



Introduction

For too long Eurosceptics in the Tory Party, UKIP and the media have been allowed to wrap themselves in the Union Jack and portray themselves as standing up for Britain. Their task has been made easier by a constant drip of bad news on the European economy and the failure of European leaders to tackle the problems.

Unfortunately many Pro-Europeans have not put forward counter arguments which demonstrate that the UK's true interest is to be at the heart of Europe. Our national interest is best served by not only being in the European Union but also by playing an active part in negotiations. Many decisions on trade, economic and financial matters which have an impact on the UK will be taken whether we are at the table or not. So true patriots would want to ensure we are there actively influencing decisions. Thankfully, this is understood by the Welsh Government and National Assembly Members who engage European policy as they recognise how important programmes such as Structural Funds and Common Agricultural Policy are for Wales. Sadly, this is not always the case with the Tory-Lib Dem coalition Government in Westminster.

Since I was first elected as an MEP in 2009, I have met with hundreds of organisations including local government, the voluntary sector, businesses, trade unions, colleges, universities and schools as well as many individual constituents. I have seen at first hand the difference that EU membership has brought to our communities.

However, it is often very difficult to find ways of informing people how important the EU is for us in Wales and the whole of the UK. This pamphlet will put the patriotic case for Europe, particularly from a Welsh perspective. This will be done by examining key issues such as trade, the economy, power, legislation and peace and stability. For each of these issues I will argue that the people of Wales and the whole of the UK are better off being in the EU.



Trade

Over 50 per cent of UK overseas trade is with other EU countries. It is estimated that around three million UK jobs, 150,000 of these in Wales, depend on this trade. There is no doubt about the huge benefits for UK companies having access to a market of 500 million people living in 27 countries (soon to be 28 when Croatia joins the EU in 2013).

Even most Eurosceptics, including think-tanks such as Open Europe, concede the advantages of being part of such a huge single market. Indeed, many want to keep their black forest gâteau or tiramisu and to eat it, they argue the UK can have access to the Single Market but not be bound by the Single Market rules. They often point to Norway and Switzerland as two examples the UK could follow. Unfortunately for them the facts do not support their claims. Norway, for example, has access to the Single Market as a member of the European Economic Area. However, it has to abide by the EU Single Market rules and still has to pay to be a member of the Area. Additionally, Norway is not at the table when the rules governing the Single Market are decided. Although not identical, Switzerland is in a similar position.

Therefore is it really patriotic for the UK to pay to be in a club but have no influence over the rules by which it must abide? And is it being patriotic to limit our ambitions to be like Norway, a very nice but very small country in terms of its economy and position in the world? Surely we should be more ambitious for the UK.

A final point to make on trade is that we should be pressing for more progress in completing the single market. In sectors such as energy and telecoms the single market has not yet been fully established. This has led to a few large dominant multi-nationals with consumers continually getting a raw deal. The most obvious example being energy costs which are much higher in the UK than in most other EU countries.



Economy

The financial crisis which began in the United States and then spread elsewhere surely must show to even the most Eurosceptic person that economies are inter-dependent. Financial and now economic problems in the US and Europe have had an impact everywhere, even on islands like the UK. Furthermore, it should by now be obvious that solving these problems cannot be achieved by one country acting alone. Isolationism and protectionism will not work in a global economy.

We need to work together to find solutions to stabilise financial institutions, to deal with debt and importantly to stimulate economies in order to promote growth and jobs. Let's take the financial and banking sector. These institutions became so linked through the creation of complex products and inter-institutional lending that problems in one leads to contagion and problems in others right across the EU. Therefore, only EU-wide solutions such as common regulations, Eurobonds and a banking union will now work.

We can also look at the issue of low growth and high unemployment across the EU, not just in the Eurozone. For example, the UK has had a double dip recession with the Chancellor partly blaming economic problems in Europe for the UK's troubles (along with the last Government, the weather and the Queen's Jubilee). He therefore must accept that part of the solution must come from EU-wide action to stimulate growth. This position is now put forward by many governments including France and Italy who rightly recognise that no single country acting on its own can solve its economic problems.

However, it is unlikely the Chancellor will follow his own logic and support EU measures to promote growth and jobs. Some examples of EU action include more money for Structural Funds to boost infrastructure and skills training. Also the creation of EU project bonds which could fund major infrastructure schemes. Additional resources for the European Investment Bank could also fund more infrastructure projects and lending to SMEs. The creation of a small Financial Transaction Tax or Robin Hood Tax on transactions between financial

institutions could also raise billions of Euros (or pounds) which could be used to stimulate the economy. A recent academic study suggested that such a tax could increase GDP by 0.25 per cent.

Most Eurosceptics oppose such measures just because they are EU initiatives. Wouldn't it be more patriotic to support measures which will provide much needed funds to spend on infrastructure projects and job opportunities, particularly for young people?

Again we are lucky in Wales as our First Minister and whole Government recognise the importance of EU funds. Structural Funds, Agricultural and Rural Funds, Research and Development money etc. all add up to nearly £1 billion per year coming to Wales from the EU. Recent research has shown that EU membership benefits Wales by around £40 per person. This investment is being used to tackle the long-term economic, social and educational disparities embedded in Wales and helping to make huge improvements in our infrastructure, regenerating ailing and disadvantaged communities and providing additional training and business support.

Eurosceptics argue that if the UK did not pay into the EU it could use the money saved to fund UK regions. This argument falls for a number of reasons. Firstly, because as mentioned earlier, the UK would always have to pay to be part of the single market. Secondly, and most importantly, does anyone really believe that the UK Government would commit to giving Wales £1 billion extra funding every year? Most rational people would accept that this was unlikely to happen at any time, but when the UK Government is committed to cutting spending the chances are extremely remote. Indeed I believe the question has been asked previously and the UK Government refused to give a commitment. Therefore it is wiser and more patriotic to accept that Wales and UK regions should stick with the long term security provided by EU funds.



Power

If truth be told some Eurosceptics oppose the EU because they dislike decisions being taken outside the UK. It's the so called island mentality and the stand-off culture of disenchantment and Euroscepticism, fostered by UKIP and right wingers of the Tory Party that damages and not strengthens the UK. It is all well and good playing to the media gallery but we lose so much by flouncing off and grandstanding rather than staying around the negotiating table and directly influencing the decision making process.

Economic problems cannot be solved by one country on its own. The same can be said for other issues such as climate change where concerted international action is vital. Other examples, where working together and pooling sovereignty is vital, are trade negotiations and external relations. In trade negotiations are China or the United States more likely to deal in a serious manner with individual states or with a large power bloc like the EU? Additionally, if there are trouble spots in the world or if humanitarian aid is required, is it more effective for individual countries to act alone or for there to be co-ordinated action at EU level?

A patriot might conclude that the interests of the UK are best served by being part of a large influential bloc. In my discussions with senior Chinese politicians they certainly supported a strong EU being part of a multi-polar world. Indeed, the recent creation of a European External Action Service is likely to increase the influence of the EU and its Member States on the world stage.



Legislation

The one thing which causes the greatest reaction from Eurosceptics is EU legislation. Whilst many, including myself, believe the EU shouldn't legislate on everything, some EU-wide legislation is inevitable. If we are to have a single market then there must be common rules to stop market distortion and anti-competitive actions by member states and companies. This is why we need common rules on matters like consumer rights and workers' rights.

It should be remembered that this type of EU legislation is there to protect the single market which the political right support so much. It should also be remembered that when such legislation is passed it has to be agreed by the Council of Ministers at which the UK and sometimes Wales is represented, and by the European Parliament which also has UK members. Additionally, it is worth pointing out that EU legislation is usually very broad and detailed implementation is left to member states. Therefore in many cases any problem with EU legislation is down to the way it has been implemented. A prime example of this is the rules relating to welfare benefits for EU citizens.

Finally, when Eurosceptics argue that EU legislation should be repatriated they usually mean social legislation and consumer rights legislation. The right does not want any legislation that interferes with the free market and that might reduce profits. However, repatriation would not be accepted by other member states and I would argue a true patriot would not want it either. This is the type of legislation which has brought benefits to consumers on issues like toy safety, passenger rights and mobile phone charges. It is also legislation which has given workers health and safety protection, paid holidays and equal rights for part-time workers. As the current UK coalition looks to dismantle rights, it will be to Europe we will need to look again to protect UK workers.



Peace and Stability

The history of Europe has been one of war, particularly between the great powers. In addition to the First and Second World Wars there have been many other conflicts which have brought death and misery. Therefore after the Second World War the founding fathers of the EU were determined to bring peace and stability to the continent. They also wanted a Europe where human rights and social justice were cornerstones of society. They wanted to use economic means to achieve their political goal of peace and stability. In other words, they wanted to tie the economies of Europe together in a single market so they became inter-dependent and wars over resources, land, etc. would cease. The fact there has been no wars between the major powers since the creation of the initial EU institutions is its greatest achievement.

Germany, France and most other EU member states recognise this. Unfortunately too many Eurosceptics, usually on the right but some on the left, forget this. If they could they would go back to a period where nation states competed over trade, land and raw materials. This return to nationalism would in turn lead to xenophobia and racism and bring the danger of conflict back to Europe. True patriots do not want this. They want a Europe for future generations which is peaceful, stable and which respects freedom and human rights.



Conclusion

The Eurosceptic right play the patriotic card with great effect. Their message is simple and, of course, they have support from the right wing media who are more than happy to tell half truths about the EU. Those who are pro-Europe have a much harder task as the arguments are more complex and there is no easy way of getting these arguments to people. However, it is vital the other side of the story is told otherwise we will find ourselves in a position where there is a momentum behind Eurosceptic policies of either re-patriating EU powers or even holding a referendum to withdraw the UK from the EU.

This pamphlet puts the case for Europe. It shows that there is a patriotic case for Europe whether we look at trade, economics, power, laws or peace and stability. I am confident the more people who can access this information the more likely we are to win the argument to have a proper relationship with the EU, one where the UK has influence and is able to work with others to benefit all our people.