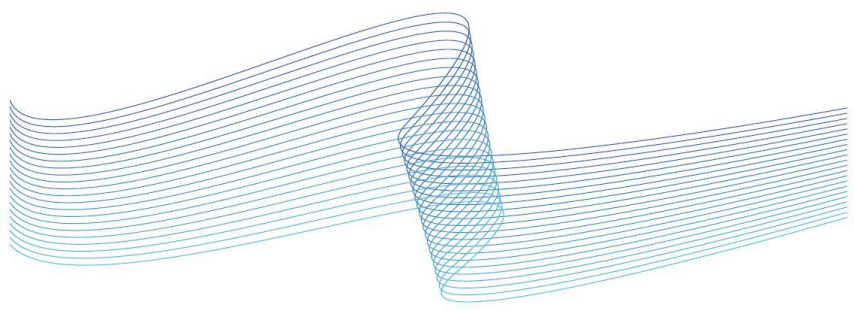




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Reform or Repatriation? What does Cameron's shopping list mean for the EU and Britain's future in it?

30 June 2015

Time **18:00–20:00**

Place **Press Club Brussels**, Rue Froissart 95

On **Tuesday 30 June** the European Movement International organised a briefing entitled '**Reform or Repatriation? What does Cameron's shopping list mean for the EU and Britain's future in it?**' The event was held in partnership with ACCA, Cicero Group and Volkswagen Group, and gathered representatives from trade unions, businesses, MEPs and civil society organisations for a debate on the UK's future in the EU.



The debate featured crossed swords among the panellists, which included: **Owen Tudor** from the Trade Union Congress; **Sean McGuire**, Brussels Director of the Confederation of British Industry; **Kay Swinburne**, ECR MEP; **Jo Leinen**, S&D MEP, President of the European Movement International; and **Helena Welsh**, Executive Director at Cicero Group. The event was moderated by **Petros Fassoulas**, Secretary General, European Movement International.



Dr Kay Swinburne, a Conservative Member of the European Parliament for Wales, kicked off the debate, providing a detailed analysis of David Cameron's reform agenda and four key priorities for change, "*I expect a strong campaign from David Cameron on **fairness, competitiveness, sovereignty and immigration**. I firmly believe that the only way for the Prime Minister to get a strong mandate is having a referendum, to enable UK people to have a say*", MEP Swinburne stated. She expressed her strong conviction that negotiations need to take place as soon as possible, as uncertainty is one of the major factors capable of damaging the UK economy.



Developing further on the key priority areas, which impact not only the UK, but the entire EU, MEP Swinburne explained: "*Fairness is an important point. How do you ensure fairness between those in the Eurozone and those outside of the Eurozone and the single market objectives? How do you make a rule-book for 28 countries to work whilst ensuring that the Eurozone doesn't have an unfair say over those policies?*" Ms Swinburne stressed that the UK is a huge supporter of the single market, "*it is critical to us that we still have a voice that is heard*". She also stated that it is really important for the UK to find practical solutions for the financial sector, to make sure that it still has the ability to regulate its own markets.

She continued by arguing that competitiveness is something that affects the entire EU, it's needed to deliver jobs and growth, and it is a shared agenda, not just a British agenda. Ms Swinburne pleaded for new economic instruments that would work for the entire European Union, rather than for only the Eurozone members, "*a single market bluebook*".

With regards to sovereignty, it is all about ensuring democratic accountability, Ms Swinburne said. There are many member states that feel their national parliaments are not involved enough in the process. Despite this, the framework of the Lisbon Treaty tried to improve the democratic accountability of the EU institutions and to put in place a dialogue between the European Parliament and national parliamentarians.

Ms Swinburne also noted that the yellow card system has been put in place, meaning that one third of national parliaments can object to legislative proposals by the Commission. Yet, this system has been used only twice. It is, therefore, not an effective tool – it is not working as efficiently as it should; as such, we need to find a way to make it work.

Ms Swinburne also argued the need to find solutions for some of the language that we have in existing treaties. One of the things about the "ever closer Union" is that it means different things in different countries. As a Brit, Ms Swinburne suggested that for her it actually means giving up sovereignty.

The issues of immigration, free movement and access to social benefits also lie at the core of the

UK reform agenda. Ms Swinburne said that when people are asked in polls what is the one thing they dislike about the EU, they say immigration. When they are asked in the same polling exercise, what is the thing they like the most about the EU, they say it's the ability to travel, work and to retire within the Union.

"We have to find a solution to the immigration issue" Ms Swinburne proclaimed. "There are things we can do domestically that would improve the perception amongst the electorate. And there are things we can do at the European level, without changes to the fundamental principle of the freedom of movement and work in Europe. For example, we can make sure that member states have the ability to be restrictive on employment practices in the very early days of new countries joining."



MEP Jo Leinen (S&D, Germany), President of the European Movement International, started by saying that he perceives Grexit and Brexit as interconnected debates. He referenced The Queen's speech in Berlin just days before, *"asking all of us for the unity of Europe, not the disunity and separation in the West and in the East"*. MEP Leinen welcomed the policy progress in the UK

in the past weeks, as opposed to the "poisoned rhetoric" of the elections campaign. He further stressed that there should not be any privileged conditions for one country, and it should be understood that there is currently neither the need, nor feasibility for a treaty change. The European Union's *raison d'être* is to find common solutions to our joint challenges. The current debate also poses a serious threat to the UK itself, because the British discourse on the EU could alienate many of its traditional allies in Europe. Leinen argued that we share our sovereignty in order to stay stronger together. EU Membership does not come down to 'cherry picking' - it is not acceptable to pick out bits that you favour and refuse the very basic notion of solidarity. Staying in means respecting the rules of the club; most importantly, in this particular case, not losing the core principle of free movement. In his summarising statement, the European Movement President advocated for a constructive engagement with Britain: offer as much help as possible, take a strategic approach, and pursue sustainable partnerships.

Sean McGuire started by outlining the main goals of the Confederation of British Industry: competitiveness, growth and jobs for Europe and its citizens. The CBI's reform proposal, which was released this year, is based on a business perspective for the entire European continent, not only a UK-specific plan. Since the report was launched, it has won the support of many stakeholders, defending the value and benefits of the European Union. It advocates for a competitive Europe where the EU acts at its best, touching upon big issues and moving away from interventionist approaches. Linked to that is the agenda for Better Regulation, which should focus on creating jobs, with legislation aimed at enabling economic development across the continent. Completing the single market is the third crucial issue; due to the importance of the financial services industry to the EU, the Digital Agenda and Digital Single Market are also on the top of the CBI's list of recommendations. The Digital Agenda can act as an enabler and play a vital role for the effective functioning of European businesses according to McGuire. He wrapped up by stating that a competitive Europe should

have an ambitious trade agenda, thus we should seek conclusions from more international trade agreements, not only the broadly discussed TTIP, but also deals with countries like Japan, African countries or Mexico.



Owen Tudor (TUC) shed light on the British referendum from the trade unions' perspective. The position of the TUC is conditional on what the EU is actually doing for workers in Britain and around Europe, he said. He drew the audience's attention to the hidden agenda lying behind the negotiations; the target is "*elements of the social chapter*" which have always been disliked by the political right in the UK. He pointed out that increasing competitiveness is not about letting employers do whatever they want, and cannot be pursued through attacking workers' rights. Quite the contrary, the evidence shows that respect for workers' rights increases competitiveness and contributes to general growth. There is a need for a positive agenda – more jobs, competitiveness and growth – which unfortunately is not the case for the reforms presented by Cameron's government. Tudor also pointed out that one needs to take into consideration individual advantages and disadvantages of migration and its impact on the EU economies, not to judge the phenomenon as a whole.

Helena Welsh from Cicero presented a more economic point of view, mentioning concerns regarding the uncertainty around the referendum itself. Cicero's clients come from the financial services, energy and health sectors, which means they vary in their approach and perceived impact of a Brexit. She noted that some of Cicero's clients are invested in the UK regardless of the UK's EU-membership status, and view a Brexit as a threat to the EU, rather than vice versa; but many argue that it is critical for the UK to stay within a reformed Europe. "*What is it that Cameron does not want*", asked Helena rhetorically, stating that "*he does not want to be remembered by history as a Prime Minister who capitulated to a back-bench rebellion.*" As an Irish citizen, Helena expressed the widely-heard concerns about the future consequences of the referendum for Northern Ireland, especially regards Foreign Direct Investment. She also referred to the mistakes that were made in the Irish referendum – namely a lack of clear investment in the campaign and clear articulation of the arguments to citizens about the impact of their vote.

The European Movement International will return to the question of Britain's membership of the EU in the months ahead, in an effort to promote debate and enhance understanding among all relevant stakeholders.



This event was organised with the kind support of:



Photos from the debate can be found [here](#).

On 27 May 2015, the European Movement International issued a [press release](#) emphasising the necessity to end the aura of uncertainty surrounding the European future of the United Kingdom, *A UK referendum on the EU to help end uncertainty*:

In reaction to the Queen's Speech the **European Movement International** calls on the UK government and the European leaders to end the uncertainty about the UK's role and commitment to Europe as quickly as possible. Current challenges, ranging from migration in the Mediterranean to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, require a united European response, and the European Movement International is confident the UK will play its part.

The Movement urges a responsible and fair campaign for both 'yes' and 'no' camps that seeks to take account of the voices of all businesses and citizens, and establish what either option would mean for the UK's relationship with its European counterparts. The movement also encourages UK nationals that live abroad, especially those in EU member states, to come back and vote to keep the UK in Europe.

Jo Leinen MEP, President, European Movement International, said:

"The future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union has to be clarified without delay. Given the economic and foreign policy challenges the European Union faces, we can't afford a lengthy period of uncertainty. David Cameron and the European leaders have to evaluate swiftly, if an agreement that respects the fundamental rights of the European citizens, especially the right of free movement, is possible."

Contact us!

If you have any further inquiries, we will be happy to address them.

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