

Brexit options in the European Economic Area

Sir, Lord Owen does much more than merely argue that the European Economic Area (EEA) is a flexible arrangement ("The only Brexit option is dodging the cliff edge", Daniel Finkelstein, June 14). He draws our attention to the crucial articles of the original EEA agreement, to which the UK is a contracting party and which clearly allow national intervention in immigration controls (on all sorts of grounds) as well as freedom to pursue trade agreements with other countries. Furthermore, it avoids a full customs union, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has no locus and all trading regulations are subject to sovereign parliamentary control.

What in some quarters has still not been grasped is that successfully and constructively leaving the European Union is bound to be a process in stages (a complex one) rather than a one-off, package event. If we want an eventual clear detachment that minimises disruption, an amended EEA seems an obvious transitional status, before we, as well as the EU, evolve towards what we shall find in the years ahead to be completely new

configurations and relationships in an ever-faster changing, digitalised world.
LORD HOWELL OF GUILDFORD
House of Lords

Sir, Daniel Finkelstein is right. We need to do a two-step. The first step is to leave the EU and join the European Economic Area as soon as practicable. By keeping us in the single market, EEA membership maintains the free flow of goods and services and gives business medium-term certainty. By removing us from the common agricultural and fisheries policies, it gives back control in these areas. It also reduces, but does not eliminate, our payments to the EU and the influence on us of the ECJ.

What it does not do is give us any form of control over EU immigration and market regulation. These have to be addressed by the second step, which is to negotiate advantageous bespoke free-trade agreements with the EU and other key trading partners without being rushed by the Article 50 deadline.

CHARLES JACKSON
Brackley, Northants

Sir, You report (June 14) that Philip Hammond wants to keep Britain inside the EU customs union. Last December the European Union committee of the House of Lords, of which I am a member, produced a report on the options for trade under Brexit. It concluded that the government should consider remaining a member of the customs union at least as an interim arrangement. We got a dusty response, but perhaps now it will think again.
LORD HORAM
House of Lords

Sir, Lord Spicer (letter, June 14) says that the central Brexit issue arising from the referendum is whether the UK is governed by European law and the ECJ. How does he know why people voted to leave? Some will have voted Leave because of immigration, some because they disliked the EU in general, many believed the lies about how much money we would save, and not a few because they simply disliked David Cameron.
JOHN NUGÉE
New Malden, Surrey