

# **Brexit:** **Questions from a** **91-year-old**

**end**  
**the**  
**chaos!**



**Let the people decide**



# Questions from a 91-year-old

A follower of End the Chaos says an elderly relative has asked the following questions – here are our responses.

## **We voted to join a trade agreement – so why do now have the structure we have?**

The European Community that the UK voted to join in 1973 operated under substantially the same structure as the EU does today - with the key institutions the European Council, Council of Ministers and European Parliament.

These are democratic institutions that give the UK considerable influence over everything the EU does.

The UK also has more opt-outs than any other member state – for example, we are:

- not a member of the euro
- not a signatory to the Fundamental Charter of Human Rights
- not part of Schengen - EU citizens entering the UK are subject to border controls

### **The European Council**

- made up of PMs/Heads of all 28 member states
- sets overall priorities and policies
- every PM/Head has a vote with decisions made by simple majority
- important issues require a unanimous vote

### **Council of the European Union**

- also known as the Council of Ministers
- made up of government ministers from all 28 member states
- votes on all EU legislation, with most decisions also requiring approval from the European Parliament
- ministers attend depending on the issue being discussed – so if it's finance, Finance Ministers attend

### **European Parliament**

- made up of 751 MEPs, including 73 British MEPs
- all MEPs are directly elected by voters in all 28 member states
- every MEP has a vote on legislation with decisions made by simple majority
- for sanctions and security issues the Council of Ministers can decide on its own



## **I didn't vote to join a vast bureaucracy like the EU**

Even the EU's most ardent supporters would probably agree it could be reduced in size or made more efficient.

Over time, the EU has developed in such a way that it now assists the UK and other member states in most areas of modern life. For example:

- the UK does not just trade freely with the other 27 EU countries – the UK is part of the EU's trade deals with more than 60 non-EU countries
- the European Medicines Agency ensures all medicines are safe
- the European Common Aviation Area enables flights between the UK and lots of destinations without the need for separate agreements
- common regulations ensure the safety and correct labelling of food
- UK companies participate tariff-free with EU partners – including to make aeroplanes and cars
- young people can live and study abroad with EU funding
- through regional development and social funds, the EU is providing £10 billion to the UK in 2014-20 for people most in need
- through the free movement of people, EU workers are available to fill vital jobs for the UK – 18% of new teachers, 15% of dentists
- EU workers do many low-skilled jobs that others do not want – such as fruit-picking enabling UK farmers to be competitive

If the UK has to replace the above with its own trade deals, agencies, visas and funding, many believe:

- it will take a very long time and cost a huge amount of money
- there will be hardship and shortages whilst new systems get up and running – trade deals typically take years to complete, there could be a shortage of workers, the Government is preparing to stockpile medicines and food
- at best, we will simply replace one large bureaucracy with another

## **We were never consulted when the EU got bigger - why not?**

The UK operates under a representational democracy - therefore voters are not consulted on everything.

It has been up to successive UK Governments and MEPs to help shape and agree EU rules and policies.

Only European countries that fulfil certain criteria can join the EU – these include a free-market economy, stable democracy, rule of law, and the acceptance of EU legislation.

Countries cannot join the EU unless the Governments of all member states – including the UK – agree. The Parliaments of all member states – including the UK – must ratify the decision.

## **We were fine before we went in and will be fine again**

In economic terms, the UK was not fine when we joined the EU – compared to our neighbours in the European Community, our economy had been in significant decline for nearly 25 years.

Successive UK Governments had failed to turn things around – we were known as ‘the sick man of Europe’.

After we joined the EU, the UK became more competitive and our economy grew faster than other member states.

## **Why do we give so much money away when we have austerity at home?**

Total Government spending in the UK in 2018/19 is expected to be around £817.5 billion or £15.7 billion per week.

The UK's net contribution to the EU is around 1.1% of this total. Compared to the value of the UK-EU relationship, this contribution is quite small:

- In 2016, the UK's gross contribution to the EU amounted to £19 billion i.e. £365m per week, however this amount was never actually paid to the EU.
- Before the UK government pays anything to the EU, it is entitled to a rebate – this was £5 billion in 2016.
- A further £4.4 billion in 2016 also came back to the UK - examples include payments to farmers and to poorer areas of the UK such as Wales and Cornwall.



- The net contribution, after allowing for these payments amounted to £9.4 billion in 2016, i.e. £181 million per week – around 1.1% of total Government spending.
- The EU also makes direct payments to the private sector for research grants and other things. In 2014, these were worth an estimated £1 billion, i.e. £19 million per week – including them would reduce our net contribution further still.

### **Why can't we go back to the old system of visas?**

314 million people crossed the UK border in 2016 – if all non-UK citizens required visas, this would mean a huge increase in bureaucracy.

Visas are cumbersome – they can take many months to obtain.

Any delays would damage families, trade and tourism – all vital to the UK.

And in an age of rapidly increasing mobility, visas would be seen by most as a restriction on freedom – many young people could decide to leave.

After Brexit, the UK Government proposes to give visas only to EU workers earning over £50,000 per year – this means many vital workers will be unable to come, for example:

- teachers
- research scientists
- social care workers
- nurses
- low-skilled workers doing jobs others don't want

### **We fought for the Europeans in World War Two - now they are trying to tell us what to do**

Millions of people died between 1939-45 in a fight against fascism. Today, some are afraid far right views and policies are returning.

The number of recorded hate crimes has more than doubled in the last 5 years - the Home Office says this is likely to be partly because of the EU referendum.

People fought in 1939-45 to preserve their society for future generations.

In 2016, many voted for the same reason for the UK to stay in the EU – and because that is what the vast majority of young people wanted.

Many Europeans fought alongside us in World War Two. The contribution in particular of Polish airmen in the Battle of Britain is rightly celebrated.