

LONDON4EUROPE – CAMPAIGNERS’ BRIEF: THE EU IS DEMOCRATIC AND SUBJECT TO THE RULE OF LAW



European Movement
United Kingdom

Points to Make

- The EU is a democracy of nation states and of citizens.
- European Council (Prime Ministers of member states) sets general strategic direction and priorities.
- EU laws are made by the people we elect: the directly elected Parliament and the Council of Ministers (representatives of EU Governments who deal with the subject under discussion: agriculture, transport &c).
- The President of the EU Commission needs to win a vote of the Parliament to be appointed.
- The Commission as a whole needs approval of the Parliament.
- Decisions of the EU institutions may be challenged in national and European courts of justice

Defensives

[We can't get rid of the European Commission.] MEPs can throw the Commission out – just as MPs can pass a vote of no-confidence.

[EU Parliament toothless as it may not initiate legislation.] European Parliament may amend laws and is in constant dialogue with Commission about future legislation. President-designate von der Leyen has said she will bring forward a draft law in response to any Parliamentary resolution. At Westminster, no backbench MP's bill gets anywhere without government backing to make time available for debate; Crown right of financial initiative means that only the Government may propose spending money.

[I didn't elect the government of France but they still legislate for me] We don't have a vote in Yorkshire either but their MPs sit in Westminster. All EU countries share our values. The EU is not "they" it is a bigger "we".

[EU laws made by unelected bureaucrats] Commission proposes laws but they have to be passed by the directly elected Parliament and the Council of Ministers (governments of member states).

[I wish to live under laws made by people I elect] We elect European Parliament. What EU laws do you wish to get rid of? Why do you think that Westminster would pass a better law?

[In 2019 EU did not follow the lead candidate process where the parties campaign in the elections for a candidate for Commission President; top jobs were handed out by a stitch-up by leading nations.] 2019 Parliamentary election did not lead to a clear result. As after an inconclusive national election a compromise leader needs to be found. President of Commission was approved by majority vote of MEPs – like a confidence vote in Westminster.

[EU is undemocratic: in UK we elect the government] We elect MPs. The party with most MP gets the chance to form a government. The Government needs to obtain a vote that shows it has the confidence of the House of Commons. In the EU, the President of the Commission and the Commission as a whole have to obtain approval by the Parliament. Looks similar to me.

[EU undemocratic because it censures Hungary & Poland.] EU is a club with rules. Countries may be censured if they fall away from common European standards.

[EU is remote and not interested in individual people.] Government is inherently remote. EU has to be very open in its processes because of the need to bring 28 countries on board. If UK press do not bring serious stories about EU that is hardly the EU's fault.

[EU is undemocratic because it always rejects referenda with which it disagrees (Greece).] A referendum is binding on the polity that holds it. The Greek bailout referendum bound the Greek government, but not anyone else.

[EU is undemocratic because it always insists countries re-run referenda with which it disagrees.] Normally when a country decides something in an EU-related referendum that is the end of it. Sometimes the Government negotiates changes to a proposed treaty and the Government decides the country should have a fresh vote on the revised treaty; that happened in Ireland and Holland.

Background

The view that the EU is undemocratic is partly down to misinformation, especially the belief that the unelected Commission makes laws.

But it is also down to a view that a Parliament that draws members from other EU countries is not legitimate in the way that Westminster that draws MPs from all over the UK is. So it is important to discuss our common European heritage.

Further information

London4Europe has published an [Indexed list of Remain blogs](#).