EU doesn't prevent us from increasing trade with countries outside it. Germany's biggest trading partner is China.

We already have deals with over 65 countries - including, yes, Canada - thanks to our EU membership. We'd have to renegotiate those just to get back to first base. America and China could impose terms to suit them. They can't do that to the EU because its economy is bigger than theirs.

The EU has the economic clout to secure very good trade deals on behalf of its members – in a similar way to how Tesco gets better deals with suppliers than, say, Lloyds. The EU's latest trade deal is with Japan, clearly a major economy. We couldn't just leave the EU but preserve all the trade deals that the EU has negotiated. Partners would want to renegotiate all of these deals with the UK, because as an isolated medium-sized economy we could not hope to negotiate deals as favourable as the EU has achieved.

Trade flows between countries are always affected by distance. The closer countries are, the stronger the trade flows. The EU is our nearest neighbour and accounts for roughly 40% of our trade. You can't compensate potential trade losses with the EU by joining the Trans Pacific Partnership!

To negotiate a trade deal takes a lot of time. The UK has few experienced trade negotiators.

- **Better for whom?**

We would lose a reliable and mutually profitable set of trading partners who, collectively, have the clout to make advantageous trade deals with any country in the world. On our own, how could we get better deals? To give us preference would compromise most other countries' existing or under negotiation deals with the EU. Even our friends NZ, Australia, Canada have made clear that they actually can't do that.

This is not an opportune moment for Britain to pursue export superpower status. It can either leave the EU or it can aim to increase its exports. It cannot do both.

Ngairé Woods, University of Oxford in The Guardian 5 sept

- **And at what cost – to whom?**

Why would they give the UK a better deal than they have with the EU, a 500m trading block? For example, a trade deal with the USA. You really think that the great deal-maker "America First" Trump wouldn't extract a high price – e.g. the NHS ? *

* article in The Times 19sept 2018: the Initiative for Free Trade (Daniel Hannan, P.Minford et al) says that, to help clear the way for a UK-US trade deal, US healthcare corporations should be allowed to compete with the NHS to run hospitals; also that the UK should accept US environmental and food safety regulations, and allow import of e.g. chlorinated chicken. [Rate of food related illness in the USA is 4x that in the EU.

The only way we could make trade deals to replace those we have through membership of the EU is by significantly reducing health, worker protection, food and environmental standards. This is what the Brexiteers want to do. We would end up with lower standards everywhere, and with severe damage to manufacturing and agriculture – acknowledged by the hard Brexiteers. In order to compete farmers would have to forget worrying about the environment and the use of dangerous pesticides. In manufacturing costs would be cut by exploiting workers.

The proposed EU-US trade deal (TTIP) explicitly, at EU insistence, protects public services inc health, water, education; and rules out any requirement to privatise such services. [EU-US joint statement, Brussels 20 March 2015]

Q **Would other Trade deals Stick?**

Could other countries even rely on the UK to keep to a trade deal?

Liam Fox thinks we should go with any EU exit deal that seems practical now so we can get Brexit through Parliament, following the line taken by Michael Gove. He thinks we can always chuck it once we've left. Fox believes that *"it's self-evident that if it's a bilateral treaty, it can be revised later on"*. This is not a great look for the trade secretary, who is supposed to make reliable commitments to bilateral treaties. It also means the public could be conned by a "blindfold" Brexit - and the hardliners push through an even more damaging form of Brexit if we quit.

- **Irish border: threat to Good Friday Agreement.**

Any bilateral trade deal involving standards diverging from the EU's would surely require a hard border on Ireland, since the EU could not accept an unguarded back entrance for e.g. hormone ridden US beef. That would breach the Good Friday Agreement: a no-no. Same goes for trading on WTO terms.

S **WTO rules would be fine**

The WTO doesn't eliminate tariffs and does little to reduce non-tariff barriers (rules + regulations) or to open up markets for services, a particular UK strength.

WTO rules state that in the absence of a trade deal (years to conclude) you must treat everyone the same as the least favourable deal: no favouritism. So, neither the EU nor anyone else could give us special treatment and just let in our goods or service or waive their regulations. Neither could we.

S We could get cheaper food / protectionist EU

Food, e.g. fruit + veg, currently imported from many countries is subject to zero tariff, under free trade agreements with the EU. That includes the 30 poorest countries, in the "anything but arms" deal.