

EFTA or EU?

Qs & As

Hugo van Randwyck



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Introduction

What is the best option , or best options, for Britain trading with EU countries? Could it be an off-the-shelf option or something that could be designed from scratch? What option would likely get the most public support, in a referendum? What criteria would people be looking at, for making their decision? What could be the benefits of changing from the current EU/EEA (European Union/European Economic Area = Single Market) arrangement? What do other countries do, who are not in the EU? What do EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries do? What sort of questions have been raised, and what could some of the answers be?

This paper will aim to answer the above questions, and show there are a number of positive working alternatives that Britain would benefit from significantly, in many areas, including: democracy and job creation.

Qs & As

The paper is a Qs & As style, as many people have raised questions, and good ones.

A number of questions have been raised, which include some below giving the pro-EU/EEA perspective and also the pro-EFTA/EEA perspective. In most cases the EFTA response is long, since the EU responses generally lack back up material to prove their points.

Q. What is the EEA, Single Market?

The EEA, is the European Economic Area, which allows for member countries to have free movement of: goods, services, people and capital = Single Market. Countries in the EU are members of the EEA, including also countries not in the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, who are members of EFTA. European Free Trade Association

Q. What is EFTA, European Free Trade Association?

A. EFTA is a simple free trade group, that, as it says, is an association, allowing each country to run it's own affairs, with any agreements, reached by unanimous votes by each member. Countries who are members, are Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein have an EFTA/EEA agreement, allowing them access to the Single Market, while allowing them to each, run their own policies on: agriculture, fisheries, Home Affairs, Justice. In addition, they are only subject to the 4,500 EEA regulations and not the additional 15,000 EU regulations, of which each year there are around 350 new EEA regulations and an additional 650 EU regulations, which they are not affected by. They also are not affected by EU taxes, and can have full membership of the NATO security alliance, and can make individual or group Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with any country in the world. Switzerland has a series of free trade bi-lateral agreements with the EU, so does not get any regulations each year. Switzerland started negotiating the bi-lateral agreement in 1992, and this was implemented in 2002, after 10 years.

Q. What are the off-the-shelf options for trading with EU countries?

There are a number, including the current option which is EU/EEA.

EFTA/EEA = Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein,

EFTA/bi-lateral = Switzerland

FTA/bi-lateral people movement = e.g. Mexico has free trade and the people movement is organised by each individual country

WTO = World Trade Organisation = which allows for access to markets, with progressively lower tariffs

Q. What are the differences between payments to the EU?

EU = currently Britain pays around £15bn + to the EU, and gets back £9bn, with £6bn given to other EU countries

EFTA = the UK would save around £3bn a year. It would also no longer need to pay money to the EU, that came back to the UK as 'EU money', and spent according to EU guidelines and lobby influence. Looking at EFTA, there is the EEA grants process, of which they have agreed to pay E1.79 billion, of which Norway pays 97%, for the 2009-2014 period. So Norway in total pays around E1.736 billion, or E347 million a year. With a Norwegian population of 5 million, this is around E69 per person. For the UK with 63 million people, this would amount to E4,347 million. With a GDP per head, 70% of Norway, this is E3.04 billion a year. Using an exchange rate of 1 for 1, this is £3bn a year. Using an exchange rate of E1.4 to £1, this is £2.17bn a year. Since current net payments, to the EU exceed £6bn, this is a saving of around £3bn a year. Which is a lot of money, however seen amongst the hidden costs discussed later, it is dwarfed by the hidden costs of EU membership.

The 2009-2014 grants saw a 22% increase on the previous grants, so it is possible to question, what each funding period ought to be.

Q. How quickly could the UK switch to the alternatives?

The EFTA/EEA option, in some areas, could be done in weeks, with some things months and some years, while transition arrangements were organised. This option, while continuing access to the Single Market, allows for 'business as usual'. With other EFTA/EEA members, this is a working model that can be implemented.

The EFTA/bi-lateral option, like Switzerland, could take longer, since Switzerland took 10 years to negotiate this.

FTA/bi-lateral, could be done in years, as some other FTAs with countries have taken with the EU.

WTO, this could be done fairly quickly, months, maybe a year, since it is already running, however, it would mean tariffs being added to British exports to the EU and imports from the EU, so unlikely to be favoured.

In summary, many people would feel that the EU/EEA option and the WTO option are the extremes, and the middle ground is somewhere where the other options are.

Most paperwork includes the word EEA already, in fact when you travel at airports, you'll be able to see the passport queues for EU, EEA nationals and Swiss, all one, for fast track checking. The infrastructure is already in place.

The regulations are also easy to separate. Any EEA regulation has an additional 'text with EEA relevance' added, so it is easy to see EEA regulations and EU regulations.

Q. What does public opinion say about links with the EU?

Polls can vary, however, a number of polls, have shown that:

Stay in EU = 30%

Something looser = 40%

Get out completely = 30%

Which, if you are looking at the off-the-shelf options, would mean EFTA/EEA, EFTA/bi-lateral and the FTA/bi-lateral movement of people options.

Q. What do other opinion polls show?

A recent poll by Survation showed:

EEA/EFTA = 54.3%

EEA/EU = 22.2%

Don't Know = 23.5%

So of those who expressed a view:

EEA/EFTA = 71%

EEA/EU = 29%

Which seems about right if you look at the 5 of people who prefer something looser and also want completely out, would come to 70%.

This poll, was taken in July 2013, with 1,000 respondents, including looking at their political voting intentions to give weighting to opinions. Obviously a better representative sample would be the 44 million voters!

Q. How would having a looser arrangement affect Britain's trade with EU countries? EU supporter= there are 3 million jobs which are involved with trading with the EU and these jobs would be lost?

EFTA supporter= Britain would still be part of the Single Market and continue trading as normal, with no disruption. In addition the EEA regulations would only affect 9% of the economy that trades with the EU , and the other 91% would not get any more EU laws. The regulations are like a tax, so reducing regulations would be alike a tax cut for business, 'helping' employment.

Q. How would it affect Britain's exports?

EU = British exports would lose out, and exports would fall

EFTA = Currently Britain has trade deficit with EU countries, of around £40 billion a year, which is the equivalent of exporting 1 million jobs. Britain has only once had a trade surplus with EU countries, otherwise a deficit, not the win-win agreement people thought they were getting. Having a deficit, means other countries benefit from the jobs, the income taxes, corporation taxes and VAT that come from producing those goods and services. Countries like Norway and Switzerland have generally a trade balance or surplus with EU countries.

Q. Is it fair to look at countries like Norway and Switzerland and compare them to the UK, for possible economic performance and other benefits?

EU = No, the economies of Norway and Switzerland are very different to the UK economy.

EFTA = Yes, if you look at the economies of Norway and Switzerland, you'll see that their economies are more similar to the UK economy than to each other, what they have in common is a simpler EFTA agreement.

Norwegian economy = Oil and Gas, Fishing, Chemicals

Switzerland = Agriculture, Engineering, Finance, Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals

UK = all of the above

Unemployment rates:

UK= 7.5%

Norway = 3.5%

Switzerland = 3.5%

In fact you could look at the UK economy, and see that the economy of London is different from the West Midlands economy and the Yorkshire economy and Scottish economy, yet they all have 2 things in common, membership of EU/EEA and unemployment over 7%.

Q. What influence would the UK have if it was no longer a member of EU/EEA?

EU = Britain would lose influence in making regulations which affect it, and would hurt business. Also Britain would lose influence on the world stage, as their opinion would not be part of the EU opinion.

EFTA = It is true that Britain would no longer be able to 'vote' on any regulation formulated, so would need to implement a regulation it had not voted on. However Britain already has a limited voice, with being only 1 of 27 countries, and also with more and more qualified majority voting, they can be over-ruled anyway. Britain has been for decades trying to stop fishermen having a quota system that means if they have caught their quota of a certain fish, they need to throw them overboard where they die anyway and fish stocks are reduced/wasted, this has taken years, for the EU to address this waste. However since Britain would go from having around 0-4% voice of 4,500 EEA regulations and 0-4% voice in 15,000 EU regulations, to having 0% voice on 4,500 EEA regulations and 100% voice on the existing 15,000 EU regulations, this is an increase in self-government and local decision making. It is not perfect, however it is a balance of pros and cons. Britain would also gain membership of the WTO which regulates global trade rules, a big plus.

Also a number of the regulations are impacted by lobbying from large businesses, who are able to raise barriers to entry for smaller businesses, and allow cartel behaviour. These large businesses don't seem to realise that the EU is raising their costs in other parts of their business, which is affecting their competitiveness, e.g. 1 step forward 2 steps back.

Generally, a successful economy would have more influence in world affairs than an under-performing economy.

Q. How will Britain being in the EFTA/EEA affect the voting and final regulations enacted?

EU = Britain will lose all influence, and will need to implement 100% of regulations

EFTA/EEA = It is true Britain would lose its voting rights. However the process for making EEA regulations involves also EFTA countries, as the EEA agreement states, that EFTA Countries are fully involved in the consultation process and discussions, and in fact make valuable contributions towards any final regulation. The EFTA states also tell the EU how they would have voted, if they could have voted. Also they will say if any regulation will need to be voted on by their respective Parliaments, to see if they agree with it. Finally, EFTA states have the option of vetoing a regulation – a rarely used option. Though not ideal, in practice, Britain already goes along with some regulations, because they are in a minority opinion.

Q. What about Britain not being part of the EU bloc in the world?

A. There are a number of groupings/blocs in the world. EFTA is one of the most successful. ASEAN is another, they have around 4% unemployment. The similarity between EFTA and ASEAN, is that they are associations, allowing self-government and flexibility to respond to local need. The EFTA and ASEAN emphasis is on getting results for the public, not building an artificial EU structure, for the benefit of bureaucrats and lobbyists.

Q. How do unemployment rates compare?

EU = EU unemployment is over 12% and rising

EFTA = EFTA unemployment is around 4%

UK unemployment is around 7.5%

Q. What influence would Britain have in the world?

EU = Britain would lose influence in the international arena?

EFTA = Britain would gain influence in a number of areas, while maintaining current influence in areas. Areas where Britain already has influence and would remain, is in UN Security Council, IMF, World Bank, NATO, European Space Agency (ESA), Commonwealth and others.

Where influence would increase is having a seat at the WTO (World Trade Organisation) where other countries like: Canada, Australia and New Zealand are

members, so helping shape world trade ideas and initiatives. These often lead into EEA regulations, so this would be an 'upstream' improvement, in influence.

In addition other organisations where Britain would regain a voice, include: The World Health Organisation, Food and Agricultural Organisation, International Labour Organisation, UN's Economic Commission for Europe, International Standards Organisation, UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, World Meteorological Organisation, UN Environment Programme, International Maritime Organisation and others.

Britain's general influence would also increase as it's prosperity increased.

EFTA membership would lead to an upgrade in Britain's voice in international organisations.

Q. What are other possible benefits of membership of each agreement?

EU = Membership of the EU allows Britain to save money on trading with other countries and improves economic performance

EFTA = there are huge hidden costs associated with EU membership, which would not be there with EFTA membership. Estimated costs of EU regulations are between 3% and 10% of GDP, a cost on the whole economy, even if not trading with EU countries. Other hidden costs are that since the EU is more and more the government of the UK, and elected MPs can make all kinds of promises in election manifestos, what happens is that the EU can override any election promises made. The EU becomes the 'role model' for decision making in the UK and other countries, and also how the public sector functions and uses public funds. The decision making model includes: a council of Ministers from each country, an EU commission – politically appointed, MEPs – who have a duplicate parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg, EU agencies in different parts of Europe, lots and lots of meetings, including an EU court in Luxembourg, over 10,000 employees – compared to 90 with EFTA, longer distances between decision makers and the public, top down decision making, accounts not signed off for over 15 years - due to fraud, 'white elephant' projects - megalomania experiments like the Euro.

So if you look at what has been happening in the UK, it has been mirroring the EU. More and more merging of local supplied services, you'll see demoralised frontline staff, in ever bigger departments, massive computer programmes – costing millions/billions which fail to be completed on time and fail to deliver the promised benefits i.e. a white elephant waste of money. Duplication of structures and investment, for example having a new London mayor and assembly process – while there already

are mayors and elected local councillors in each borough, and local MPs who could easily do the jobs. Long time for decision making and correcting mistakes. Lots and lots of meetings, which don't seem to go achieve much. Huge white elephant plans to shut down an existing airport and make a huge new one at massive cost somewhere else. A congestion charge, tracking motor vehicles and an extra tax on local people. On a national scale, a plan to build a new train line to Scotland, costing over £30 billion - to save, maybe an hour of travel time, even though there already is a train line to Scotland. Huge contract to build 2 huge aircraft carriers, with major multi-billion pound overruns - while frontline troop numbers are reduced and there aren't planes to put on the carriers.

Government departments failing to communicate well with each other, even in local government.

Frontline staff in the public sector can see the waste, but feel not listened to and demoralised. Decisions are top down. Some people put into position of leadership, have had no experience of frontline operations, so don't know how things work and why. Lots of quangos, giving high paid jobs, with some jobs going to political appointees and connections. Extra layers of management in public services – with cuts to frontline staffing.

There also other hidden costs, associated with implementing regulations. Some regulations are similar or duplications of existing UK regulations, however to comply legally, managers need to read and understand both. This adds to costs and also opportunity lost, since managers could be spending time getting more sales, increasing training, investing money in the business – all things competitors outside the EU are able to do. Also organisations, private, public and charities need to spend time and money on these regulations, even if they don't export to the EU – 91% of the economy doesn't export to the EU! These additional costs create distortions and lower the return on investment calculations – affecting employment and competitiveness, and higher costs for consumers.

The EU pattern just keeps replicating itself more and more and wasting more and more.

Q. How important is the EU for prosperity? EU = it is vital, and helps create jobs

EFTA = access to the single market is beneficial, however you don't need EU membership for that, there are many options, including EFTA/EEA. With a trade deficit with the EU, Britain is losing jobs, not gaining jobs. Also there has been a

trend in more and more power being centralised in the EU, and we have also seen more and more wealth being centralised with fewer and fewer people, so people needing benefits, when they would prefer to be working and paying their way. EFTA countries have lower unemployment.

Q. What about defence and security?

EU = being a member of the EU is vital to Britain's security and is responsible for peace in Europe since the WWII.

EFTA = Britain would remain a member of the NATO security alliance, as non-members Canada and Norway are. The peace in Europe these last 60 years has been as a result of NATO and support for democracy and prosperity. The war in former Yugoslavia, was not stopped by the EU, in fact it dragged on and on, and showed how ineffective the EU was. It was stopped by American commitment with British and NATO support.

Q. What if Britain left the EU and switched to EFTA? What would some countries say?

EU = have all the benefits without paying costs

EFTA = a trade agreement is supposed to be a win-win agreement. Currently Britain pays over £6bn, net, to have free movement of goods, services, people and capital – this is a tariff, not a Free Trade Agreement, like Mexico and other countries. Also Britain has a trade deficit of over £40 bn with the EU, i.e. exporting 1 million jobs, as well as giving jobs to EU nationals in the UK from mainly Eastern Europe. This is not a win-win agreement. In addition, Britain has paid over £134 bn net, to the EU since joining, added to the loss of income tax, VAT and corporation tax from having goods made overseas and not locally – this is a lot of money given to other countries.

Q. What about when people say, you can't have an 'a la carte' relationship?

EU = Yes, it is only possible to have an EU/EEA relationship with the EU

EFTA = there are already numerous 'a la carte' arrangements. For example Norway EFTA/EEA, Switzerland EFTA/bi-lateral, Mexico Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Turkey in the customs union, China uses WTO rules, with discussions on simplifying trade. There will continue to be many different variations. EFTA and the EU have very good relations. Britain is a democracy and EU countries respect the referendums

of countries, for example a country that voted not to join the EU – Norway, and a country which had a referendum not have the Euro – Denmark.

Q. How do EFTA and EU countries work together?

EU = EFTA countries don't work with the EU on the Euro, Defence policy, Foreign policy, Foreign Aid.

EFTA = EFTA countries are happy to have their own currencies, Defence arrangements and treaties, Foreign policy and Aid policy. EFTA representatives work together in many EEA meetings as other EU countries, though do not vote on regulations. They are informed of any new plans and included in the consultation process. There is also an EEA Council which meets half-yearly and the chairman role switches each time between an EU representative and EFTA representative. – this helps in discussing EEA issues as well.

EFTA and EU countries work together on other issues, without the need for the EU framework.

Q. What treaties are there between EU members and EFTA members?

EU = EU countries have the Lisbon Treaty, with over 200 pages.

EFTA = EFTA countries have a Convention, of 30 pages.

Q. Where are the EU and EFTA offices?

EU = EU offices are in Brussels, a court in Luxembourg and also another Parliament in Strasbourg, and other offices around Europe, total employees, 10,000+.

EFTA = EFTA has offices in Brussels, a court in Luxembourg and also office in Geneva, total employees 90.

Q. What about websites for people to look at?

EU = the EU has a website, <http://europa.eu> where people can see the scope of regulations affecting countries. By clicking on the language of choice, then under the heading 'EU law' clicking on 'Find legislation', then the centre of the page has a heading 'Legislation in Force', then click on 'search by topic', you will be able to see the regulations covering a country.

EFTA = EFTA has a website, www.efta.int which shows how the EEA works for EFTA. By putting the cursor over the 'EEA' on the upper toolbar, a drop down menu comes up, and then clicking on 'seminars' people can see powerpoint

presentations of the EFTA and the EEA, showing workings of the EFTA secretariat, and other workings.

Q. What about the European arrest warrant?

EU = this is vital to ensure criminals are brought justice quickly

EFTA = the evidence needed to issue an arrest warrant is less than before, and could mean a Briton wrongly extradited without sufficient evidence. There already existed extradition agreements before, this is a duplication and lower standard. In fact some crimes committed have been due to lax border controls.

There is also an argument that the EU is in fact an arsonist. After the fall of communism and also military dictatorships in South America, people couldn't work out why, after WWII, in the military dictatorships 10,000s of lives were taken, whereas in socialism/communism it was 10 of millions. Then they saw that in the military dictatorships, there was respect for private property rights. So the respect of property boundaries led to more respect of human rights. So, with the EU, there is less respect for national boundaries and there has been an increase in crimes – so needing people to be extradited. By simplifying from EU to EFTA, Britain will help move the centre of gravity towards respecting boundaries and human rights.

Q. What about the EU in the world supporting democracy?

EU = the EU plays a vital role in promoting democracy and supporting democracy.

EFTA = the EU model of unelected bureaucrats making decisions, financial mismanagement, top down management, political appointees – has been a poor role model for other countries. Those countries in Eastern Europe which have been receiving aid, have seen politicians – who were already corrupt – become more corrupt, also giving the impression that economic policies were working when they were not. Also nearby with the Arab spring, people have seen that newly elected governments have failed to deliver and go off at tangents, instead of working on bread and butter issues affecting them – jobs, housing, education, health, law and order. Also some Commonwealth countries, also have seen more centralised decision making happen and corruption, with waste of public funds.

With Britain switching from EU membership to EFTA, it will help shift the centre of gravity in many areas in the world, to self-government, working on priorities, better human rights, respect of boundaries, local decision making, integrity with public finances, decisions by people who have public support.

Q. How easy or difficult would it be for Britain to switch to EFTA/EEA?

EU = it would be very difficult and take a long time

EFTA = it would be mostly easy and quick. Norway with 5 million people and Iceland with 300,000 people, have elected representatives who implement EFTA/EEA. Britain with 60 million people, has enough smart people to do this easily. Since the EEA part – Single Market – continues as usual, and British representatives continue attending many of the same EEA meetings in Brussels, this is easy. The switch to running agriculture, fisheries, Home Affairs and Justice are also easy. No new EU legislation would be applicable, freeing up time to look at current EU regulations and how they can be: kept in full, simplified/amended, or scrapped completely. This could involve all affected: industry/organisation sector, associations, government officials, experts, frontline staff/teams, EFTA experts and other. An approach using the 80/20 rule could help, with around 80% of EU regulations being easy to sort out in weeks and months, and 20% in months and years.

A simple example is fisheries. While on holiday in Cornwall a number of years ago, I was on a boat and the subject of the EU came up, whereupon the boat captain got very agitated and anti-EU. He was an ex-fisherman and had nothing positive to say about the EU. So I asked him what he would do, if he could change fishing policy. Oh, that would be easy, just do what they had done some years before. There used to be a problem with over fishing in the Irish Sea, so the fisherman got together and worked out a plan. Organise the Sea into blocks, and which ones could be fished in. Each fisherman got a quote for fish. If a fisherman caught above his quota for certain fish, these fish would go to other fisherman, and be part of their quota. I don't remember if the fish were sold at cost to other fishermen, if above quota. What he said was, they recognised the problem, local people who knew the situation got together, worked out a plan, implemented it, and it worked.

Often the answers are there already – locally and with frontline people.

Switching to EFTA is also pro-democracy.

Q. What about referendums, is it alright to use this process?

EU = it is not the British way to use referendums, it ought to be an In/Out referendum

EFTA = a referendum was held in 1975 about whether to stay in the Common Market, which became the EU. Britain has had many referendums on many issues. Scotland had a referendum on having a Parliament, so did Wales about having an Assembly – recently had another referendum on having more decision making and

self-government, which was approved. There are even now extra funds for locally elected Police Commissioners. There has been a referendum in the Falkland Islands on sovereignty. Local referendums on whether to have local elected mayors – most people voted no. A referendum on changing the voting system for Westminster elections, to have system more similar to EU countries – people voted no.

So a simple referendum is a good way for people to choose for:

More EU or more self-government

Best way to create more jobs

A possible wording could be:

‘Do you think Britain should be a member of the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) and the Single Market (EEA, European Economic Area)?’

It would also help if there was a petition/referendum process for advisory referendums, for any international treaties/protocols/agreements/other, that the public could initiate. Perhaps with 2.5% of eligible voters signing a petition with 1 year, with a referendum held 2 to 3 months after signatures completed.

Q. What benefits would there be in having an EFTA/EEA or EU/EEA referendum?

EU = there is no need

EFTA = there are a number of benefits, including:

Option with best chance of getting most support/votes

Best option for winning a referendum

Easiest to implement

Fastest to implement and get benefits

Option for further referendums

Likely to get the most support from business, since the UK would still be in the Single Market

Most likely option for other European countries to win a referendum. It is worth realising that there are other countries with strong pro-democracy public opinions, who could also like to have referendums, and help in a reforming of the Europe, to a simpler EFTA, or complicated EU. EFTA/EEA could be easier for other countries to win in a referendum.

Summary overview of options:

Comparison information	EU/ EEA	EFTA/ EEA	EFTA/ bi-lateral	UK/ bi-lateral	UK/ WTO
New regulations per year	1000	350	0	0	0
Approximate financial contributions to the EU pa	£6bn	£3bn	£2bn	£0bn	£0bn
Accounts signed off by auditors	Not for 15 years	Every year	Every year	N/A	N/A
Employees	10,000+	90	90	0	0
Control over fisheries	EU	UK	UK	UK	UK
Control over agriculture	EU	UK	UK	UK	UK
Responsibility for Home Affairs	EU	UK	UK	UK	UK
Responsibility for Justice	EU	UK	UK	UK	UK
Free movement of Goods in EU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	tariff
Free movement of Services in EU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	tariff
Free movement of Capital in EU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free movement of People in E	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Member of EEA	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
EU taxes apply	Yes	No	No	No	No
Approximate total EU and EEA regulations	19,500	4,500	0	0	0
2 Euro Parliaments in Brussels and Strasbourg	Yes	No	No	No	No
Euro Arrest Warrant	Yes	No	No	No	No
Estimated cost of EU & EEA regulations % GDP	5%	1.5%	0%	0%	0%
Office in Brussels	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Website	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Member of NATO security alianc	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ability to make bi-lateral free trade agreements with other countries, e.g. Canada	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Key legal document	Treaty	Convention	Bi-lateral	Bi-lateral	Bi-lateral
Pages in legal document	200+	30	0	0	0
Countries currently	UK	Norway	Switzerland		
Approxinate current unemployment rate	7.5%	3.5%	3.5%		
Time to switch from EU/EEA to alternative	N/A	weeks	years	years	years

Summary

If you are living in a democracy you can: make, amend and repeal laws. A referendum, EFTA/EEA or EU/EEA, would give the British people an opportunity to choose EFTA, re-establish democracy in Britain, help create more jobs, shift the centre of gravity in the world towards accountable self-government, and show it is possible to have pro-democracy movement that uses the ballot box, help politicians listen to the public and deliver on priorities and jobs. The European Free Trade Association option would allow Britain to upgrade to a better option for trading with EU countries and help with lowering costs for trading around the world in expanding markets and opportunities.

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The Bruges Group is an independent all-party think tank. Set up in February 1989, its aim was to promote the idea of a less centralised European structure than that emerging in Brussels. Its inspiration was Margaret Thatcher's Bruges speech in September 1988, in which she remarked that "We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level...". The Bruges Group has had a major effect on public opinion and forged links with Members of Parliament as well as with similarly minded groups in other countries. The Bruges Group spearheads the intellectual battle against the notion of "ever-closer Union" in Europe. Through its ground-breaking publications and wide-ranging discussions it will continue its fight against further integration and, above all, against British involvement in a single European state.

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BRUGES GROUP MEETINGS

The Bruges Group holds regular high-profile public meetings, seminars, debates and conferences. These enable influential speakers to contribute to the European debate. Speakers are selected purely by the contribution they can make to enhance the debate.

For further information about the Bruges Group, to attend our meetings, or join and receive our publications, please see the membership form at the end of this paper. Alternatively, you can visit our website www.brugesgroup.com or contact us at info@brugesgroup.com.

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