

EU key issues brief

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Key facts:

- Of all four Welsh MEPs, Labour MEP Derek Vaughan consistently works the hardest. He spends the most time in Parliament, votes on the most legislation and delivers the best results for Wales.
- Derek was the only Welsh MEP to fight against cuts for Wales in the new EU budget. His efforts mean that Wales will benefit from an additional £130m in EU funding rather than the £400m cut that the UK Tory Government originally insisted on.
- Derek's work means more EU money to support Welsh businesses, research and jobs in our communities.
- If all Labour supporters vote on May 22nd we have a good chance of winning this election and continuing to represent Wales' best interests in the EU.

Worker's rights

With the Prime Minister pledging to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, the undercurrent of attacking hard won workers' rights at the same time cannot be ignored.

EU legislation has given workers health and safety protection, paid holidays, and equal rights for part-time workers. It has ensured protection against discrimination and harassment at work, the right to reasonable working hours and the right to maternity and paternity leave.

The Tory right and UKIP want to leave the EU in order to deny Welsh workers their rights. Indeed, you only have to look at some of the policies and statements from UKIP to see that this is the case. They want to scrap maternity pay in SMEs, they want to privatise the NHS and one of them even said that public sector workers and the unemployed should not be allowed to vote.

Women's rights

The European Union has introduced and defended many of the women's rights we now take for granted:

- Rights during pregnancy - Women can no longer be sacked for being pregnant and pay and conditions will be protected when returning to work after maternity leave.

- Parental leave – Any parent with a child under five now has the right to a minimum of 13 weeks unpaid parental leave to be taken when they choose before the child's fifth birthday.
- Maternity rights – EU law now requires that women working for 26 weeks for the same employers continuously into the 15th week before the baby is due qualify for maternity rights replacing the previous two year waiting period.

Consumer rights

The EU safeguards important rights for consumers including:

- The right to a refund when returning goods bought “at a distance” within seven days of receiving them.
- If you get cold feet after signing a mobile phone contract, you have the right to withdraw from the contract within seven days of agreeing to it.
- The right to have faulty goods repaired or replaced if they break within two years.
- The right to a refund where goods bought online do not match their description.

The EU has also made cartels illegal. This means that groups of traders, like energy companies, are not allowed to fix prices so that consumers end up paying more. The European Commission has the power to investigate and impose heavy fines on companies involved in a cartel.

EU funding and Welsh jobs

- Welsh people receive more from the EU than they put in, around £70 extra per person per year.
- Since 2007, £1.9 billion of EU funds has led to a total investment of over £3.7 billion in the Welsh economy - helping to create 6,000 new enterprises and nearly 20,000 jobs.
- They have also helped 50,000 people across the whole of Wales into work and nearly 140,000 to gain qualifications.
- Support from Europe is also helping us to deliver our Modern Apprenticeship scheme and Jobs Growth Wales Programme, which are helping people to improve their career prospects and find jobs. So far, the Jobs Growth Wales Programme has created 8,349 job opportunities with 6,352 young people filling these opportunities.

Trade and investment

- It is not just funding that benefits Wales – Europe is our largest trading partner and over 600 firms across the country export goods and services worth around £5bn every year to other EU countries.
- There are around 150,000 jobs in Wales depending on that trade. In addition, more than 450 firms from other Member States have bases in Wales, providing more than 50,000 jobs.
- Our membership of the EU is also a major attraction for companies from across the world looking to invest in Wales as it provides them with access to the EU's Single Market of over 500 million consumers and existing inward investors have cited this as a major factor in their decision to invest here.
- Wales attracted over £1bn in inward investment projects in 2012 – a massive rise on the previous year, creating and safeguarding 7,500 jobs in Wales. If the UK were to leave the EU, it would be naive to believe that access to these markets would

remain. At a stroke, investors would lose a major incentive to come to Wales and these companies could go elsewhere.

Migration

- People from other EU countries make up about four percent of the UK population (2.3m) and there are around 2.2m British people living in other EU countries.
- A report commissioned by the UK Government this year found that EU immigrants claim far fewer benefits than UK nationals and other migrant groups. In fact, they make up just four percent of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Labour's policy is to stop unscrupulous firms exploiting cheap foreign labour by:
 - Increasing fines for firms that breach minimum wage legislation
 - Banning recruitment agencies from having a policy of hiring only foreign workers.

UKIP

Where does UKIP stand on key issues?

- Taxation -They propose a flat rate 31% income tax which would mean billionaire bankers paying the same rate of contribution as anyone earning £11,000 or over.
- Law and order - The relaxation of drink-drive laws for rural areas and bans on hunting and smoking in public places to be reversed.
- Protection for workers - UKIP support attacking health and safety laws and believe that maternity pay and other key employment rights should be reduced.

What do UKIP do in the European Parliament?

UKIP MEPs' attendance at the European Parliament is amongst the lowest of all parties. Four of them have voting attendance of less than 60% and two of them less than 50%.

When UKIP MEPs do manage to make it to the European Parliament, in recent months they have:

- Opposed every single measure to fight tax evasion and tax fraud and fought restrictions on bankers' bonuses.
- Voted against proposals that improve safety, protection and higher standards of employment rights for workers, particularly those that benefit women.

Contact:

Derek Vaughan MEP office contact details for any casework and queries:

4th Floor, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9SD

Tel: 029 20 227660

E-mail: contact@derekvaughanmep.org.uk