

French businesses believe Europe must serve two purposes: to guarantee a secure space for its citizens, and to help build a zone of prosperity - founded on companies' competitiveness – in a world that has become ever more open. It is with this in mind that the MEDEF, in close concertation with its European partners, comes to the current debate on the place of the United Kingdom within Europe.

The UK will hold a referendum on its continued membership of the EU before 2017, and most likely in summer 2016. By its very nature, this event has no equivalent in European history. Given the role, weight and influence of the British within the Union, a negative vote would profoundly challenge the EU as it exists today.

The forthcoming ballot is preceded by a discussion between the British government and its European partners, based on the four sets of demands expressed by David Cameron: related to competitiveness, sovereignty, the relationship between Eurozone and non-Eurozone countries, and immigration. All these questions are legitimate. The responses to them may well serve to quell ambiguities and fears in the public opinion. Whatever happens, they force Europeans to take clear positions on major topics about which they have been often in the past either unable or unwilling to commit.

MEDEF has two priorities:

- That the UK continues to participate in the European project. Both parties will gain from chasing together the opportunities of a world in the throes of great change. This common engagement is all the more necessary given the unprecedented and dangerous pressures that all members of the European Union are currently facing at their external borders and on their own territory: terror attacks, massive immigration flows, nationalist temptations, the rise of extremes, xenophobia..
- That Europeans seize the opportunity created by the British debate to change what does not work: to build a better Europe of 28 that guarantees the conditions for fair competition in an internal market, respecting the free movement of people, goods, services and capital; simultaneously, to engage resolutely in a deeper political, economic, financial, fiscal and social convergence among the members of the Eurozone.