

# Winning the referendum

If there is a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU what is the current state of opinion and what are the essential issues that will motivate a vote to leave?

There have been a number of polls in recent times, some showing a majority to stay in and others showing a majority to leave. For analysis, I examine the questions of two of the best known firms of pollsters.

These are based on the questions:

a) For YouGov: *"If there was a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, how would you vote?" The alternatives offered were: "To remain in the EU" or "To leave the EU"*

b) For Ipsos-MORI: *"If there were a referendum now on whether Britain should stay in or get out of the European Union, how would you vote?"*

Both these questions are useful as they have been asked in the same form for many years. In the course of the YouGov polls throughout 2014, there was almost level pegging at 40% on each side.

However, the questions are misleading in that the issues in the referendum will not be what is implied in both these questions – that the choice is between staying in the EU broadly as it is (probably with some minor reforms negotiated by David Cameron) and otherwise exiting abruptly into an undefined future. Neither of these propositions are true.

Ipsos-MORI in their October polling asked a further question offering four alternatives which are reproduced here:

Ipsos Mori EU Poll

(<https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/political-monitor-oct-2014-EU-charts.pdf>, page 5)

From this, one can see there are four blocks of opinion:

- a) Those who want closer integration – 14%
- b) Those who want broadly the same relationship as at present – 29%
- c) Those who want to belong to an economic community without political links – 34%
- d) Those who just want out – 17%

It is absolutely obvious that those seeking withdrawal need to win both the vast majority of those who want a return to an economic community without political links and some of those who want the same relationship as at present.

Relying on the group that wants to leave the European Union altogether is only to attract 17% of the electorate (all the percentages are excluding the six per cent of 'Don't Knows'). Of course, in the 'squeeze' question – remain or get-out – the get-out attracts some of the other groups, making its total 40%.

Because of the status quo and inertia effects in referendums, that is the tendency in referendums throughout the world for the electorate to vote for the status quo, the withdrawalists need to be looking at a poll lead of 15-20% at the start of the campaign to be sure of victory.

Plainly the group who wants to remain part of an economic community without political links must be offered this which means the offer of staying in the Single Market without all the political links, that is to say, EFTA-membership to be sought and EEA membership to be maintained. This is an existing, workable, off-the-shelf solution to the key aim, exiting from the political and judicial side of the EU.

But this is not enough. Inroads must be made into the group

who want the relationship with the EU to remain as it is at present.

Because the EU, as set up, has an ongoing integration process at its heart with thousands of employees working precisely on this, it is essential to convince most of this group that their wish is unrealisable and is simply not on offer.

It needs to be clearly and repeatedly stated and demonstrated that the integration or (power grab) process is continuing and will continue. It is part of the EU DNA.

First, attention should be drawn to the repeated treaties which have turned the Common Market into the European Union. All of these have been a one-way transfer of power always with assurances by British politicians that they do not mean very much.

Then attention must be repeatedly focussed on what integration measures are in the pipeline today and over the next few years.

- British financial contributions will rise to a much higher level.
- More mass immigration is planned, for example, David Cameron flew to Istanbul last week to hasten Turkey's entry to the EU and Juncker's plan to 'promote mobility'.
- The chaotic accounts, off balance sheet liabilities and implied liabilities in the European Central Bank, the European Investment Bank and the EU itself are likely to impact on the British taxpayer as the eurozone crisis returns.
- Juncker's 'Agenda' for the next five years, set out in his speech of 15th July to the European Parliament, contains further integration proposals. Among these are:
  - o Massive spending proposals;
  - o A new European Energy Union;

- o Europe to be number one in renewables;
- o Single Supervisory Mechanism and Single Resolution Fund for the banks (that is, bailing out foreign banks);
- o A Capital Markets Union;
- o 'Promoting' labour mobility;
- o A Commissioner with special responsibility for the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- o Common asylum policy;
- o 'New European policy' on legal migration;
- o 'A stronger Europe when it comes to foreign policy'.

While withdrawalists cannot hope to capture all the votes of the block of opinion that wants to stay in the EU 'as it is', it must be repeated constantly that their desire is not on offer. Politicians who generally find it difficult to confront hard choices also must be confronted with the real choice.

The choice is between more financial contributions, more EU control, more immigration, more spending and an adventurist and dangerous EU controlled foreign policy in much of the world on the one hand and a clear offer that saying 'No' means staying in the Single Market via the EEA which will take all the 'business' concerns out of the debate and jobs and the economy will not be affected but all the political and judicial structures of the EU will be jettisoned.

There is also a final argument to make. We need to stress that Britain can have a great future in the world if it acts globally. The 'stay in' option must be clearly shown to be an option to 'get in deeper'.

Perhaps a thought for the electorate to consider is the old Chinese proverb:

*'Fool me once, shame on you,  
Fool me twice, shame on me.'*