

European Union

As part of the UK we are one of the 'Big Three' in Europe – that means we have enormous influence. We benefit from the UK's opt-out from the Euro and the UK's rebate worth £135 per year per household. By trying to fool us on the EU, Alex Salmond showed that he was willing to say anything and do anything to get us to vote for independence.

The UK is one of the most influential members of the European Union. This means that we don't just sit at the top table, we help make the decisions that affect so many parts of our life here in Scotland.

Whether or not an independent Scotland would be a member of the European Union was the issue that showed us that the SNP were willing to say anything and do anything in order to get us to vote for independence.

For years, senior nationalists asserted time and time again that Scotland would be waved into the EU with no questions asked if we voted to leave the UK. Alex Salmond told the BBC that they had legal advice to back up their claim. When they were asked to publish their advice, they spent your money on a court battle to keep secret the fact that he didn't actually have any.

SNP claims that we would be an automatic or continuing member of the EU have been disputed by experts. Even the President of the European Commission has said that it would not be the case.

If we have to reapply to join the EU we cannot guarantee what would happen. We would lose the hard won UK rebate – which is worth £135 each year to every family in Scotland. Would we have to do as every other new member has done and commit to joining the Euro? Would we have to do as every other new member has done and sign up to the Schengen agreement, which would result in a border being created between us and the rest of the UK?

Every question that is posed to the nationalists about this issue is met with the assertion: we will enter into negotiations **with all the 28 countries in Europe** and they would give us everything that we demand. Again, it is an example of Alex Salmond's wishful thinking. The experience of the EU's most recent member Croatia shows that simply would not be the case.

The 5 things you need to know

- **SIZE MATTERS** – We may not think that it is terribly right or fair, but the reality is that it is the big countries that call the shots in Europe. As part of the UK we are one of the 'Big Three' in Europe – France, Germany and the UK. This means that we have enormous influence over something that plays a huge role in our lives.
- **KEEPING THE REBATE** – Were we to have to negotiate our way into the EU, then the other member states would seek to remove the annual rebate that the UK currently gets back from Europe. This is real money. It is worth around £135 a year to every household in Scotland.

- **AVOIDING THE EURO** – Every country that has joined the EU since the creation of the single currency has had to pledge to join the Euro. The nationalists like to downplay this and say that it is not the case, but it is a matter of fact. Croatia – who joined the EU in 2013 will join the Euro in 2014. The UK currently has an opt-out from the Euro and will not have to join unless it wants to.
- **BORDER POSTS** – Another of the commitments that all new member states have to make is to the Schengen agreement. This means that people can move freely across Europe without stopping at border controls. The UK has an opt-out from this agreement and controls its own borders. If we have to sign up, experts have said the rules state that we would require the *operation of border posts*. *Experts have said this could mean the introduction of checkpoints and the need to show documents to cross the border.*
- **MORE NEGOTIATIONS** – If we were to have to apply to join, then we would have to negotiate with all the other 28 member states on areas such as farming and fishing. Even although the nationalists say that we would get everything that we wanted from those negotiations, common sense tells you that that simply cannot be guaranteed. The President of the European Commission has even gone so far as to say it would be “extremely difficult, if not impossible” for a separate Scotland to join the European Union.

What the experts say

Negotiations:

- **Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission:** *It would be “extremely difficult, if not impossible” for a separate Scotland to join the European Union.*
- **Ivan Grdesic, ambassador of Croatia (the EU’s newest member) to the UK:** *“Our experience is that it really is not a negotiation process, you are actually joining a club that already has all the rules and regulations that you have to adopt.”*

Reapplying as a new member state:

- **Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission:** *“A new state, if it wants to join the EU, has to apply to become a member of the EU.”*

The Euro:

- **Alex Salmond’s own economic adviser, Professor Andrew Hughes-Hallett:** *“All new members of the EU are required to join the Euro eventually and it is not clear that there are grounds to argue that Scotland has the right to inherit the UK’s current Euro opt out.”*

Borders:

- **Professor Robert Wright, of Strathclyde University:** *“The SNP government has stated it will opt out of the Schengen Agreement, since its preference is to remain part of the CTA. It is difficult to think of a set of circumstances that would allow Scotland to opt out and not be part of the Schengen Area as this is now the norm in the EU.”*