

Things you need to know about the **European Union**

Including ...

Workers' Rights

Fighting terrorism

Human Rights

Food security and
quality

Migration

What does the EU
actually cost us?

Consumer rights

Regional
development

The Economy

Norway and
Switzerland



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A debate is underway about the role of Britain in Europe and I am sure we all want that debate to be an informed one. Unfortunately, so much of what is written about the

European Union (EU) has been scandalised, distorted and twisted.

However, the EU is neither totally flawed nor totally perfect. It gets some things right and some things wrong, like every level of government. The laws the EU makes are decided on by politicians, MEPs and government ministers. We have different views and you may agree with some of the things we do and not with others.

EU laws regulate matters which go beyond national borders, for example, air quality, over-fishing in our shared seas and food safety as so much of our food is imported. They tackle criminals who flee across borders, improve co-operation on medicines regulation and, crucially at the current time, they curb the excesses of the banks by capping bonuses.

One of the most important elements is that the EU laws protect us in the workplace by setting minimum rights for everyone. This booklet looks at just some of the most important questions about the EU. I hope you find it useful.

About Linda McAvan...

- Linda was born and raised in Bradford. She currently lives in Sheffield with her husband Paul.
- She leads for the Socialists & Democrats Group (the 2nd largest group in the Parliament) on the Committee for the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety coordinating the other S&D MEPs.
- In 2010, she was Parliament's 'Rapporteur' or lead MEP on pharmacovigilance (medicines safety).
- She has also worked on environmental legislation, climate change, food labelling laws and improved regulation of medical implants, following the recent PIP breast implant failures.
- Currently, Linda is leading for the whole of the European Parliament on new tobacco laws which have been developed in an attempt to make smoking as unattractive as possible to young people.
- Back in the region, Linda is working hard to secure the next round of EU funding for economic regeneration in our area.

Your Rights at Work

How does the EU protect your rights in the workplace?

The European Union's 'Working Time Directive' and the 'Social Chapter' guarantee your rights at work.

These include:

- A rest period every six hours
- No one to be forced to work more than 48 hours across 7 days
- At least 20 days paid leave per annum plus bank holidays
- Protection for agency workers
- Equal rights and access to benefits for part-time workers

The Conservatives claim that these rights place an 'ever increasing regulatory burden on British businesses'. They are looking to reduce this type of regulation by half, but haven't specified which rights would go.

British Prime Minister David Cameron upsets Doctors over the Working Time Directive

In a speech earlier this year, David upset junior doctors with his notion that the working hours of doctors should not be set by the European Union.

David Cameron: 'It is neither right nor necessary to claim that the integrity of the single market, or full membership of the European Union requires the working hours of British hospital doctors to be set in Brussels irrespective of the views of British parliamentarians and practitioners.'

Chair of the British Medical Association's Junior Doctor's Committee: 'I resent Cameron knocking the European Working Time Directive. Not working 100-hour-weeks has probably saved lives.'

Europe: working for women

Maternity rights: EU law has reduced from 2 years to 26 weeks the length of time a woman has to work for the same employer before she is entitled to maternity rights.

Equal pay for women: The EU ensures discrimination on grounds of gender is eliminated, guaranteeing women equal pay for equal work.

Returning to work: A job of the same status and pay must be kept open for a woman on maternity leave. Becoming pregnant no longer means losing your job.

The Economy

How is the EU tackling the economic crisis?

The collapse of American banking giant Lehman brothers in 2008 triggered a global recession which has forced Europe to get tough on banking, and work harder to tackle unemployment.

EXAMPLE 1 Cap on Bankers' Bonus

The European Union has agreed to a bankers' bonus cap at a 1:1 annual salary to bonus ratio. It is hoped this will put an end to the risk-taking culture that has led to bailouts funded by the taxpayer in the past.

EXAMPLE 2 European Youth Guarantee

The European Youth Guarantee is an EU initiative which asks all member states to guarantee young people a job, further education or work-focused training, four months (at the latest) after becoming unemployed or leaving education.

FACTS

- The US makes up just 10% of the UK's export trade
- The UK's total trade with Belgium alone is greater than our trade with commonwealth countries Australia, Canada and India combined
- EU member states make up 7 of the UK's top 10 trading partners
- Over 50% of the UK's export trade is with the EU

How does Britain compare with other EU countries?

- UK unemployment is currently at 7.7%.
- Eight EU countries have lower unemployment rates than the UK, and 5 of those are Eurozone countries.
- In 2012, the UK economy grew by 0.3%. We were outgrown by 11 EU countries, and 6 of those were Eurozone countries.

(Statistics taken from Eurostat)



Why can't we be like Norway?

Norway is a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) but not the European Union. This means that in order to be a part of the single market they have to adopt EU laws, without having any say in how they are made.

Norway and the EU

Norway contributes about 240 million euros (£205 million) annually to the EU; EU law constitutes one-third of Norway's legislation.

Norway has no Members of European Parliament and is not represented at the Commission or the European Council. They have no say in the making of the laws which affect them.

Quotes

David Cameron on Norway: ... I have always been very clear that it is in our national interest as a trading nation to be in the single market, but not like Norway, just accept all the rules of the single market, pay for the privilege of being part of it and be governed by fax from Brussels.'

Nikolai Astrup, Norwegian Conservative MP: If you want to run Europe, you must be in Europe. If you want to be run by Europe, feel free to join Norway in the European Economic Area.'



Why can't we be like Switzerland?

Switzerland isn't a member of the EU or the EEA, and has been forced to negotiate bilateral agreements with every member of the EU in order to maintain trade relations.

Switzerland and the EU

Since 1992, Switzerland has had to negotiate more than 100 separate agreements with the EU, including signing up to the free movement of people.

The EU has begun to reject Switzerland's latest appeals for bilateral deals, restricting Switzerland's role in the European economy and impeding its political influence.

If the UK were to withdraw from the EU and the EEA, we would have to begin negotiating with 28 different countries in the hope of trading with our closest neighbours after our exit.

Quotes

David Cameron on Switzerland: Who are going to be the winning nations for the 21st century? If your vision of Britain was that we should just withdraw and become a sort of greater Switzerland, I think that would be a complete denial of our national interests.'

Crime and Terrorism

How can the EU help countries work together to tackle crime and terrorism?

Europe has a co-ordinated approach to law enforcement across the member states in order to fight cross border crime and prevent terrorism.

EXAMPLE 1 Europol

Europol were the only force capable of investigating horsemeat fraud due to the cross border nature of the problem.

Even British Tory Minister Owen Patterson said: 'Europol is the right organisation to co-ordinate efforts to uncover all wrongdoing and bring criminals to justice, wherever they may be.'

EXAMPLE 2 European Arrest Warrant

Having fled the failed London bombings on 21st July 2005, terrorist Osman Hussain was arrested in Rome and extradited back to the UK under a European Arrest Warrant.

Hussian was only returned with such speed as a result of the European Arrest Warrant. He stood trial in the UK for attempted murder and was sentenced to life imprisonment to serve a minimum of 40 years.

Facts

European countries made 6,760 extradition requests to Britain in 2011.

In the same 12 months, the UK made 205 requests for suspects wanted for crimes here in the UK.

It is estimated that more than 300 paedophiles, murderers and rapists have been returned to Britain as a result of the EAW to stand trial since it began in 2004.



Consumer Rights

How does the European Union protect my consumer rights?

Co-operation between the members of the European Union has allowed for increased consumer protection when moving across Europe

EXAMPLE 1 Cheaper calls, texts and data on your mobile

The EU has negotiated a limit on what mobile phone operators can charge you when using your phone in another EU country.

- Maximum charges were introduced from 1st July 2012 and will continue to decrease until 2014.
- Operators must also text you when you cross the border into another EU country to let you know the price you will be paying for calls, texts and data.

Comparison of international call charges, inside and outside Europe:

	Charges set by EU as of 1st July 2013 (prices ex-VAT)	Leading operators' outside Euro rates
Outgoing calls (per minute)	24 cents	£1.10
Incoming calls (per minute)	7 cents	90p
Outgoing SMS texts	8 cents	40p
Data (per MB)	45 cents	£6.00

EXAMPLE 2 Passenger rights and compensation

The EU has ensured that passengers delayed on flights or trains may now be entitled to a refund, refreshments and compensation.

- Depending on the flight distance and length of delay, if you are flying either to or from an EU country, the airline has to offer you refreshments, and in some instances accommodation.
- If you are delayed by longer than 3 hours, EU regulation states that you are entitled to compensation providing the delay was not due to extraordinary circumstances.
- Travellers with reduced mobility getting onto a plane, boat, train or bus have the same rights to access as everyone else and are entitled to free assistance. Users should call to arrange this in advance.

Free Movement

How does the free movement of people affect us?

The single market is based on the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital. The free movement of people to study, work, travel and retire across Europe is a key benefit of the European Union.

FACTS

- A total 711,151 UK citizens were living in other EU countries in 2011.
- From June 2011 to June 2012, 157,000 EU citizens and 282,000 non-EU citizens migrated to the UK.
- There are 390,880 British citizens living in Spain, and 71,000 Spanish citizens live in the UK.
- Foreign students are worth £8 billion a year to our economy.
- Every country in the world has to manage migration, even those outside the EU. In 2010, the estimated number of foreign born people totalled nearly 40 million in America. Unlike the UK, America has not entered into any 'Free Movement' agreements, yet it is home to millions of migrants.
- According to figures from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), of the roughly 1.8 million people from elsewhere in the EU of working age, about 90,000 are claiming an "out of work benefit", or about 5%. That compares with about 13% for nationals.

Statistics from Eurostat and the Office of National Statistics

What would Labour do about immigration?

- Manage migration to and from the UK so that it's fair for all.
- Ensure those working in the public sector, in a public facing role can speak English.
- Prevent employers avoiding minimum wages by offering migrants sub-standard accommodation, as part of their wage.
- Put a stop to agencies who only recruit foreign staff, keeping jobs from local people.
- Prosecute gangmasters and employers who pay migrants less than minimum wage, keeping UK citizens out of a job and exploiting the free movement of people.
- Have the maximum transitional controls for any future countries joining the EU.

Investing in our region

How much does the EU invest in jobs and growth in our region?

The EU has invested millions of Euros into our region through 27 different funding programs. Here are details of just the Regional Development Fund.

Objective One and Objective Two Programmes (2000-2006) EU funding from the Objective One programme invested £820 million from Europe with more than 250 organisations, supporting over 650 projects in South Yorkshire.

Objective Two funding invested £365 million from the EU across the rest of the region.

ERDF Programme (2007-2013) The latest European Regional Development Fund programme will have invested £471 million across our region by the end of this year.

Local authorities, MPs and MEPs are now working together to secure funding for the next 6-year program.

Where has the money been spent? Here are just some of the projects...

NORTH YORKSHIRE

- Bio-renewables development centre – University of York
- Hambleton food grade managed workspace in Leeming Bar
- Next Generation North Yorkshire project
- Science City York specialist services
- WasteValor project – University of York
- Full-time courses at Craven College

WEST YORKSHIRE

- Business Growth Calderdale
- Huddersfield Textile Centre of Excellence
- Energy efficiency in deprived housing project – Kirklees
- University of Bradford Sustainability Centre
- University of Leeds Utilising Synergies in Nano-Manufacturing to Accelerate Innovation project
- Hebden Bridge Creative Quarter

EAST YORKS & NORTH LINCS

- Capitol Business Park – Goole
- Environmental Technologies Centre – East Riding College
- The Beacon Business Park – Hull
- Change Plus recruitment and retention program for those with barriers to work – North East Lincolnshire.
- Freeman Street Business Hub – Grimsby
- Marfleet Environmental Industries Park

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

- Barnsley College Think Low Carbon Centre
- Doncaster Civic and Cultural Quarter
- University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Institute
- Rotherham Central Railway Station redevelopment
- Sheffield 'Heart of the City' project
- Barnsley Interchange

The Cost of the EU

What does the EU cost us and what do we get back?

We often hear different amounts about how much the EU costs the UK. Here are the facts about what it costs us and what we get back.

The Figures

The UK's national contribution to the EU in 2011 was 11.3 billion Euros.

The UK gets back 9.9 billion directly from the EU, 6.6 billion in development and agriculture and 3.6 billion back in the rebate.

The cost of being in the EU is 0.64% of our GDP

Statistics from Eurostat

It is estimated that 3,445,000 jobs in the UK depend upon exports to the EU.

In 2011 the estimated total UK exports to the EU were worth £158.3 billion.

Is the EU good or bad for business?

We are clear that we want the UK to remain an active participant in the single market, helping to write the rules and push for greater trade and economic growth.'

British Bankers Association

It's essential we stay at the table to bang the drum for businesses and defend our national interest, particularly protecting our world-class financial services industry to maintain our competitiveness internationally.'

CBI's Director-general, John Cridland

Auditing the EU's accounts

MEPs are regularly asked about the EU's accounts which auditors failed to sign off this year due to an error rate of 3.9%. To break this down, 86% of these errors occur once allocations for projects are passed back into the control of national governments. It is worth noting that a recent investigation by the UK's House of Lords into the EU audit, found that there was no evidence of corruption at the European Commission, only varying standards and occasionally incomplete paperwork at a national level. To put auditing budgets of this size into context, the UK's Department for Work and Pensions' accounts have not been signed off for the past 24 years for similar reasons.

Human Rights

Why is the European Court of Human Rights not a part of the EU?

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is an institution that pre-dates the European Union and was established following the atrocities of the Second World War.

FACT 1

The European Court of Human Rights is not an EU institution.

The ECHR actually sits in judgement on cases that relate to the European Convention on Human Rights, which was drafted by a body called the Council of Europe set up after the Second World War. MEPs are therefore not involved in any of the decisions concerning the European Court of Human Rights. Britain is one of 47 member states of the Council of Europe (there are 28 member states in the EU) and has implemented the rights granted by the Convention in UK law under the UK Human Rights Act.

FACT 2

The European Court of Human Rights is a final appeals court and does not 'bypass' the UK legal system.

The ECHR acts as a final appeals court for human rights cases in situations where all possible avenues available under the UK legal system have been exhausted.

FACT 3

The European Convention on Human Rights was not 'imposed' on Britain - it was Winston Churchill's idea.

The UK proposed the creation of the European Convention on Human Rights, which was adopted in 1950 so that the atrocities of the second world war could not be repeated. The Convention needed a court able to rule on the issues covered by the Convention. Even the court building was designed by a British architect.



Do the papers tell the truth about the EU?

EU PLOT TO SCRAP BRITAIN

(Daily Express,
4th May 2012)

This was in response to the suggestion that the high-powered jobs of President of the European Council, and President of the European Commission, should be merged. Needless to say, the story was very vague in explaining just how this job change would lead to a 'scrapping' of Britain. The EU as an institution simply does not have the power to 'scrap' member states. The article didn't quote anyone from the Commission nor did it provide any evidence to support its claim.

EU SAYS WATER IS NOT HEALTHY

(Daily Express,
18th November 2011)

The European Food Safety Authority considered the potential health benefits claimed by a number of products. It concluded that bottled water could not make claims that drinking regularly could protect drinkers from dehydration, rather that it would help to keep to body hydrated. It never said that water wasn't healthy it only suggested bottled water could not boast to be better for the body than it is. (Or better than non-bottled water for that matter...)

EUROPE'S WAR ON BRITISH JUSTICE

(Daily Mail,
12th January 2012)

The Daily Mail ran the story that the UK was losing 3 out of 4 cases that it took to the European Court of Human rights. The story failed to outline the difference between the European Court of Human Rights and the EU. It was also found that they were only counting final verdicts, not all the cases thrown out by the ECHR before they got to trial. This made rulings against the UK more like 1 in 50 than 3 out of 4.

EU WANTS TO MERGE UK WITH FRANCE

(Daily Express,
4th May 2011)

Since 1995, a program has been running to establish links between councils in the UK and their counterparts in France. The EU's Commissioner for Regional Policy wrote to the Daily Express telling them that their story was 'absurd' and that the links were aimed at 'things like boosting jobs and looking after the environment'. The EU simply does not have the power to merge Nation States.

