

FUTURUS

BRIEFING

A SERIES OF BRIEFINGS ON THE EU REFERENDUM

January 2016

REFERENDUM DATES

Members of The Campaign for an Independent Britain, The Bruges Group, Futurus, The Harrogate Agenda, EUreferendum.com and Restore Britain's Fish have formed a group of EU withdrawal organisations under The Leave Alliance banner (formerly The Referendum Planning Group) to fight the EU referendum.

It is our intention to launch this separate campaign in mid-March 2016. We do not think there will be a referendum either in the Spring or the Autumn of 2016, although we could be wrong. (William Hill are offering 8-1 for a referendum in 2017 or later. These are good odds.)

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<http://www.futurus-thinktank.com/>

FUTURUS is now a member of The Leave Alliance (formerly The Referendum Planning Group) <http://www.referendumplanninggroup.org.uk/> - Blog at <http://leavehq.com/>

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There are a number of reasons why we believe this:

- The Electoral Commission has recommended that there should be a ten-month period between the Royal Assent for the Referendum Bill (18.12.15.) and the date of the referendum.
- June 2016 will be overshadowed by the European football tournament. One of the dates bring put forward for a possible EU referendum is 16th June when a **daytime** UEFA cup match takes place in France between Wales and England. It is quite possible, if Wales or England do well, they also could be playing on 30th June (Thursday) or 7th July (Thursday).
- There has been no general election in the autumn for over 50 years except for the special circumstances of 1974. Why? Politicians think that voters are more confident, more cheerful and **will support the perceived (not actual) status quo** in the spring and summer.
- A referendum in October would mean the main campaign period would be when Parliament is closed and when the electorate is on pre-arranged holidays. There are also the Olympics in August and the Party Conferences, although the latter could be cancelled.
- We think that there must be, and will be, further Cameron strategic moves. After all, no-one can possibly think that a referendum can be won or lost only on a small change in migrant benefit rules. There must be more to come and we believe it will centre on a new, 'associate membership' for the UK, rebranded as the 'British model' which is already been talked about by EU leaders. This will become more salient in 2017 when a path to a new EU Treaty will be put forward, according to Juncker.
- It is usually forgotten that there are two sets of 'negotiations' going on in the EU at the moment. One is the negotiations of David Cameron and the other is the negotiations with the Swiss, following the 2014 referendum there on restricting immigration, including that from the EU. One can notice that the Swiss government is not bothering to tour the outer reaches of Eastern Europe to put its case. Indeed, it is Merkel and Juncker who come to Berne. The reason is that the Swiss government takes its citizens' vote seriously.

No progress has been made on the EU-Swiss negotiations so the Swiss have said in December that they will be implementing the result of the 2014 referendum, which limits EU migration and are prepared for all the bilateral agreements with the EU to be revoked. The Ministry of

Justice will produce draft migration restrictions in April 2016 and, by then, surely the Conservative government – and the UK media – will notice what is happening.

The fact is that by April 2016 there will be (on EU migration) a template put forward by the Swiss and a standard by which the UK government negotiations can be judged in this area.

Further ahead, the likelihood is that around February 2017 the Swiss government will have obeyed its electorate and revoked the migration bilateral agreements with the EU (it has 3 years from February 2014).

To put it mildly, this will be a considerable complication for the UK government which is likely to look unrobust by comparison and this will be the background from April 2016 and all of 2017.

- A rush to a referendum, to button it up without any serious reform, will in any case be a poor basis to launch a stay-in campaign after all the theatricals of the negotiations. After all, national referendums only come along once in a lifetime but much of the media and political world is treating it as a Westminster personality drama
- Another point is the position of those Conservative politicians who say that they will not vote to remain in the EU unless there is 'real reform'. Many of Conservatives for Britain, including Lord Lawson, are in this group and are backers of the Vote Leave get Control Leave Campaign – over 50% according to Steve Baker its Chairman.

The Electoral Commission cannot (for its own reputation) designate a lead committee where there is a chance that some of the major name backers may change sides as Lord Lawson, the President, says he may do once he sees the results of the negotiation. There are also damaging quotations on record from others where they said they would accept staying in the EU if the reforms were adequate.

When we compare the EC's position on designation in the EU referendum, with the situation during the run-up to the Scottish referendum, it was all straightforward in Scotland. The SNP and the independence groups did **not** contain people (let alone a majority of its politicians) who were awaiting the final outcome of UK/Scotland negotiations and saying they were open to change sides.