The months running up to the General Election will be crucial to our future relationship with the European Union (EU). There are only two possible outcomes from the vote next May: either David Cameron will continue as Prime Minister, or Ed Miliband will get the keys to Number 10.

If David Cameron wins, he has said that an In/Out referendum is a deal breaker: whether he leads a single party, minority or Coalition Government, there will be an EU Referendum by the end of 2017. So the UK could be embarking on an EU renegotiation by as early as next Spring, which is why the research team here at Business for Britain are busy working out what a good deal for Britain could look like. The Prime Minister needs to have a clear picture of what changes business leaders want from our relationship with the EU, which is why we need to provide the answers – and fast.

If Ed Miliband wins, we also need to be in a position where he is forced to hold a referendum. We cannot go through another full five year Parliament with the current unsatisfactory terms of EU membership. This country needs a better deal and voters need to have a say. Thankfully, with both Labour’s biggest private backer and Trade Union sponsor supporting a referendum, with MPs and members joining Labour for a Referendum, and with UKIP nipping at their heels, opinion is shifting in the Labour Party. Which is why we are doing everything we can to push the EU Referendum Bill through Parliament before the General Election.

Changing the EU will continue to be an uphill struggle, especially with the objective of ‘ever closer union’ at the heart of the project. The recent appointment of Jean-Claude Juncker – a politician so out of touch with voters that he thinks Euroscepticism is a myth of the British press – shows how the European Commission is still firmly clinging to the status quo.

Business for Britain has an important role to play in this debate. You can read more about the path ahead in the EU Roadmap (pages 4-5). There’s a lot to do, and not very long to do it. But we are lucky to have a strong Board, a high calibre Advisory Council and the support of over 800 business leaders, up and down the UK (page 8).

We also have a battle tested campaign team, with a clear strategy to shift the terms of debate (pages 6-7). With the experience gained from the TaxPayers’ Alliance to Big Brother Watch, from NOtoAV to the People’s Pledge and Boris’ 2008 Mayoral Campaign, the team here know how to make a difference. And the progress made since our launch in April 2013 is substantial.

But there’s so much more to do. We will continue to work tirelessly to support an EU Referendum, whilst defining what a better deal for Britain really looks like. And most importantly, we will demonstrate that this is the view of the vast majority of business leaders in the UK. With 66 per cent of UK business leaders supporting a referendum (YouGov) and 81 per cent of FTSE 100 chairman saying they want to see Britain renegotiate its relationship with Brussels, we are making progress. But we must not let up between now and the General Election.
Why the EU needs to change

The European Union needs to change, if it doesn’t then the consequences for the member states will be grave. The EU faces big economic and social challenges: its economy is shrinking, population aging, and flawed economic policies have resulted in continued economic and political crisis.

Reform cannot be delayed, it is already long overdue. Taken as a whole, Europe’s share of world output is projected to fall by almost a third in the next two decades yet the only answer EU leaders have provided to date is further integration and regulation. Britain will not submit to ever closer union and voters have made clear they want quite the opposite. The EU must change, or it will consign itself to the history books.

As Angela Merkel points out, Europe accounts for just over 7% of the world’s population, produces around 25% of global GDP and 50% of global social spending. That is not sustainable. If the EU is to avoid being overtaken permanently by developing nations then it has to embrace serious reform. It must cut its budget and the huge amounts of waste that permeate every level of EU spending. Britain’s contributions to this mammoth budget have continued to rise – 200% in the last decade.
It’s not just businesses that are hurt by EU rules and regulations. The EU is responsible for disastrous levels of youth unemployment that are condemning a generation to life on the dole. We can only change this if the EU is truly open to reform.

We must begin renegotiation today and seek substantial reforms, backed by an In/Out referendum in 2017. Polls show that both voters and businesses want a referendum as they know it is the best hope of securing change. Everyone bar those wedded to remaining ‘in’, at all costs, recognise that the status quo is not an option. But if the EU fails to reform we must not be afraid to consider the possibility of ‘Out’.

Despite these extraordinary challenges, the EU continues to devote much of its time interfering with vital parts of the UK economy. Financial regulations introduced by the EU Commission plus proposals to create a new EU financial tsar pose a huge threat to one our most prized assets, our financial services. We must reject these proposals and challenge those trying to scare us into staying in on the current terms. The UK is one of the largest trading nations in world, we have a trade surplus outside the EU and we’re the EU’s biggest market in the world. Leaving could potentially free us from the rules that prevent the UK from taking advantage of the growing trade opportunities across the world. It’s no wonder that senior government ministers have made it clear that if there is no change then they expect the British people to vote for Out and would do so themselves. We can get a better deal from the EU but the EU must show it is willing to reform and become more competitive. What’s clear is the status quo isn’t an option.

The UK is the EU’s single largest market – in 2013 the EU exported €280 billion worth of goods to the UK. Neither side will have any appetite for a ‘trade war’
NOW AUTUMN 2014 2015 MAY 2015

**EU ROADMAP 2014 -17**

**September 2014:** Presenting our case at the three Party conferences

**November 2014:** Consulting supporters across the country about our manifesto

**January 2015:** Publication of our business manifesto

**October 2014:** Supporting the EU Referendum Bill when it returns to Parliament

**May 2015:** Getting our message out during the election campaign

NOW AUTUMN 2014

**July 2014:** Philip Hammond appointed Foreign Secretary

**September 2014:** Scottish Referendum

**September 2014:** Party conferences

**Spring 2015:** Party manifestos published

**May 2015:** UK General Election

United Kingdom

European Union

**November 2014:** New EU banking laws enacted

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The next few years will be crucial in terms of our global relationships. For those of us who believe that the UK should be outward looking, seeking to trade and engage with countries from across the world, we will be pushing for the EU to fundamentally reform, to become more competitive and to drop its protectionist tendencies. The In/Out referendum is crucial leverage in this process.

June 2015 onwards?
Ensuring we get a good deal in the renegotiation

January 2017 onwards?
Analysing the small print of the deal against our manifesto and consulting our supporters about next steps

June 2015:
Pressing the new Government to include a referendum and renegotiation in its first Queen’s Speech

June 2015-2017:
Building coalitions with other business groups across the EU

May 2016:
Scottish Parliament General Election

November 2016:
Presidential Election

May 2016:
Scottish Parliament General Election

November 2016:
Presidential Election

EU Referendum, by end of 2017
How we influence debate

1. Solid research

Polling & focus groups
A perennial myth in the EU debate is that business leaders support the status quo and oppose an In/Out referendum. We regularly commission polls of business leaders to prove that there is a desire for change amongst all sectors and sizes of company for a better deal from the EU, and to show how existing groups like the CBI are misrepresenting the views of business.

In-house research
Our small team of policy analysts regularly produce eye-catching, newsworthy research to show the weaknesses in our existing relationship with the EU and to suggest necessary changes for the renegotiation. These take the form of short research notes and longer position papers, which reflect the results of our polling and regular consultations with BfB supporters.

Wider research
We also commission research from outside bodies with experience in specific policy areas. The most recent example was a paper by Europe Economics, which set out the probable future impact of EU regulation on the City and financial services. It rightly warned that the Eurozone might dominate non-Eurozone countries like the UK by as early as 2020.

2. Strategic communications

Newspapers & magazines
Getting our message into the press is important because so much of the news agenda in the broadcast media is set by what’s in that morning’s newspapers. We work particularly closely with business journalists and the ‘Lobby’ – political journalists who work in Parliament.

Radio & TV
Appearing on the TV and radio is important, because it is where most people get their news. Whenever possible, we provide one of our business supporters to go on air, but our campaign staff are always on call to represent Business for Britain on late night and early morning slots or for breaking stories.

Website, Twitter & Facebook
We use digital media to spread our message and reach out to a new, younger supporter base. Twitter is an important tool to get a message out in real time to the media and politicians, and Facebook allows campaigns to engage with their supporters and to spread the word virally.
High profile launches
Providing a platform for high profile politicians and business leaders who support our cause is an important way to get our message out. Iain Duncan Smith spoke about how the EU was undermining his welfare reforms and Ben Elliot, Founder of Quintessentially, encouraged young entrepreneurs to join the campaign.

Eye-catching media activities
Getting an EU Referendum is essential, so we have pulled out the stops to assist James Wharton and Bob Neill with their EU Referendum Bill. Our giant inflatable Ballot Box will be inflated once more this Autumn when the Bill returns to Parliament for a second time.

Building strong coalitions
Business leaders alone won’t win the EU debate, we need opinion formers from all sectors to back our call for a better deal. This is why we are encouraging everyone from economists to historians to work out what role they can play in this big debate facing the country, and we will be helping them make their case.

Progress made
We are only eighteen months into this campaign, and there is still a long way to go, but we feel we are making good progress. The debate is moving our way, as the following events have shown:

- In the European Elections, a majority of voters (61 per cent) supported a party offering an In/Out referendum.
- The appointment of Philip Hammond was a step forward: we now have a Foreign Secretary who believes Britain should leave the EU if it doesn’t reform.
- London Mayor Boris Johnson came out in favour of our ‘Change, or go’ approach. He made it clear that a free trading UK would be more prosperous than being shackled to the status quo.
- Even Nick Clegg has shifted (a bit). He recently backed BfB’s proposal to exempt small businesses and start-ups from EU red-tape.
- And most recently, we were pleased to see a new survey of FTSE 100 Chairman, which showed that 81% said they wanted to see Britain renegotiate its relationship with Brussels and 63% want a return of social and economic policies to Westminster.

We are closer to getting a referendum and politicians are getting the message that it’s either **Change, or Go**.
Business leaders are joining us...

“BfB has a clear view of what the national interest is: that we should push for EU reform and a renegotiation of Britain’s terms of membership based on trade, not an ever closer union.”

John Kersey, Managing Director, Kersey Hairdressing

“To get a better deal from the EU, we need an In/Out Referendum. A new Treaty would be good for the EU and good for the UK.”

Charlie Mullins, Managing Director, Pimlico Plumbers

“The City and financial services are vital to the UK’s economic prosperity, which is why Business for Britain must protect the City from onerous regulation.”

Julie Meyer, Managing Partner, Ariadne Capital Entrepreneurs Fund

“More of the same will just produce more of the same - less growth, less trade and fewer jobs. If we don’t get a better deal from the EU, Britain will become weaker not stronger.”

Neville Baxter, Director, RH Development Property Ltd

To sign up to the campaign please go to our website www.businessforbritain.org

If you wish to donate, receive our regular email bulletin, or have any questions on the campaign please call 0207 340 6070 (office hours)

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