



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Via e-mail

Europe Directorate
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

www.fco.gov.uk

[REDACTED]
For the #Stop WatchingUs group, Hanover, Germany

7 March 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter via e mail of 01 February 2014 to addressed to the British Government and its representatives about the European Union. As you can appreciate, the British Government receives a high volume of correspondence. Where relevant, letters are delegated to officials at the appropriate government department for a response. Therefore your letter has been forwarded to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office as the department leading on this issue.

This Government believes that membership of the EU is in the national interest, but also believes that important reforms are needed in the way the EU works. The UK's membership of the European Union is of huge benefit in terms of the jobs and investment that the single market helps to bring to the UK; in terms of the strong collective voice which the EU provides on negotiating free trade agreements; through the UK's ability to use targeted, effective sanctions to counter threats to our security; and to act internationally on cross-border issues such as climate change, peace keeping and conflict prevention.

Nevertheless, the EU needs reform. It needs to become more competitive, more democratically accountable and more flexible than it is today. As the Prime Minister said, "flexible, willing cooperation is a much stronger glue than compulsion from the centre." That is why we continue to argue for reforms that will ensure the EU can better tackle the challenges it now faces, such as the Eurozone crisis, the EU's lack of competitiveness and the disengagement that many voters feel from the EU and what it does. The Government is making progress. For example, the UK has secured a single EU patent regime which saves innovators and entrepreneurs millions of pounds in multiple patent applications and encourages economic growth. The UK also led a coalition of countries that secured a reduction in the EU's seven-year budget, the first time in the EU's history. In addition, Ministers have led initiatives which have led to to the exemption of the smallest businesses from new EU regulations and the reform of EU fisheries policy to ban the practice of 'discarding' fish.

You discussed holding a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. Reflecting the Coalition Agreement between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, the Government has no plans to hold such a referendum in this Parliament. However, through the 2011 EU Act, the Coalition government has legislated to ensure that there will be a referendum on any further transfer of powers from the UK to the EU. In his January 2013 speech on Europe,

David Cameron set out the Conservative Party's intention to hold an in/out referendum by 2017.

Yours sincerely,



Future of Europe Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office