

## UK and the EU Referendum

### What is the European Union?

The European Union - often known as the EU - is an economic and political partnership involving 28 European countries. It began after World War Two to foster economic co-operation, with the idea that countries which trade together are more likely to avoid going to war with each other.

It has since grown to become a "single market" allowing goods and people to move around, basically as if the member states were one country.

It has its own currency, the euro, which is used by 19 of the member countries, its own parliament and it now sets rules in a wide range of areas - including on the environment, transport, consumer rights and even things such as mobile phone charges.

### What has happened?

A referendum - a vote in which everyone (or nearly everyone) of voting age can take part - was held on Thursday 23 June 2016, to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union.

Leave won by 52% to 48%.

The referendum turnout was 71.8%, with more than 30 million people voting. It was the highest turnout in a UK-wide vote since the 1992 general election.

### What does Brexit mean?

It is a word that has become used as a shorthand way of saying the UK leaving the EU - merging the words Britain and exit to get Brexit.

EU law still stands in the UK until it ceases being a member and that process could take some time.

For the UK to leave the EU it has to invoke an agreement called Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty.

The UK will continue to abide by EU treaties and laws, but not take part in any decision-making, as it negotiates a withdrawal agreement and the terms of its relationship with the now 27 nation bloc.

For more information see the [BBC news site](#).