

## Vince Cable: Promising an EU referendum is 'dangerous' and 'utterly unrealistic'



'Holding out the prospect of major reforms that aren't going to be achieved is dangerous'

[ANDREW GRICE](#) 

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David Cameron's promise of a referendum on a new deal for Britain in Europe is "dangerous" and "utterly unrealistic", Vince Cable said today.

The Conservatives accused the Liberal Democrat Business Secretary of being "anti-democratic" after he said: "I think the approach of the Conservatives is actually quite dangerous. It is assuming that the other 27 countries will magically agree to British requests.

**Speaking in Brussels to the Lisbon Council think-tank, Mr Cable said:**  
**"Precipitating a referendum in current conditions, holding out the prospect of major reforms that aren't going to be achieved is dangerous."**

He predicted that Britain could win reforms on "excessive bureaucracy" and abuses of benefit tourism by EU migrants but warned: "Anybody who is expecting that our relationship with Europe can be fundamentally renegotiated is just being utterly unrealistic."

Mr Cable said that the referendum was dangerous because it undermined confidence for Japanese, Indian and other foreign companies which invest in Britain.

Looking back at the 1975 referendum, he admitted: "In the 1970s it was possible to argue that joining the EU would enhance our economic performance because it was so dynamic. That is not the position today. We're in a difficult political situation."

A Conservative Party spokesman said: "Vince Cable thinks giving the British people a say on Europe is 'dangerous' - but what is dangerous, and deeply disturbing, is that he seems to have forgotten that we live in a democracy. Our Prime Minister David Cameron has a clear plan to renegotiate our relationship with Europe to boost our economy, crack down on migrants claiming benefits and let the British people have their say on the EU with an in/out referendum. None of the other parties can or will do that."