

THE GOVERNMENT'S EU LEAFLET FACT CHECKED

This week, every household in the UK will receive a leaflet laying out the government's arguments for staying in the EU. Full fact, an independent fact-checking charity, have gone through the leaflet with a fine toothcomb to look into the claims made by the government. This is what their independent researchers found:

The leaflet says: "The UK is not part of the EU's border-free zone - we control our own borders which gives us the right to check everyone, including EU nationals, arriving from continental Europe"

The UK isn't part of the EU's border free zone—the Schengen area—and it retains control over its borders.

This means it can check passports at its borders and refuse entry to people without any valid identity documents, including EU nationals. This isn't the same as saying the UK can refuse anyone from other EU countries, if they do have valid documents. The UK also cannot directly control levels of immigration from other EU countries.

The leaflet says: "The Government has negotiated a deal that will make our benefits system less of a draw for EU citizens. In future, new

EU migrants will not have full access to certain benefits until they have worked here for up to four years."

It's not clear how much of an impact the new deal will have in terms of affecting the likelihood of citizens from the rest of the EU wanting to come and work in the UK. It's far from certain that in-work benefits ever acted as a significant pull factor for EU migrants coming to the UK.

The new deal means that in-work benefits can be restricted to new migrant workers from other EU countries for up to four years after they start working if a so-called 'emergency brake' has been applied.

An EU member country can apply for a brake if it notifies EU authorities that it has experienced an inflow of workers of "exceptional magnitude" over "an extended period of time". The size of that inflow has to affect its social security system, lead to difficulties in its employment market, or be putting "excessive pressure" on public services. See more here.

The European Commission has already said that the UK would be justified in triggering the emergency brake, but it does require the approval of the Council.

The leaflet says: "EU cooperation makes it easier to keep criminals and terrorists out of the UK. Since 2004, using the European Arrest Warrant, over 1,000 suspects have faced justice in UK courts and over 7,000 have been extradited."

Around 7,100 suspects were extradited from the UK using the European Arrest Warrant between 2004 and 2014, and about 1,100 suspects were sent to the UK on the same basis.

The UK has 'opted in' to various security arrangements that the EU has, such as the European Arrest Warrant (EAW), Schengen Information System (SIS), and European criminal records system.

If the UK decides to leave the EU, it might not be able to access these arrangements directly. The EAW for example doesn't currently apply to countries outside the EU. But Norway for example does participate in the SIS and something like the EAW without being a member of the EU.

The leaflet says: "The EU is by far the UK's biggest trading partner. EU countries buy 44% of everything we sell abroad, from cars to insurance."

About 44% of UK exports in goods and services went to other countries in the EU in 2014. That compares to about 21% to countries in the Americas, 19% to Asian countries, and 11% to non-EU European countries.

That share has been declining, as exports to other countries have been increasing at a faster rate.

It's sometimes argued that these statistics overstate the proportion of UK exports that go to the EU, as a lot of goods pass through ports like Rotterdam before being shipped to a final destination outside the EU. Both the ONS and the government's review of our EU membership have concluded that it's hard to quantify the extent of this 'Rotterdam effect' or establish whether it's a serious problem for the statistics.

It's not clear what would happen to this trade if the UK votes to leave the EU. If the UK leaves the EU, the future rules on trade would depend on what kind of agreement, if any, the UK reaches with the EU after its departure.

The leaflet says: "No other country has managed to secure significant access to the Single Market, without having to: follow EU rules over which they have no real say; pay into the EU; accept EU citizens living and working in their country." Norway, Iceland and

Liechtenstein have full access to the single market despite not being members of the EU. This includes accepting free movement of people (except for Liechtenstein) and paying.

They do have to follow EU rules which they don't vote on, although they are consulted about proposed laws and reserve the right, at least in principle, to refuse new EU laws they object to. Doing so would have political consequences, though.

Switzerland has partial access to the single market. Its relationship with the EU is based on lots of different treaties, including one on free movement of people, and it also makes payments linked to the relationship.

The Swiss also take on EU laws, but instead of laws constantly flowing into its legal system as with Norway, they change their laws where a treaty requires or if they think it's a good idea anyway.