

THINK PRAY Vote



Think, Pray, Vote:
EU referendum
resources for churches

Think, Pray, Vote: EU referendum resources for churches

A series of briefing notes produced by the **Joint Public Issues Team** of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and United Reformed Church with the support of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office. It covers different topics and includes background information, issues for debate, and questions, and can be used for conversations with groups or for personal reflection.



The Methodist Church



The Church of Scotland



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Introduction

On 23 June each of us will be asked to answer the question

“Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”



Behind the simple challenge of the referendum question are many others which are not on the ballot paper. The referendum is surrounded by controversy, and because opinions differ, so does the interpretation of facts. This resource does not presume to say which way people should vote. Rather, it explores the issues surrounding a range of aspects of membership of the European Union (EU), and offers different opinions and perspectives. Christians may not agree on how to vote in the referendum, but we can each reflect thoughtfully and prayerfully on the issues involved.

Love your neighbour

As Christians we are called to work, live and pray for a better society. This includes participating in the political processes that shape the lives of our communities, our country and our world. It is our identity as followers of Jesus that will both engage us in the referendum and shape our response. How, then, do we allow our faith to inform our answer to one of the biggest political decisions facing the United Kingdom?

The gospel accounts remind us that Jesus said the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind”, while the second is to “love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus reinforces the established Old Testament principle that our relationship with God affects the way we relate to and live with one another. These human relationships are an expression of our relationship with God; the two are intertwined.

But what does this have to do with the European Union, the Schengen Agreement and the single market? The answer is that each of these refers to and directly impacts upon how we relate to each other as individuals, as members of organisations and communities, and as countries. Whether it concerns questions of sovereignty, the free movement of people, or where laws are made and enforced, these are issues that influence and affect our relationships, and as such, our faith has much to share.

The UK has a longstanding relationship with the other nations of Europe. Our churches have well established links with Christian communities and congregations across the continent; these relationships extend to nations that are currently part of the European Union and those that are not. It is not an issue of whether we need and value these relationships, or even whether we belong in Europe, but whether that sense of belonging is best expressed by being part of the European Union.

The real referendum question

The referendum question might therefore be phrased as: “To what extent does the European Union enhance or hinder our ability to love our neighbour and, in doing so, our ability to love God?”

You may like to have that at the back of your mind as you work your way through the more detailed material in this resource, along with these other general questions:

- Who, in this context, is our neighbour? Are we talking about neighbours in our local communities, in the UK, in Europe, or in the wider world?
- It is an important aim to have good relations with all countries, in Europe and elsewhere. Does our membership of the European Union help us with this, or hinder us?
- All political and economic structures are made by humans and therefore flawed. The referendum offers us a choice between political and economic structures where the UK is part of the EU or outside the EU. Which would best enable us to fulfil our Christian duty towards God and our neighbour?
- Can the EU, in its current or a reformed state, achieve the ideals we might have for it?

Using this resource

This resource explores some of the key issues in the debate. These may not be the issues which are being covered in the media, but they explore crucial questions about how the UK relates to the EU, now and in the future. There may be other issues, not covered in this resource, which are particularly important to you as Christians in your area, and we encourage you to explore these as well. The resource includes personal opinions from two Christians who will be voting in different ways in the referendum, as well as offering further resources and some background information on the EU. This resource can be used in a variety of ways, either individually or as part of a group discussion.

Some Churches Together groups will be organising hustings or question time events before the election. You can find advice and information on running these events, as well as further resources, at www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/eu-referendum and www.actsparl.org

On either side of the debate there are individuals with passionately held views on the question of the UK's membership to the EU. Whatever our position as Christians we should work to ensure that our discussions are respectful, our decisions are taken with good grace and that it is God's kingdom that is central rather than our own.

“ Which neighbours are we talking about: those in our local communities, in the UK, in Europe, or in the wider world?

Does economic union help our relationship with some nations while hindering others?

Does the way the European Union makes laws aid or impede our Christian duty? ”

Prayer

Loving God,

*In the referendum that lies before us,
in the challenge of seeking an answer,
in our differences of opinion,
in our need to understand,*

*may you guide us in our decisions,
make us gracious in our disagreement,
and may we join you to work for the
building of your kingdom
rather than our own.*

Amen



The single market

At the heart of the EU is the single market. Laws and policies regulating trade are coordinated allowing people and businesses to trade freely without barriers between 28 different member states.

Many of the questions about the future of the EU – where laws are made, the free movement of people and access to welfare – are all related to the economic conditions considered necessary to make the single market work. For a single market to operate effectively, people have to be able to move between job markets where regulations apply equally.

The benefits of being part of a single market are significant. The EU's single market area contains half a billion people and is the world's largest trading block, importing £1.7 trillion and exporting £1.9 trillion of goods and services each year. Trade within the single market accounts for around half of the UK's imports, exports and inward investment. It is by some margin the UK's most important trading partner in terms of size.

The UK Government estimates that this trade supports around 3.5 million jobs in the UK. How many of these jobs would be lost as a result of leaving the EU is unclear and would depend on the UK's relationship with its former EU partners after exit. Some argue that the large scale of EU trade lowers prices and reduces the cost of living – although to what extent is hard to quantify accurately.

To facilitate trade between the EU nations, barriers such as customs duties and import regulations have been removed. Rules have been agreed so that once a business has developed a product that is safe and legal in one country, it can be sold anywhere within the single market. Other rules have been agreed to allow for fairer competition within the EU. For example, the UK was instrumental in preventing governments subsidising industries that could inundate the market with unrealistically cheap products, and potentially drive others out of business.

Leaving the EU would certainly change but not end the UK's trade with the single market. Non-EU states with full access to the single market are required to comply with EU rules including free movement of people. Other non-EU countries negotiate different deals but face tariffs and restrictions in order to trade within the EU. It is impossible at this stage to say accurately what the EU/UK relationship would be should the UK leave. This is one of the areas that the two sides of the current referendum debate hotly contest.

There is considerable support for regulations that allow for equal access to the single market. Disagreement is focused on the efficiency and the costs associated with some of these regulations. For some, the necessary compromises that come with membership of a large trading block will be unsatisfactory. The key question is, are the compromises worth the benefits of being able to access the single market?

“ For a single market to operate effectively, people have to be able to move between job markets where regulations apply equally. The question is, are the benefits of the single market worth the costs? ”

Reflection

All economies are located in social relationships. Trade shapes, reflects and is part of our interactions with each other. Trade and markets have a moral element whether that is in the distribution of wealth, the provision of work or the creation of resources. We learn from the Bible that we are not owners but stewards of possessions that ultimately belong to God and that we must look to use these possessions in ways that serve God through serving those in need.

Questions

- What biblical principles help to inform our perspective on trade?
- Who is helped and who is harmed by the current single market arrangements?
- What links need to be made between trade and the protection of God's creation?
- In what ways does the EU's single market provide opportunities for serving God and serving others, and how does it limit this ability?

While we recognise that Bible passages are written in a particular context and often with a particular purpose, you may find some of the following readings helpful as you reflect on the issue of trade. You may also find it helpful to consider other passages from Scripture or different texts in your reflection.

- The parable of the talents – Matthew 25:14-30
- Giving alms – Luke 12:3



European flags in front of the European Parliament building, Strasbourg

Sovereignty and subsidiarity

A key issue in this referendum is the question of sovereignty. Who has the power to make decisions affecting our lives, and where does accountability lie? These questions become particularly pointed when people feel distant from the institutions, elected or otherwise, which have decision-making power.

Working together may mean giving up some of our control. The EU represents this dynamic on a large scale, as 28 member states attempt to cooperate over a range of policy areas. The European Commission has the power to propose, though not enact, legislation. While its members are nominated and approved by elected representatives, they are not directly elected themselves which is felt by some to signify a 'democratic deficit'.

The European Court of Human Rights is unrelated to the European Union and is instead an international court established by the European Convention on Human Rights to which all EU states and 19 other states are signatories.

Are the limitations placed on nation states to let the EU function justifiable? Some argue that decisions that govern our lives should be taken by those who are directly accountable to the UK electorate. Others say that true sovereignty lies in our ability to achieve the results we want, something that often requires collaboration.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is felt by some to be an example of this 'democratic deficit'. It is a proposed trade agreement between the United States and the EU, which aims to enhance economic growth but, some fear, will increase the power of transnational companies. The contents of the agreement being negotiated are not fully available to the public or even to the Members of the European Parliament who represent them.

The UK has a say, though not control, over legislation coming from the EU:

- Member states nominate Commissioners to the European Commission.
- The European Council, made up of the elected heads of each of the 28 member states, sets the priorities for the EU.
- Through the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, elected representatives (Members of the European Parliament, MEPs, and Cabinet Ministers) get to examine and approve or reject legislation.

EU legislation comes in various forms: regulations must be applied in their entirety across all member states, whilst directives require national parliaments to devise their own legislation, reflecting national diversity, to attain an agreed goal. Yet it is still possible that the majority of people within a nation state may be in favour of one outcome and yet be overruled if the majority of member states vote for another. A similar tension is experienced within the UK, with a Scottish Parliament and Northern Irish and Welsh Assemblies working alongside the Westminster Parliament. For some people the tension between the EU and member states makes membership of the EU fundamentally problematic.

For others the benefits gained through being in solidarity with other nations is a reason for surrendering a degree of self-determination. Even where a state might not see any direct benefit, or even experience some disadvantage, nations may be willing to give up some autonomy because in the long run they believe in a particular principle. Cross-border challenges such as climate change might be an example of this.

One means of safeguarding national sovereignty within the EU is the principle of subsidiarity. This is a concept that originated in Catholic Social Teaching. It was based on the principle that everyone has God-given dignity and therefore all other forms of society should serve the human person. The political consequence of this is that government should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more local level. The EU should therefore only do things which cannot be done at a national level. EU legislation can be reviewed if two-thirds of nations believe that it does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity. For some this is core to the aims of the EU; for others it is viewed as a fig leaf for increasing federalism.

Reflection

All Christian theological thinking about sovereignty begins with the sovereignty of God. If we accept that God's power is universal then our starting concept of sovereignty is one that transcends national borders. All other sovereignties exist under, and are subject to, divine sovereignty. But when should nations or individuals surrender a degree of self-determination in order to cooperate? And when should they preserve their individuality in order to meet their own needs more acutely? Certain passages within the Bible suggest that God wants us to live together in unity but our individual diversity is also valued, as we read in 1 Corinthians 12:19, "If all were a single member, where would the body be?" As we reflect on the EU referendum it might be helpful to explore some of the following questions.

Questions

- What do you think sovereignty means? What about subsidiarity? How do Christian understandings of these concepts affect how we see the EU?
- What are the ways in which working with others enables us to serve God and those around us? When can it be restrictive?
- How does the EU affect UK sovereignty? How does it affect our ability to meet our own needs and the needs of those around us?

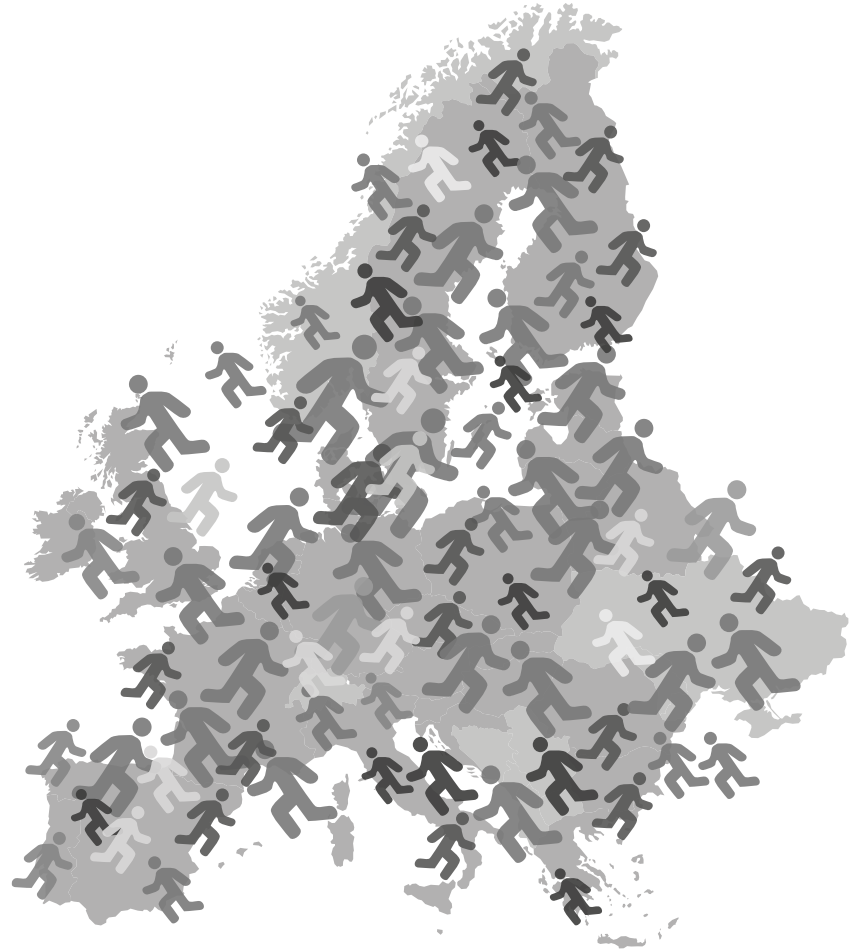
While we recognise that Bible passages are written in a particular context and often with a particular purpose, you may find some of the following readings helpful as you reflect on the issue of sovereignty and subsidiarity. You may also find it helpful to consider other passages from Scripture or different texts in your reflection.

- “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!” – Psalm 133:1
- “When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples.” Deuteronomy 32:8
- One body with many members – 1 Corinthians 12:12-20
- Regard for others – Philippians 2:1-5

“ Some argue that decisions that govern lives should be taken by those who are directly accountable to the UK electorate. Others say that true sovereignty lies in our ability to achieve the results we want, something that often requires collaboration. ”

3

The free movement of people



As part of their country's membership of the EU, all EU citizens are entitled to look for a job in another EU country. They can work there without needing a work permit, reside there for that purpose, stay there even after employment has finished and enjoy equal treatment with nationals in access to employment, working conditions and all other social and tax advantages.

The free movement of people to work anywhere within the EU can be seen as a part of the single market and viewed in terms of numbers and economics, allowing people to move as freely as money. It is also clear that the freedom to move between nations is intended to be more than simply an economic device, but also to further the objective of bringing European peoples together.

Some would argue, however, that such freedom contributes to the suppression of wages within the UK and an increased pressure on resources, such as housing, and a 'brain drain' within some of the EU's poorer countries. There is substantial concern about immigration to the UK with around 40% of UK voters ranking it as the most important issue facing the country. The number of people arriving from EU countries increased when the EU expanded in 2004 and underwent a further increase from 2012 – providing impetus to the debate around the free movement of people.

It is, however, important to note that every year since the foundation of the EU more people have arrived in the UK from outside the EU than from EU countries. A small fraction (<5%) of new arrivals seek asylum. The ability to move within the EU is reciprocal, so 1.5 to 2 million British people live in other parts of the EU while around 2.5 to 3 million citizens of other EU nations live in the UK.

Most analysis suggests that EU migration is beneficial to the economy and makes a net contribution to the treasury over the short and the long term. There is evidence of a varied impact on wages, reducing in some industries and increasing in others, but largely flat over the whole economy.

But the effects of EU migration are wider than economic. Some parts of the UK have been changed substantially by other EU nationals moving there and settling. Some people perceive these changes to be destructive to existing neighbourhoods, increasing pressure on resources and threatening community cohesion. Others see EU immigration as providing an enriching diversity to people's lives, through local economies and cultures. In research, most people appear to have a more mixed or nuanced view towards change. Among those who do not have a vote in this referendum are the many European nationals who have moved and settled in the UK. Many have built a life working and raising children here, with some marrying UK nationals. There is at present uncertainty around what would happen to this group, especially families of mixed nationalities, should the UK choose to leave the EU.

“ Approximately 2 million British people live in other parts of the EU while around 2.5 to 3 million citizens of other EU nations live in the UK. ”

Reflection

The Bible contains stories involving migration and the movement of people – whether it be the Israelites moving to escape famine, flee persecution or to follow God's calling to the promised land; or the disciples and apostles of the early Church spreading the good news. Within these migration stories movement, culture and identity are explored as a fruitful ground for blessings (to those settling and those resident), as well as threats, both physical and cultural. As we reflect on the EU referendum it might be helpful to explore some of the following questions.

Questions

- How has your local area been affected by EU immigration? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this to the local community, and to the country?
- What do biblical stories tell us about nations, migration and the place of the stranger?
- How does the free movement of people in the EU affect our identities? How does this relate to our identity in Christ?

While we recognise that Bible passages are written in a particular context and often with a particular purpose, you may find some of the following readings helpful as you reflect on the issue of the movement of people. You may also find it helpful to consider other passages from Scripture or different texts in your reflection.

- Joseph and Pharaoh – Genesis 47:1-12
- “You and the alien shall be alike before the Lord...” – Numbers 15:15
- “He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal...” – Luke 9:1-6
- “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” – Galatians 3:28

4



Work and benefits

EU citizens are able to work in any EU country. Once they become residents, EU citizens must pay taxes in the country where they are to be able to receive that country's social benefits. The majority of EU migrants come to the UK to work, with the next largest group made up of those who come to the UK to study.

Despite many stories to the contrary there is no substantial evidence that people come to the UK to claim out-of-work benefits. EU citizens have significantly restricted access to such benefits, and those able to claim do so at a rate very much lower than the general UK population.

There has been some controversy around the relatively small numbers of employed EU migrants claiming child benefit to support their children who are resident in other EU countries. The recent renegotiation process means that in future these payments will be based on the standard of living where the child resides – sending more money to children in richer countries and less money to those in poorer countries. The overall effect is likely to be a small reduction in total cost.

UK citizens claim benefits in other EU countries. Systems vary across member states, which makes direct comparisons of numbers difficult, but at

- least 30,000 UK citizens claim the equivalent of unemployment benefits in other EU nations.

EU migrants are entitled to in-work benefits such as tax credits and child benefit and claim these at a similar rate to UK citizens. Migrants tend to be younger than the average UK citizen and are more likely to be employed although often in relatively low paid jobs. Taking these factors into account EU migrants are on average net contributors to the UK exchequer, paying more in taxes than taking out in public services including health, education and benefits. There is no substantial evidence to support the claim that benefits are acting as a draw to EU migrants, nor is there any evidence for EU migrants claiming benefits at a high rate.

- For some people, however, allowing non-UK citizens to claim UK benefits is an injustice, especially given the pressure on the welfare state.

Reflection

How we treat others is an important part of our worship of God. The Bible calls on us to love our neighbour, to provide for those in need and look after those who might easily be taken advantage of, particularly strangers in a foreign land. Yet the call to love our neighbour provokes the questions: who is my neighbour? Who is in greatest need?

Questions

- How do the EU entitlements around work and benefits fit with the Bible's picture of caring for those who need it?
- As in the case of child benefit, what responsibility do we have for others, and how does that apply to those outside our national borders?
- Is there a tension between the call to care for others and the need to care for ourselves? How do the two relate to one another in our lives and in Scripture?

While we recognise that Bible passages are written in a particular context and often with a particular purpose, you may find some of the following readings helpful as you reflect on the issues of work and benefits. You may also find it helpful to consider other passages from Scripture or different texts in your reflection.

- "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field..." – Leviticus 23:22
- "Do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow..." – Jeremiah 7:6-7
- Warn against idleness – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

“ The call to love our neighbour provokes the questions: who is my neighbour? Who is in greatest need? ”



Candle-lit vigil,
Paris, France,
10 January 2016

Peace and international relations

The first stated aim within the Treaty on the European Union is the promotion of peace. Article 3 of the Treaty states that the EU is to “promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples”. In the face of a turbulent international situation, including new forms of terrorism, an unstable Middle East and a huge refugee crisis, it is important to ask if we are better able to tackle these challenges within the framework of the EU or outside.

Foreign policy is held by EU member nations; however the EU does have a Union Minister for Foreign Affairs able to negotiate in areas agreed by the member states. The refugee crisis and the increasing terrorist threat have made these areas of responsibility more important. Both the power of collective action and the unwieldiness of EU decision making have been demonstrated in the response to these challenges.

In the areas of trade, defence and foreign policy the EU is open to criticism of behaving as a conventional nation-state – promoting the interests of its members over other, often weaker, nations. The Overseas Development Institute accused the European Commission of

moving towards protectionism and hampering the opportunities for developing countries, contributing to the global inequality which destabilises developing countries and fuels civil and international conflict. The European Union has also been criticised for pursuing a conventional security policy built around defence, the military and the production of arms. For example, in December 2013 the 28 EU member states agreed that the EU arms industry “should be strengthened to ensure operational effectiveness and security of supply [or armaments], while remaining globally competitive and stimulating jobs, innovation and growth across the EU.”

Others would argue that the European Union plays a large role in peacebuilding internationally, supporting hundreds of peacebuilding projects and, with its member states, contributing half of all global development aid. In December 2012 the EU received a Nobel Peace Prize for “over six decades [having] contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe”. Those giving the award cited “75 years of peace between Germany and France, the introduction of democracy in Greece, Spain and Portugal, the overcoming of divisions between East and West within Europe, and the process of reconciliation in the Balkans” as areas to which the EU had contributed. Some argue that the EU was not essential to enable these positive developments. While this is unknowable, the more important question is if the EU will be a force for peace within Europe and with its neighbours in future.

Europe is currently witnessing a refugee catastrophe, as people flee Syria and other conflict zones. The EU has tried to implement a policy for relocating refugees across Europe, but is increasingly being blocked by nation states who are worried about the scale and impact of the crisis on their populations. The UK has opted out of the EU deal and has made its own commitments. The situation is a European-wide problem, but is not being handled effectively at an EU level. Fears about the refugee crisis are raising questions about the principle of the movement of people in the EU.

Reflection

As Christians we are called to follow the Prince of Peace, and peace is often used to signify right relationship or God’s blessing. Yet, the Christian concept of peace is much more than the absence of violence. As we see in Matthew 10, we are not called to make peace for its own sake, but to enable peace to grow out of relationships that allow the full flourishing of all. As we reflect on the EU referendum it might be helpful to explore some of the following questions.

Questions

- What are the characteristics of the peace that God desires for us?
- How are these characteristics present or restricted through the EU’s structure, its projects and its work?
- What role do we have as Christians for building peace within Europe and does that relate to membership of the EU?

While we recognise that Bible passages are written in a particular context and often with a particular purpose, you may find some of the following readings helpful as you reflect on the issue of peace. You may also find it helpful to consider other passages from Scripture or different texts in your reflection.

- “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation...” – Micah 4:3
- “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” – Matthew 5:9
- The cost of following Jesus – Matthew 10:34-39
- Pursuing the kingdom of God – Romans 14:17-19

“ Does the European Union promote peace within its borders while contributing to conflicts outside of its membership? ”



Care for the environment

The EU has been one of the main drivers behind environmental legislation in the UK over the past 30 years, setting new standards across a range of areas.

Examples of EU environmental action include:

- water quality, including drinking water, waste water treatment, and the quality of river and bathing waters.
- waste management, including recycling and restrictions on landfill.
- air quality, including monitoring of pollution in urban areas.
- regulation on the use of dangerous chemicals.
- environmental impact assessments.
- wildlife and habitat conservation, for example through the Natura programme.

This work has resulted in a range of directives that require EU member states to put in place legislation to meet common EU environmental standards. Various programmes offer support for scientific research and funding for environmental projects. The EU also supports the European Environment Agency which monitors environmental standards across Europe.

Much EU policy in this sphere was originally established in response to environmental damage and pollution caused by industry. However, it has grown to embrace wider challenges of promoting sustainable development, action on climate change and safeguarding biodiversity, making a vital contribution to United Nations treaties on all these themes. The EU will have an important role in ensuring member states implement the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change (CoP21) and it has made a commitment to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases by 40% across the EU by 2030 from 1990 levels. However following the Paris agreement, some critics have called for the EU to raise its ambition in responding to climate change.

The EU has undoubtedly had a great impact in raising basic environmental standards across Europe: bathing water has become cleaner, air quality in urban areas better, and less waste goes to landfill. It has contributed significantly towards global action on climate change and can claim that it has succeeded in promoting economic growth in Europe while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy have been criticised by some environmental groups for not doing enough to preserve and protect natural habitats. Many species and habitats remain at risk due to intensive fishing and farming practices, including fish stocks in some European waters and populations of farmland birds that continue to decline in some countries. Some people argue that the economic foundation of the EU and its continuous drive for growth are incompatible with a more sustainable way of living.

“ The EU has undoubtedly had a great impact in raising basic environmental standards across Europe. ”

Reflection

Christian concern for the environment arises out of an understanding that we have a duty of stewardship and care for creation that is ultimately God's. As *Hope in God's Future*, produced by the Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches, observes "God is present and active in sustaining creation from moment to moment. We are not, therefore, stewards acting in place of an absent landlord, but servants called to play our part in response to God's care for creation."

Questions

- In what ways does concern for the environment fit into our worship of God and service of others?
- As we look to the future, how do we think the EU will help or hinder our care of God's creation?

While we recognise that Bible passages are written in a particular context and often with a particular purpose, you may find some of the following readings helpful as you reflect on the issue of environment. You may also find it helpful to consider other passages from Scripture or different texts in your reflection.

- "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." – Genesis 1:28-31
- "The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it..." – Psalm 24:1-6
- "The earth is full of your creatures." – Psalm 104:24-25



Agriculture and food

Although a comparatively small part of the UK's economy, agriculture and fisheries play an important role in our countryside management and the production of our food. They are correspondingly a part of the UK's culture and heritage. Agriculture comprises a very important part of the EU's focus, accounting for 40% of the EU's total expenditure.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was launched in 1962 with three main aims:

1. To increase agricultural productivity ensuring a fair standard of living for agricultural producers.
2. To stabilise markets.
3. To assure food security for the EU.

To achieve these aims CAP uses a number of tools including import levies to raise the price of imported food stuffs, import quotas to restrict the amount of food being brought in from outside the EU, internal price intervention where excess goods are purchased to ensure the market value remains at the target price, production quotas to reduce over-production, and direct payments to farmers who comply with good practice.

Over the years CAP has been widely criticised for a number of reasons including accusations of protectionism, hindering developing countries and the promotion of the expansion of agriculture to the detriment of the environment. Farmers

have also in the past criticised CAP for being too prescriptive over how they should run their farms. In recent decades CAP has changed substantially to address these criticisms, with an increased emphasis on good agricultural and environmental practices, and funding for biodiversity. Payments have been decoupled from production levels and farmers have been given more flexibility in return for good environmental, agricultural and animal welfare standards.

British farmers currently receive 60% of their income from CAP and other environmental payments. The Less Favoured Area Support Scheme enables farming and conservation of land that would otherwise be uneconomic. Its removal would affect regions very differently, as just 12% of English land qualifies for these payments compared to 78% in Wales and 84% in Scotland. If the UK were to leave the EU the UK government would need to provide an alternative form of payment to prevent farms from closing. It is argued that this could be covered by savings from the UK's membership fee to the EU.

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is much smaller, representing approximately 0.75% of the EU budget, though in some areas of the UK the fishing industry provides significant employment. CFP sets quotas for how much of each species of fish each country may catch in a certain area. The CFP has been accused of causing the decline of fishing communities without halting the reduction of fish stocks, while forcing fishermen to dump large quantities of fish because they are the wrong species or size. However, supporters suggest that it is important to have a coordinated approach because fish don't follow frontiers, and if left to their own devices different nations' fishing fleets would compete with each other reducing fish stocks to unsustainable levels.

“ **Agriculture and fisheries play an important part in our countryside management and the production of our food. They are a part of the UK's culture and heritage.** ”

Reflection

Food is more than just fuel, it is a gift from God. Yet many of us do not think about where it comes from, or how it is produced. Many of the parables within the Bible use farming metaphors to help us understand how we relate to God and to each other, and the production and sharing of food shapes our cultures and affects our relationships. As we till the land we must care for God's creation and provide for those in need. As we reflect on the EU referendum it might be helpful to explore some of the following questions.

Questions

- What does the way we produce and share food say about our relationship with God and each other?
- Who would be helped by changes to the way that farming and fishing is subsidised, and who would be hindered?

While we recognise that Bible passages are written in a particular context and often with a particular purpose, you may find some of the following readings helpful as you reflect on the issue of food. You may also find it helpful to consider other passages from Scripture or different texts in your reflection.

- “When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow...” – Deuteronomy 24:19-22
- God's provision – Psalm 65:9-13
- Life is more than food – Luke 12:22-24

Perspectives



“ My faith stretches my horizons, beyond economic pressures and political uncertainties to a world of abundant life and rich, transformative relationships. ”

Dr Alison Elliot

Being European is an important part of my identity, so I care about Europe and its people. I have no wish to turn my back on them. For twelve years, I worked for the Church in Europe. We grappled with the challenges faced by a continent endowed with a rich history in a world that has high expectations of it, and I remain committed to supporting those who seek to make the European Union a success.

The European project has always been about peace making. The EU is committed to peace, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, equality, rule of law and sustainability – a vision that is worth striving for.

My faith stretches my horizons, beyond economic pressures and political uncertainties to a world of abundant life and rich, transformative relationships. It stretches my sympathies, beyond a concern for my immediate neighbour to an engagement and hospitality that crosses borders of nationhood and cultural background. I am drawn into the community that is Europe because it offers space in which to explore and express this faith.

Europe is facing an enormous challenge just now in the paradoxical problem of the migrant crisis, which threatens to fracture the Union, just at the point where joint action is most needed.

Offered a choice between looking after our narrow national interests, or being part of seeking a compassionate way forward that may reshape the continent and its governance, I have no hesitation in voting to remain in the EU.

Dr Alison Elliot, OBE, is the Associate Director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh.



“ It is crucial to have checks and balances in government to protect us from sinful rulers and the sinful appetites of the democratic majority. ”

Dr Andrew Lilico

By what principles should Christians consider whether to support Britain remaining in the EU or leaving it? The first is to remember that we are subjects, foremost, of the kingdom of heaven and only ever dwellers in earthly principalities. It is not our task to erect any earthly utopia. All worldly government is imperfect and the only true sovereign is the King of Kings. Christians have a world-wide kingdom already. They need no earthly substitute for it. Thus we should be wary of common declarations both of the importance of “sovereignty” and of “reaching out internationally”.

A second is that humanity is fallen, and that applies to rulers and to citizens. It is crucial to have checks and balances in government to protect us from sinful rulers and the sinful appetites of the democratic majority. There is no perfect earthly means to do this – only mechanisms that seem to have worked in the past. Britain developed such mechanisms over many centuries, and the political solution produced was directly a variant of the Anglican broad Church concept. To give up the British model is to give up a specifically Christian-inspired political system.

On the other hand, the Single European State is in its own way a highly inspiring idea. It is questionable how well Christianity is projected through, or even protected by, the British model any longer.

Perhaps, though, that is itself a key point? If Britain left the EU maybe it would continue its anti-Christian drift, with ever less hospitality to foreigners, ever less respect for the need for Christians to act as such in their commercial as well as private lives, ever less respect for property or for the need to test accusers to root out false witness. But perhaps instead, leaving the EU could trigger a re-think of the key role of religion in guiding political society and giving it goals and limits? We all must judge come 23 June.

Dr Andrew Lilico is *Chairman of Economists for Britain and a practising Anglican.*

Further resources



Campaign groups

Britain Stronger in Europe www.strongerin.co.uk/

Vote Leave www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/

Christians for Britain – a group of Christians supporting leaving the EU www.christiansforbritain.org/

Christians for Europe <https://christiansforeurope.org/>

Christian resources

Quaker Council of European Affairs support staying in
www.qcea.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/With-or-without-you-Peace-v1.0.sla_.pdf

The Church of England and the Church of Scotland blog for Christian reflection and debate on Britain's future relationship with Europe www.reimaginingeurope.co.uk/

A report from the think tank Theos
www.theosthinktank.co.uk/publications/2016/01/21/a-soul-for-the-union

From the Jubilee Centre
www.jubilee-centre.org/the-eu-referendum-an-overview-from-a-biblical-perspective/

Information from the Kirby Lang Institute for Christian Ethics
www.klice.co.uk/index.php/eu-referendum-2016

Other resources

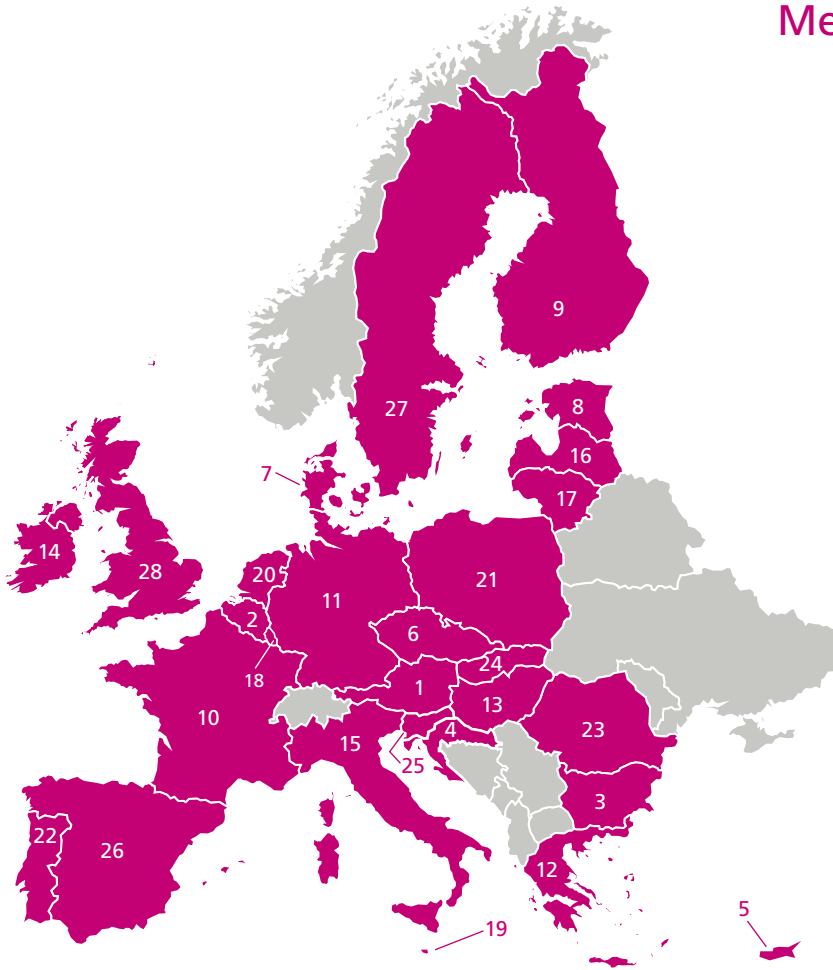
Full Fact is factchecking the EU referendum <https://fullfact.org/europe/>

Background information from the BBC www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887

Information from the Churches Commission on Migrants in Europe www.ccme.be/

Briefing paper on The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/download-our-ttip-briefing-paper/

Member countries of the EU



- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Austria | 16 Latvia |
| 2 Belgium | 17 Lithuania |
| 3 Bulgaria | 18 Luxembourg |
| 4 Croatia | 19 Malta |
| 5 Cyprus | 20 Netherlands |
| 6 Czech Republic | 21 Poland |
| 7 Denmark | 22 Portugal |
| 8 Estonia | 23 Romania |
| 9 Finland | 24 Slovakia |
| 10 France | 25 Slovenia |
| 11 Germany | 26 Spain |
| 12 Greece | 27 Sweden |
| 13 Hungary | 28 United Kingdom |
| 14 Ireland | |
| 15 Italy | |

European countries not in the EU

Switzerland
 Norway
 Bosnia-Herzegovina
 Serbia*
 Kosovo
 Albania*
 Macedonia*
 Ukraine
 Moldova
 Iceland
 Belarus
 Russia
 Turkey*
 Montenegro

*(applied to join the EU)

European Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads of EU member states • Sets the priorities of the EU
European Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One commissioner per member state. Appointed by the European Parliament and the European Council • Proposes European Union legislation and budget
European Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 751 MEPs directly elected by electorate in member states • Appoints members to the Commission • Along with the Council of the European Union scrutinises and agrees proposed legislation and budget
The Council of the European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership varies depending on the topic under consideration, eg if the council is discussing agriculture, national ministers from the 28 member states whose portfolio covers this topic will compose the council • Along with the Parliament, scrutinises and agrees proposed legislation and budget

The European Union – a brief history



The European Union was formally established under its current name through the Maastricht Treaty which came into force in 1993. Its roots, however, go back further to the European Coal and Steel Community established by six countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany) in 1952 to create a common market for coal and steel among its members. The event was hailed as “a first step in the federation of Europe”. Following on from this in 1958, the European Economic Community (EEC) was established by the Treaty of Rome to encourage economic integration between the six member states.

In 1973 the UK, Denmark and Ireland joined the EEC. The UK had previously applied for membership to the EEC in 1961, a move that had been vetoed by then French President Charles de Gaulle. After de Gaulle’s resignation, Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath took Britain into the EEC in 1973 without a referendum. However, a referendum was not long in coming and in 1975, under Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, the UK voted on its continued membership of the EEC. On this occasion, the electorate voted in favour of remaining in Europe by 67% to 33%.

In 1984 the UK negotiated what was called a budget “rebate” from the EEC. At the time, 80% of the EEC budget was spent on the Common Agricultural Policy, something which benefited the UK less than other countries where agriculture

made up a higher percentage of their GDP. This is calculated as approximately two-thirds of the amount by which UK payments into the EU exceed EU expenditure returning to the UK. Currently the UK pays £18 billion to the EU, but gets a rebate, or instant discount of £5 billion. Of the remaining £13 billion, over £4 billion comes back due to EU spending on the UK.

In 1985 the Schengen Agreement was signed between France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands and West Germany. They agreed to the gradual removal of border checks at their shared borders and the synchronisation of visa policies. Today 26 countries, including countries not within the EU, are part of the Schengen area, though the UK and Ireland are not.

In 1986 the Single European Act was signed codifying European political cooperation and setting the EEC the objective of establishing a single market by 31 December 1992. This led to the Maastricht Treaty which transformed the European Community into a Union. It introduced the concept of European citizenship which is in addition to national citizenship, a number of other social policies including asylum and immigration, and a monetary union, from which the UK secured an opt-out.

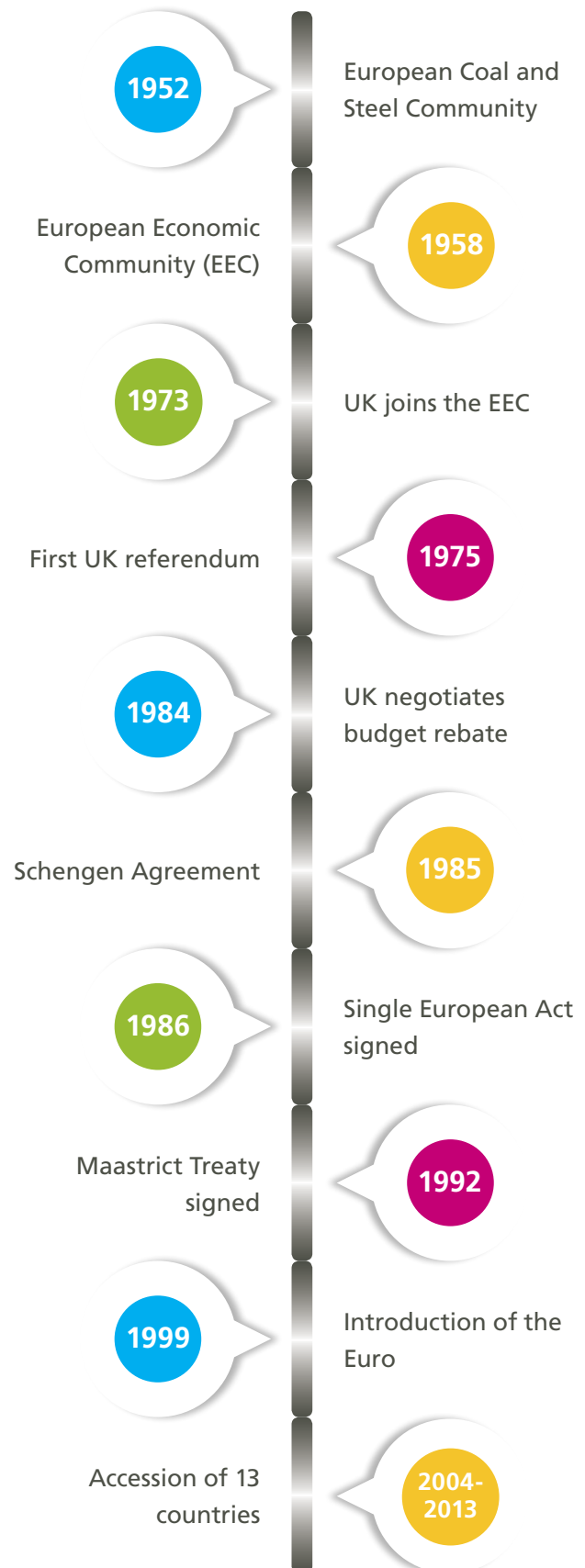
In 2002 the Euro replaced national currencies in twelve of the member states; the UK along with Denmark and Sweden opted not to join the monetary union. Following the global financial crisis of 2008, the eurozone countries found themselves facing huge and very different challenges. Bound by a single currency and working within one set of rules, weaker countries found it impossible to respond effectively. Eventually some countries needed support from the European Central Bank.

The EU expanded significantly over the past decade. In 2004 the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus joined, followed by Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

The Lisbon Treaty of 2009 brought a number of changes giving more powers to the European parliament and providing member states the explicit legal right to leave the EU and a procedure to do so.



Timeline



THINK PRAY VOTE

Thanks to Dr Alison Elliot and Dr Andrew Lilico for their contributions which should not imply endorsement of the full text.

For further information:

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/eu-referendum

www.actsparl.org

#thinkprayvote



The Church of Scotland



Scottish Churches
Parliamentary Office