

Tel: 01442 872617
Fax: 01442 876108
Email: davidowen@lorddavidowen.co.uk
Website: www.lorddavidowen.co.uk



House of Lords,
Westminster,
London SW1A 0PW

Sir David Norgrove
Chair
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London SW1V 2QQ

19 September 2018

Dear Sir David

I believe there is a systematic campaign of government disinformation concerning the European Economic Area, which for me was first signalled in letters that I have exchanged with the Prime Minister since November 2016 and I enclose copies of my latest exchange. This week the campaign has been brought out into a much wider public domain via a video presentation by the Prime Minister, posted on Facebook, ostensibly intended to provide public information. That public ‘information’ video is the trigger for this letter.

The video contains a number of assertions about the EEA, each presented as factual, but each false. Because it instantly gives the flavour of the whole, I draw attention first to the most egregious false assertion, which is that the EEA entails membership of the EU customs union and that it would therefore prevent the UK from striking its own FTAs with other countries. It is only necessary to look at the list of Norwegian FTAs to see that it does not.

The assertion that I ask you to consider, however, is a different one. It is that the EEA entails the payment of “vast” sums of money to the EU. Notwithstanding the vagueness of the word “vast” this assertion is quantitative in nature and its veracity can only be tested out by the assessment of numerical information/data. As I show in supporting documentation, the statistical information required to falsify it, in a fairly straightforward and simple way, is readily available. If you have any specific questions in any way about this information to speed up your enquiry I would be happy to assist.

The conduct I complain about can only have been the result of deliberate deception or of negligence/lack of due diligence in the assessment of numerical data. I pass no judgment on that, and do not ask you to do so either. I ask you only to assess whether the claim is misleading, bearing in mind that it was made in a context where decisions of very great public importance are about to be made.

The more general issues engaged by the episode are to do with the trustworthiness of government in providing public ‘information’ based on numerical data, which I know is a matter of considerable interest and concern to you. It is one, limited event only, but it has implications for the wider reputation of, and trust in, the reliability of ‘public information’ more generally.

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Owen CH FRCP

Tel: 01442 872617
Fax: 01442 876108
Email: davidowen@lorddavidowen.co.uk
Website: www.lorddavidowen.co.uk



House of Lords,
Westminster,
London SW1A 0PW

I do not think it will take very much of your time to reach a conclusion and I therefore invite you to give the matter your urgent consideration, in the public interest.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'David Owen'.

DAVID OWEN