

EURO MYTHS BUSTED



**Labour
in Europe**
European Parliamentary Labour Party



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament



1 'MOST OF OUR LAWS COME FROM BRUSSELS'

**JUST
13.2%
OF OUR LAWS
HAVE ANYTHING
TO DO WITH
BRUSSELS**

The House of Commons Library estimates that just 13.2% of British laws have anything to do with Brussels.

This figure includes everything that mentions the EU, even if it's just a "passing reference" or a definition, according to the researchers.

2 'EUROPEAN LAWS ARE MADE BY UNELECTED BUREAUCRATS'

EU LAWS ARE DEBATED AND ADOPTED BY ELECTED MEPS AND NATIONAL MINISTERS

The European Commission only proposes laws. It is the directly elected European Parliament and the Council of the EU (government ministers) that debate, amend and ultimately pass European legislation.

The European Parliament has the role of confirming the European Commission President and can effectively veto Commissioners. The Parliament can also dismiss the Commission if it acts inappropriately.

Contrary to popular opinion the EU is not the sprawling bureaucracy that many believe it is. In fact, the European Commission has fewer staff than some large councils in the UK. EU institutions are also reducing staff numbers by 5% to save money.

3 'NORWAY AND SWITZERLAND ENJOY ALL THE BENEFITS DESPITE NOT BEING EU MEMBERS'

NORWAY AND SWITZERLAND BOTH PAY INTO THE EU, BUT THEY HAVE NO SAY IN THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEM

The Norwegian and Swiss arrangements with the EU are different, but these countries must pay into the EU and also abide by EU trade regulations - without actually being able to influence any of them.

Norwegians make roughly the same per capita contribution to the EU budget as Britons. If we adopted the Norway model the UK Government would still be faced with up to 94% of the current costs of EU membership, but we would have no say in the law-making process, even if the laws would harm British interests.

4 'EU MIGRANTS ARE A DRAIN ON THE ECONOMY'

EU migrants contribute more to the UK exchequer in taxes than they claim in benefits. Only a very small percentage of EU migrants (5%) actually claim unemployment benefits.

Economists at University College London estimate that EU migrants contributed over £20bn to the UK economy between 2001 and 2011.

EU MIGRANTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED OVER **£20_{BN}** **TO THE UK ECONOMY**

5

‘THE EU DOES NOTHING TO HELP ORDINARY PEOPLE’

THE EU HAS ENSURED SAFE WORKING HOURS, INTRODUCED HIGHER LEVELS OF ANNUAL LEAVE AND EXTENDED PARENTAL LEAVE

Working people enjoy many rights thanks to the EU. The EU has ensured safe working hours, introduced higher levels of annual leave and extended parental leave. It was also the EU that established the legal principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work.

The EU has done much more to make life easier for people across Europe. More competition in the air travel industry means cheaper flights, EU holidaymakers can get free or reduced rate medical care with the European Health Insurance Card, it is cheaper than ever to use your mobile abroad, and new food labelling rules make it easier to identify what’s in your food and where it came from.

6

‘OUR MOST IMPORTANT MARKETS ARE CHINA AND THE US, NOT THE EU’

The EU is the world’s largest single market. Half of Britain’s exports go there, accounting for some 3.5 million British jobs. The UK sells more to the Netherlands alone than to the whole of China.

Trade with the US or emerging markets in Asia is made easier by our EU membership. The EU has recently negotiated a major trade deal with Vietnam, and it is currently in negotiations for an EU-US trade deal that could boost the UK economy by billions each year.

Labour MEPs will only support trade deals that ensure transparency and protect public services such as the NHS.

THE EU
ACCOUNTS
FOR SOME

3.5

MILLION
BRITISH
JOBS

7 'THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS FORCES ITS WILL ON THE UK'

THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS THERE TO PROTECT EVERYONE AND NOT JUST THE RIGHTS OF THE FEW

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has nothing to do with the EU. It is part of the Council of Europe - an entirely separate institution, with separate membership, that was set up by Britain after the Second World War.

The ECHR helps to protect everyone and not just the privileged few. Its rulings have helped to advance LGBTI rights, improve child protection laws, and even give the victims of the Thalidomide scandal access to justice.

8

‘THE BRITISH ARE DIFFERENT’

THE 28 NATIONS OF THE EU CELEBRATE THAT THEY ARE ‘UNITED IN DIVERSITY’

All EU member states have their different languages, cultures, histories and laws. No-one joins the EU in order to lose their identity. In fact, the EU’s motto is ‘United in Diversity’.

Margaret Thatcher said that being in Europe hadn’t made the French any less French and on this she was right. Britain being a part of the EU hasn’t made us any less British either!

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‘EU TO MAKE COWS WEAR NAPPIES’

The *Daily Mail* cried “udder nonsense” when it reported on EU rules to ban cows from defecating on Alpine slopes.

In fact, it is the story that is nonsense! The report focused on a publicity-savvy German farmer who fitted his cows with bovine diapers because, he says, cowpats constitute a fertiliser high in nitrates and are therefore outlawed by ‘barmy Brussels bureaucrats’.

There is an EU law on nitrates, dating back to 1991. It was introduced because excessive concentrations of nitrates from fertilisers have been a major source of water pollution in Europe and can damage human health.

But the EU rules do not stipulate how EU countries should go about keeping nitrate levels under control, and they certainly don’t ban grazing animals from defecating on Alpine slopes or any other hillside!

'EU TO CUT OUR COFFEE INTAKE'

The *Daily Express* claimed that "Brussels is trying to restrict the drinking habits of Britain's coffee lovers" by cutting the amount of coffee we drink.

In reality, producers of energy drinks and other products containing caffeine sought EU authorisation for advertising claims about caffeine's beneficial health claims. As part of the assessment the European Food Safety Authority analysed the safety of caffeine intake. It concluded that regular caffeine consumption of up to 400mg per day would not raise safety concerns for most adults.

This was advice, not a proposal to regulate how much coffee people drink. It is inconceivable that the EU ever could, or would want to, restrict people from drinking as many cappuccinos or lattes as they like!

**BOGUS
BANS**

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‘EU TO BAN BEACHES’

A *Daily Mail* article accused the EU of trying to “ban our beaches” adding that “dozens of British beaches will be off-limits for swimmers”.

In fact, the EU does not prevent anyone from swimming anywhere, nor has the EU introduced any new bathing water laws. What the EU does do is highlight the quality and possible health dangers of waters where individuals or their families may choose to bathe – categorising them as ‘poor’, ‘sufficient’, ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

The only change in EU bathing water law (agreed by the UK government) is that it now gives a truer picture of the long-term quality of the water, in order to protect health and the environment. For example, authorities now have to inform the public about levels of E-coli and faecal streptococci in bathing waters.

After all, who wants to swim in sewage?

‘EU BANS TOURIST PICS OF THE LONDON EYE’

Press reports have insisted that the EU is about to legislate to “ban” or “censor” holiday snaps of famous monuments and artworks and make it illegal to upload them to Facebook or Instagram.

There is no such legal proposal on the table. Even if there were, it would require the agreement not only of MEPs but of a large majority of EU countries, most of which, like the UK, currently apply “freedom of panorama”. This principle allows anyone to publish, even for commercial ends, images of public places, including the buildings and public artworks permanently located in these places.

This story stems from a general review of EU copyright law for the digital age. As part of the review, an MEP proposed that freedom of panorama should be stipulated across the EU. However, a European Parliament committee disagreed and instead voted that any commercial use should be subject to prior authorisation. But the European Parliament as a whole quickly threw out that proposal.

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