



Busting the Brexit Myths



The Leave campaigns are already peddling their lies stirring up support for a no deal Brexit. Remain campaigners need to be able to counter these myths and promote the positives of staying in the EU.

One of the saddest aspects of the Leave / remain debate is the lengths to which some Leave campaigners will go in pursuit of their goal. For them it's an existential battle where winning is all important, whatever the costs. The 'ends justifies the means' attitude has seen the Leave campaigns fined and referred to the police for breaking electoral law and fined for breaking data protection laws. Many claims made in the 2016 referendum have been thoroughly debunked (Eg. the £350m bus lie, the EU Army lie and the Turkey Accession lie in particular) however many new claims and outright lies are still being perpetrated and we see these daily on our Facebook pages and in conversation with Leavers on our street stalls. This page aims to arm you, our followers and campaigners, with accurate rebuttals.

Brexit is the Will of The People

Most Leave voters don't like the idea of a 2nd referendum or "People's Vote", they say it's an affront to democracy to even campaign for one. Every clear thinking person can see the immediate problem with this one. How, surely, can having more democracy be undemocratic?

It is the very essence of democracy for the people to be able to campaign and argue for whatever they want. Democracy is a continuous process and doesn't end with any one vote. As Nigel Farage said before the referendum, a 48:52 victory in favour of Remain would be 'unfinished business'. It's a bit rich that people like him claim we are undermining democracy. In fact, it's the Leave campaigns that won the 2016 referendum undemocratically.

For a democracy to function, the people must be sufficiently well informed and enabled to make an educated decision. The campaigning and voting process must be free and fair, and subject to a level playing field of rules and regulations governing spending and honesty, among other things. It is now known to a criminal standard of proof that both Vote Leave and Leave.EU broke electoral law, overspending by up to 10%. Both campaigns also broke data protection legislation. Both campaigns have been fined and referred to various police forces for their crimes. Arron Banks is being prosecuted because he can't explain where his £8m of funding came from. Boris Johnson is being prosecuted for the £350m bus claim. For more on the lies, lawbreaking and hypocrisy of the Leave campaigns visit brexposed.uk.

Opinion polls since the 2016 referendum, especially in the last year or so, show increasingly that remain has overtaken Leave, currently (March 2019) by a 10 point lead – that says a lot about where real will of the people is going.

We survived before, we'll survive again

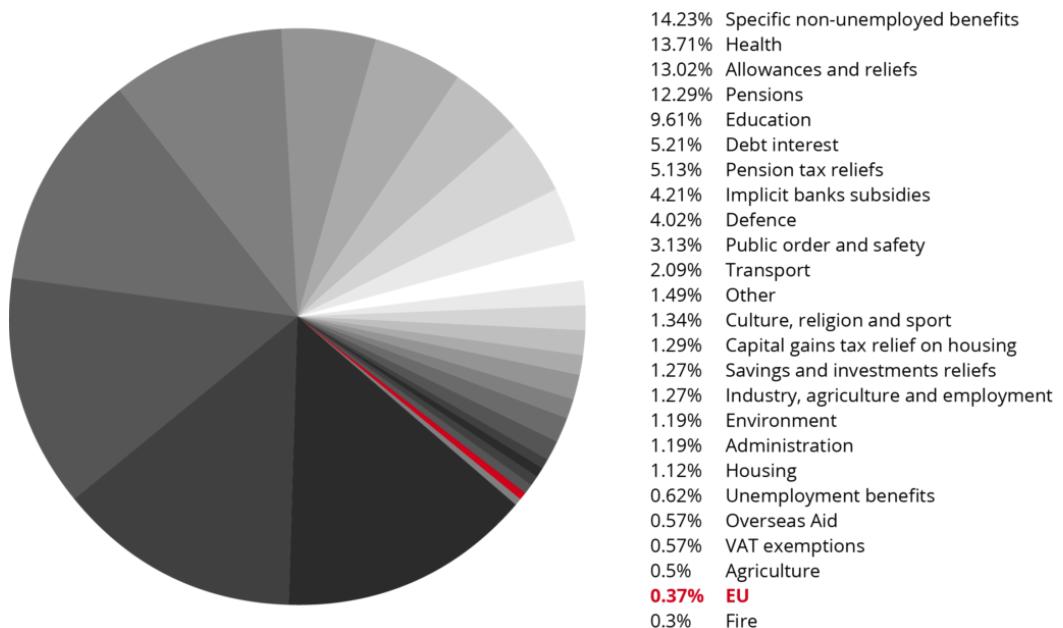
Who wants to simply survive when we can thrive?

The EU was conceived as a peace project in the 1940s following the 2nd world war and has provided stability and growth for its members ever since. Today's connected world means that countries will collaborate more, and be more connected than ever – this helps in numerous ways, trade being one of them of course, but also it is the only way we'll combat terrorism, climate change, international crime, etc. Playing a strong part in the EU has been hugely beneficial to the UK, not only financially. We have led the world on climate change and have played a key part in global politics.

'Survival' is inward looking – we must work together so that everyone thrives.

The EU is the largest and most successful trading block in the world with over 500m people in 28 countries and an economy worth \$17 trillion. 45% of our exports, and 55% of our imports are with the EU 27 alone, with a similar amount traded through countries that have trade deals with the EU. We have trade deals with 67 countries, with negotiations ongoing with a further 22. Our economies are so entwined that leaving is very complicated and time consuming. Sure, we could 'survive' without it. But who wants to merely survive? The majority of the country want to be more prosperous and have better access to good quality public services. The EU is the best way of maintaining the income required to provide good public services, while our collaboration on medicines, climate change, crime, etc. means it's greater efficiencies in many everyday government functions. Leaving the EU means greater UK bureaucracy, higher costs, lower standards.

It's important to note that for the average person, membership of the EU costs less than a TV licence. See the chart below:



WTO is easy – just walk away!

If only it were that simple. The EU's relationship with the UK runs much deeper than simply trade. WTO rules cover trade only. The 'Four Freedoms' of free trade in goods, free trade in services, free movement of money and of people means there are thousands of laws and regulations that we have willingly signed up to that will need to be carefully unpicked to ensure the smooth running of our economy and to ensure that key services can be maintained. For example the laws, regulations and compliance requirements on aviation, international taxation, food standards, medicines, nuclear materials, workers rights, international payments, insurance, and many many more would end over night should we leave the EU with no deal or transition agreement.

Not only this, the UK's treaties with the EU and 3rd countries through the EU would be broken. That means breaking international law and we could find ourselves in the international courts.

Some people believe we would not have to pay the EU 'divorce payment', however this is not the case. We signed up to certain obligations. There are many ongoing EU projects that we contribute to through our EU membership, we have UK citizens who need to collect pensions, etc. These need to be paid for and are due whether we leave the EU with or without a deal.

Leaving the EU without a deal on 'WTO rules' would mean we are the only country in the world that operates on WTO terms alone. It is worth remembering that WTO is the fall-back position, the 'backstop' that means we can all trade together. It is the worst trading position possible, which is why countries make bilateral trade deals, or form trading blocks like the EU.

On WTO terms we are at the mercy of 164 countries that must all agree to our tariff and quota schedules. As we know, negotiating with 27 countries is hard enough when we're not in a strong position. we would be at the mercy of any country with a grudge. And we've already had 20 countries line up against our schedules – including America (one of the Brexiters first choices for a trade deal.)

In reality, on a WTO exit we would be in the worst possible situation. We would be desperate for ANY deal we could get, so would have to give up many of the quality standards we currently take for granted. Trade deals often come with other hidden costs. For example, the USA has insisted that we take their sub standard meat and GM crops, and demands access to our health care system, effectively opening up the NHS to big money interests in the US (the NHS is the largest single drugs market in the world.) India has insisted they get preferential visa-free travel and working rights in the UK. The US has insisted that if we do a deal with them we can't then do any deals with China.

Contrast this mayhem with our current situation. Through the EU we have full free trade in goods and services with 27 countries. We have further free trade agreements with 40 other countries. The EU is currently in active negotiation with a further 22 countries. Of the top 30 countries in the world for GDP the EU has trade agreements, or is in active negotiation with, with 27 of them.

Leaving on WTO terms would be a massive mistake, there was no mandate for it via the 2016 referendum (it wasn't even considered an option).

See the charts below: The Red colours show countries either in the EU27 or with agreed and active trade deals, orange colours show trade deals currently in active negotiation. Blue colours show countries where we have either suspended trade deals (notably the USA), or have no trade deals in place (Iran).

Global GDP

Source: 2018 figures (\$bn), IMF

1 United States	20,513,000
2 China	13,457,267
3 Japan	5,070,626
4 Germany	4,029,140
5 United Kingdom	2,808,899
6 France	2,794,696
7 India	2,689,992
8 Italy	2,086,911
9 Brazil	1,909,386
10 Canada	1,733,706
11 South Korea	1,655,608
12 Russia	1,576,488
13 Spain	1,437,047
14 Australia	1,427,767
15 Mexico	1,199,264
16 Indonesia	1,005,268
17 Netherlands	909,887
18 Saudi Arabia	769,878
19 Turkey	713,513
20 Switzerland	709,118
21 Taiwan	602,678
22 Sweden	554,659
23 Poland	549,478
24 Belgium	536,055
25 Thailand	490,120
26 Argentina	475,429
27 Austria	459,401
28 Norway	441,439
29 United Arab Emirates	432,612
30 Iran	430,082

As EU members the UK participates in over 750 international treaties, many relating to trade.

Other treaties cover non-trade issues, from air worthiness certification to drivers licenses, UK & EU citizen's rights, food safety, environmental protects, workers rights, medicine licensing, etc.

A no-deal brexit means we lose the benefits of these treaties overnight, meaning trade slows down, prices increase, automatic rights are lost.

Top 30 countries
US\$ 73,469,414m

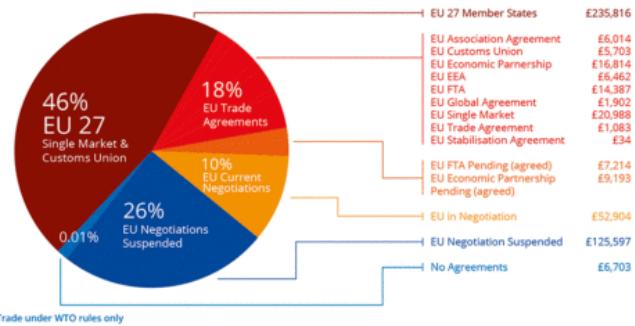
EU27 alone represent 22% of top 30 countries GDP

EU27 inc. trade deals represent 40% of the top 30

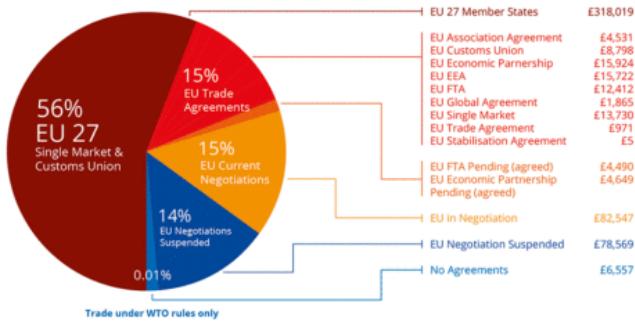
28% currently in negotiation

Combined, that would make a trading block of 68% of the top 30 countries by GDP

UK Exports 2016 by country trading status



UK Imports 2016 by country trading status



Article 24 / WTO Brexit

Pro-Brexit campaigners say even if Britain and the EU fail to agree terms for their divorce, Article 24 of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade would let them keep trading as now for up to a decade. This is another Leaver Lie. For Article 24 to come into force it would require an agreement on both sides and an agreed time frame to allow this. Because Brexiters insist that leaving on WTO terms means 'no-deal' and no 'divorce payment' there is no way that there would be sufficient good will for Article 24 to come into play.

Although there is a clause in the rules that allows for interim agreements, WTO spokesman Keith Rockwell said it also requires the two sides to provide a plan and reasonable time-frame for their deal to take shape: a distant prospect.

"This presupposes, of course, that both the UK and the EU agree on the process of negotiating a deal, whatever form that deal may take. It would also require that both parties agree to an interim deal," he said.

Trade lawyers are exasperated that Article 24 keeps resurfacing, despite their attempts to knock it down.

"It's amazing how this awful misinterpretation of Art XXIV GATT won't die, no matter how many times I point this out," Lorand Bartels, reader in international law at the University of Cambridge, tweeted in May last year.

"It's utter nonsense," former Australian trade negotiator Dmitry Grozoubinsky tweeted in December. "It relies on your being too busy to read Article XXIV of the GATT, or too confused by trade legalese to parse it."

Sources

House of commons library

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/brexit/no-deal-brexit-and-wto-article-24-explained/>

Reuters

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-wto/trade-experts-dismiss-brexiters-faith-in-obscure-wto-clause-idUKKCN1PH24V>

The EU is a German plot

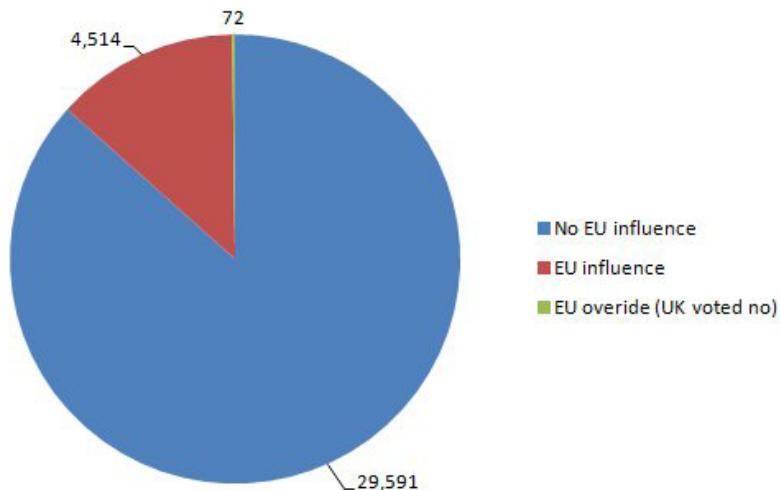
It's unbelievable that this comes up in our conversations on the street stalls. What is it about the British that we can't let go of the war? A bit of 'Fawlty Towers' humour can be enjoyed in the context of post-war British comedy, but 40 years on from Basil Fawlty, and 74 years on from WW2, this view is embarrassingly out of touch and smacks of the very racism and xenophobia we fought against in the war.

The EU was conceived as a peace project and chief among its advocates was Winston Churchill. In his view, closer integration of Europe as the only way to keeping its feuding countries from killing each other. Since then the EU has grown to become the largest and most successful trading bloc in the world. Europe has moved on, what is it about some Brits that they can't?...

We're fed up with all the rules

There is a type of Brexiter who is motivated not by xenophobia, or empire nostalgia, or buccaneering trade fantasies, but instead by "all them EU rules". Sadly they can rarely name a single one, the reason being there are hardly any! The commons library looked at how many UK laws were influenced by EU laws and found 4,514 out of 34,105. And of those 4,514 only 72 were laws we didn't vote for.

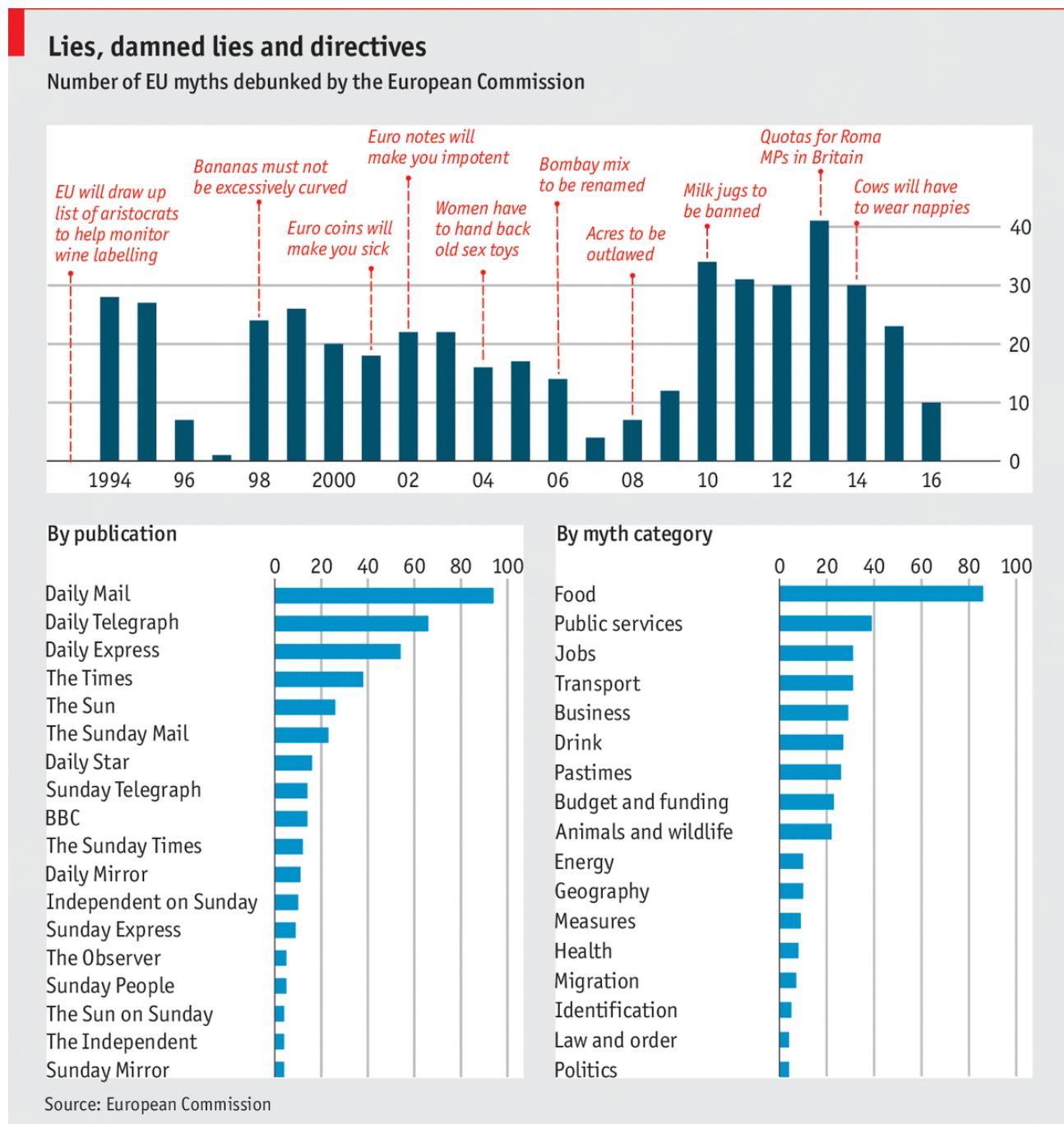
No. of Laws 1996-2014



The crazy thing is that it is very hard to find any rules that most people disagree with. Here are some examples (for the complete list read this Twitter thread):

- Food labels should say if Aspartame is present.
- Ban on livestock growth-boosters with hormonal, thyrostatic or beta-agonist effects (carcinogenic residue in meat).
- Safety advisers dealing with transport of dangerous goods on public roads etc must be properly trained and regulated.
- Conservation measures to preserve North Atlantic fish stocks.
- Additives to mineral water must be safe and labels must be honest (eg "spring water" has to come from an actual spring)
- Posted workers must be given the same pay and conditions as local workers.
- A consistent approach to data collection on goods traded between member states?
- Tightening up on livestock health checks, paperwork and traceability.

It's very easy however to find the source of this particular myth. Just take a look through any one of our right-leaning tabloids. The London School of Economics took the EU's now famous list of EU Myths (link here) and created a chart showing the biggest offenders. Not many surprises here as to who's the worst. See below chart:



The Lisbon Treaty says...

Since late 2018 there's been a cut and paste list of spurious claims about the Lisbon Treaty doing the rounds on social media, apparently it first surfaced on a Russian 'reddit' account. It won't have missed your attention that the official Leave campaigns Leave.EU and Leave Means Leave have not promoted this list, nor has it been the subject of news or TV debate, despite its inflammatory claims. This is because it's all false. An outright lie.

A complete rebuttal can be found here (<https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1087258784001654784.html>). However, a few points of immediate interest:

- First, notice that there's no link to the Scary Lisbon Treaty 2020, or quotes from the text.
- The actual Lisbon treaty was signed in 2007 and came into force in 2009.
- There have been no major amendments since.
- It makes no reference to "2020" or "2022".
- UK has an opt out from the single currency.
- Abstentions and vetoes aren't abolished.
- As well as the single currency opt out, the UK has opt outs from Schengen, justice and home affairs laws.

Conclusion: Lisbon 2022 is a leaver lie. We have always had a veto. If we remain in the EU nothing will change from what we previously had.

I just got through reading the Lisbon treaty. OMG!!!!!!

WHY IS NOBODY TALKING ABOUT THE LISBON TREATY, THE TREATY THAT COMES INTO FORCE 2020, ITS WORSE THAN THE SO CALLED DEAL, IF 99% OF THE BRITISH THINK TERESA MAYS DEAL IS BAD, JUST LOOK AT THE LISBON TREATY, PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW, LEAVERS AND REMAIN

.. "What will actually happen if we stay in the EU" is a question no remainier will ever answer but here it is warts and all.

Check it out if you wish —>>

1: The UK along with all existing members of the EU lose their abstention veto in 2020 as laid down in the Lisbon Treaty when the system changes to that of majority acceptance with no abstentions or veto's being allowed.

2: All member nations will become states of the new federal nation of the EU by 2022 as clearly laid out in the Lisbon treaty with no exceptions or veto's.

3: All member states must adopt the Euro by 2022 and any new member state must do so within 2 years of joining the EU as laid down in the Lisbon treaty.

4: The London stock exchange will move to Frankfurt in 2020 and be integrated into the EU stock exchange resulting in a loss of 200,000 plus jobs in the UK because of the relocation. (This has already been pre-agreed and is only on a holding pattern due to the Brexit negotiations, which if Brexit does happen, the move is fully cancelled - but if not and the UK remains a member it's full steam ahead for the move.)

5: The EU Parliament and ECJ become supreme over all legislative bodies of the UK

6: The UK will adopt 100% of whatever the EU Parliament and ECJ lays down without any means of abstention or veto, negating the need for the UK to have the Lords or even the Commons as we know it today.

7: The UK will NOT be able to make its own trade deals.

8: The UK will NOT be able to set its own trade tariffs.

9: The UK will NOT be able to set its own trade quotas.

10: The UK loses control of its fishing rights

11: The UK loses control of its oil and gas rights

12: The UK loses control of its borders and enters the Schengen region by 2022 - as clearly laid down in the Lisbon treaty

13: The UK loses control of its planning legislation

14: The UK loses control of its armed forces including its nuclear deterrent

15: The UK loses full control of its taxation policy

16: The UK loses the ability to create its own laws and to implement them

17: The UK loses its standing in the Commonwealths

18: The UK loses control of any provinces or affiliated nations e.g.: Falklands, Cayman Islands, Gibraltar etc

19: The UK loses control of its judicial system

20: The UK loses control of its international policy

21: The UK loses full control of its national policy

22: The UK loses its right to call itself a nation in its own right.

23: The UK loses control of its space exploration program

24: The UK loses control of its Aviation and Sea lane jurisdiction

25: The UK loses its rebate in 2020 as laid down in the Lisbon treaty

26: The UK's contribution to the EU is set to increase by an average of 1.2bn pa and by 2.3bn pa by 2020

This is the future that the youths of today think we stole from them?

They should be on their knees thanking us for saving them from being turned into Orwellian automatons!

Forget Deals no deals its time for remainers and brexiters to unite and see what's coming before its to late. This is the whole reason they are dragging brexit out. So we can get to 2020 then we have no choices anymore.

This whole post being shared by Brexiters is entirely false

The Lisbon Treaty came into force in 2009.

The dates 2020 and 2022 are not mentioned even once in the treaty.

The Lisbon Treaty has already been in force for 10 years.

The UK will not 'lose control' of any of these in the future.

Forced to join a European Army?

This one has been going around since before 2016 and was thoroughly refuted even then. Let's be clear, some EU members are in favour of greater cooperation between various member states' armed forces. Particularly since Donald Trump has intervened on NATO they have become more vocal. However, any change to the treaties to form an EU army MUST go through a number of processes first.

It must be approved by all 28 countries leaders in the EU council. Each country has a veto. We, and others, have consistently said we'd use it to prevent the formation of an EU army.

Even if our Prime Minister approved it in the EU council, the UK people would still have to approve it by means of a referendum.

So, as you can see, there's no chance of us being bounced into an EU army. If we did join an EU army it can only be done with the express will of the British people.

EU pays companies to relocate

Cadbury moved factory to Poland 2011 with EU grant.
Ford Transit moved to Turkey 2013 with EU grant.
Jaguar Land Rover has recently agreed to build a new plant in Slovakia with EU grant, owned by Tata, the same company who have trashed our steel works and emptied the workers pension funds.
Peugeot closed its Ryton (was Rootes Group) plant and moved production to Slovakia with EU grant.
British Army's new Ajax fighting vehicles to be built in SPAIN using SWEDISH steel at the request of the EU to support jobs in Spain with EU grant, rather than Wales.
Dyson gone to Malaysia, with an EU loan.
Crown Closures, Bournemouth (Was METAL BOX), gone to Poland with EU grant, once employed 1,200.
M&S manufacturing gone to far east with EU loan.
Hornby models gone. In fact all toys and models now gone from UK along with the patents all with EU grants.
Gillette gone to eastern Europe with EU grant.
Texas Instruments Greenock gone to Germany with EU grant.
Indesit at Bodelwyddan Wales gone with EU grant.
Sekisui Alveo said production at its Merthyr Tydfil Industrial Park foam plant will relocate production to Roermond in the Netherlands, with EU funding.
Hoover Merthyr factory moved out of UK to Czech Republic and the Far East by Italian company Candy with EU backing.
ICI integration into Holland's AkzoNobel with EU bank loan and within days of the merger, several factories in the UK, were closed, eliminating 3,500 jobs.
Boots sold to Italians Stefano Pessina who have based their HQ in Switzerland to avoid tax to the tune of £80 million a year, using an EU loan for the purchase.
JDS Uniphase run by two Dutch men, bought up companies in the UK with £20 million in EU 'regeneration' grants, created a pollution nightmare and just closed it all down leaving 1,200 out of work and an environmental clean-up paid for by the UK taxpayer. They also raided the pension fund and drained it dry.
UK airports are owned by a Spanish company.
Scottish Power is owned by a Spanish company.
Most London buses are run by Spanish and German companies.
The Hinkley Point C nuclear power station to be built by French company EDF, part owned by the French government, using cheap Chinese steel that has catastrophically failed in other nuclear installations. Now EDF say the costs will be double or more and it will be very late even if it does come online.
Swindon was once our producer of rail locomotives and rolling stock. Not any more, it's Bombardier in Derby and due to their losses in the aviation market, that could see the end of the British railways manufacturing altogether even though Bombardier had EU grants to keep Derby going which they diverted to their loss-making aviation side in Canada.
39% of British invention patents have been passed to foreign companies, many of them in the EU
The Mini cars that Cameron stood in front of as an example of British engineering, are built by BMW mostly in Holland and Austria. His campaign bus was made in Germany even though we have Plaxton, Optare, Bluebird, Dennis etc., in the UK. The bicycle for the Greens was made in the far east, not by Raleigh UK but then they are probably going to move to the Netherlands too as they have said recently.
Anyone who thinks the EU is good for British industry or any other business simply hasn't paid attention to what has been systematically asset-stripped from the UK.
What about the non-existent fishing industry the EU paid to destroy, nor the farmers being paid NOT to produce food they could sell for more than they get paid to do nothing, don't even go there.
What does it cost us to be asset-stripped like this, we haven't even mentioned immigration yet, nor the risk to our security if control of our armed forces is passed to Brussels or Germany.
Find something that's gone the other way, I've looked and I just can't. If you think the EU is a good idea,
1/ You haven't read the party manifesto of The European Peoples' Party.
2/ You haven't had to deal with EU petty bureaucracy tearing your business down.
3/ You don't think it matters.

A series of claims ironically entitled "how good the EU has been for British jobs" has popped up on numerous comment boards and social networking sites, purporting to show that the EU has repeatedly paid companies to leave the UK.

The statements, made by various sources in similar terms along these lines, are not true, according to three companies on the online list contacted by InFacts. Dyson, Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and Marks & Spencer all denied they had received EU funding in the way suggested.

This issue should be put in context of European Investment Bank lending in Britain, which was worth around £6 billion last year. EIB loans fund projects like Crossrail and the Midlands Metropolitan Hospital in Birmingham. Notably, the bank lent Ford £450 million in 2010 to develop a new generation of greener vehicles in the UK.

That is on top of the £13 billion in EU structural and investment funds that we are due to receive over the current 7-year budget period. In addition, we are the second-largest recipient of EU research funds, which benefit companies like Ford, Marks & Spencer and JLR.

In addition, rather than the EU shooing companies away from the UK, our membership of the single market wins us vast sums in investment, both from businesses headquartered on the continent and international firms that want to use the UK as a springboard to access the bloc. Brexit would destroy thousands of jobs that this investment creates.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies notes foreign direct investment to the UK is worth an average £54 billion per year. It reckons Brexit would reduce this sum by between 10% and 45%.

Sources

Infacts (<https://infacts.org/eu-not-paying-uk-firms-outsource/>)

I Love The EU.co.uk (<http://ilovetheeu.co.uk/trade/no-the-eu-does-not-fund-companies-to-move-jobs-out-of-the-uk/>)

We were only joining a free trade zone

One of the most frequently repeated lies about Europe is to say that, when we joined the EU, 'we were told we were only joining a free-trade area' and 'no-one told us that it was more than that'. The history is clear, as shown below:

"Whatever the economic arguments, the House will realise that, as I have repeatedly made clear, the Government's purpose derives above all from our recognition that Europe is now faced with the opportunity of a great move forward in political unity and that we can — and indeed must — play our full part in it." – Prime Minister Harold Wilson, presenting the reasons for British membership of the EEC in 1967

And, in the run-up to the British referendum, the government's own published documents spell this out even more clearly. The White Paper of 1971 spoke of "*an ever closer union among European peoples*", an objective "*to which this country can wholeheartedly subscribe*". It said that "*what is proposed is a sharing and enlargement of individual national sovereignties in the general interest*"; "Europe united would have the means [...] which Europe divided has lost".

Most tellingly, the government of the day spelled out clearly that "*if the political implications of joining Europe are at present clearest in the economic field, it is because the Community is primarily concerned with economic policy. But it is inevitable that the scope should broaden as member countries' interests become harmonised [...] What is proposed is a sharing and an enlargement of individual national sovereignties in the general interest*".

Source

Richard Corbett (<https://www.richardcorbett.org.uk/>)

We've lost control of our borders

No, we haven't. The UK is not part of the Schengen Zone like most of mainland Europe. So we check everyone who comes through our borders. Freedom of movement of people means anyone from the EU can travel, live and work in the UK. However, they must be able to support themselves. Our government chose not to implement the '3 month rule' whereby we can send home anyone who is either unemployed or can't support themselves. The UK also chose not to implement the seven-year brake on migration from new EU member states in 2007, unlike many other EU member states.

Too many migrants draining the economy

Immigration is a complex issue, and won't be 'solved' by a blunt instrument like Brexit. First off, it's important to note that the UK is an ageing population and that numbers of younger tax payers are reducing relative to those older people who are taking out increasing amounts in pensions, social- and health-care. The interesting, and perhaps surprising, thing is that EU migration is a net benefit to the UK. In other words, they pay more in tax than they take out in benefits.

Part of the reason for this is that EU migrants are young, fit and economically active. Their education was paid in their home country, so they arrive in the UK ready to work and paying taxes. EU citizens pay over £1.18 in tax for every £1 claimed in benefits, opposed to UK nationals who pay 79p in tax for every £1 claimed. EU citizens make up 10% of registered doctors and 4% of registered nurses working in NHS, and many farm labourers and hospitality staff are EU nationals. It is true to say that if you're in hospital you're more likely to be treated by an EU migrant than have one in the bed next to you.

Since the 2016 referendum, numbers of EU immigrants have fallen, with the consequence that already understaffed hospitals and care homes are losing key doctors and nurses and finding it impossible to fill the gaps. EU migration is the lowest it's been for some time. But, and some Brexiters might find surprising (and alarming), migration from outside the EU is higher than it has been for 15 years.

The government's recent Migration Advisory Committee found that there is no impact on wages with workers who are on average pay. There was a very small impact with those on the lowest wages, but this amounts to pennies rather than pounds.

Unelected bureaucrats

The EU is every bit as democratic as the UK, and in some ways more so, but it's important to see what the differences are. Firstly, it is key to note the EU is not a party-political organisation as we have in the UK. The EU doesn't vote in one administration, and then vote in another in 5 years time. It doesn't elect MEPs on a 'manifesto' as such, it votes on them to represent our interests and to create and scrutinise laws that affect the EU as a whole. Unlike elections in the UK, elections for MEPs are done on a proportional representation basis. Our UK parliament manages the key things in the UK like defence, taxation, spending, etc. Because most EU laws must be ratified by all member states, it is impossible for any one country's interests to override the interests of all.

So, how does it work?

European Council

This is the supreme political authority, giving impetus and direction to policy-making. The European Council is made up of heads of state and government, all directly democratically elected by their own people (only democracies can join the EU). The European Council also elects the President of the European Commission.

Council of the European Union (Council of the EU)

The Council of the European Union comprises ministers from member states, different ones according to policy area (e.g. agriculture, environment, transport, etc.). Decisions are made by qualified majority or, in the case of tax, defence and foreign policy, unanimously (ie. all must agree).

European Parliament

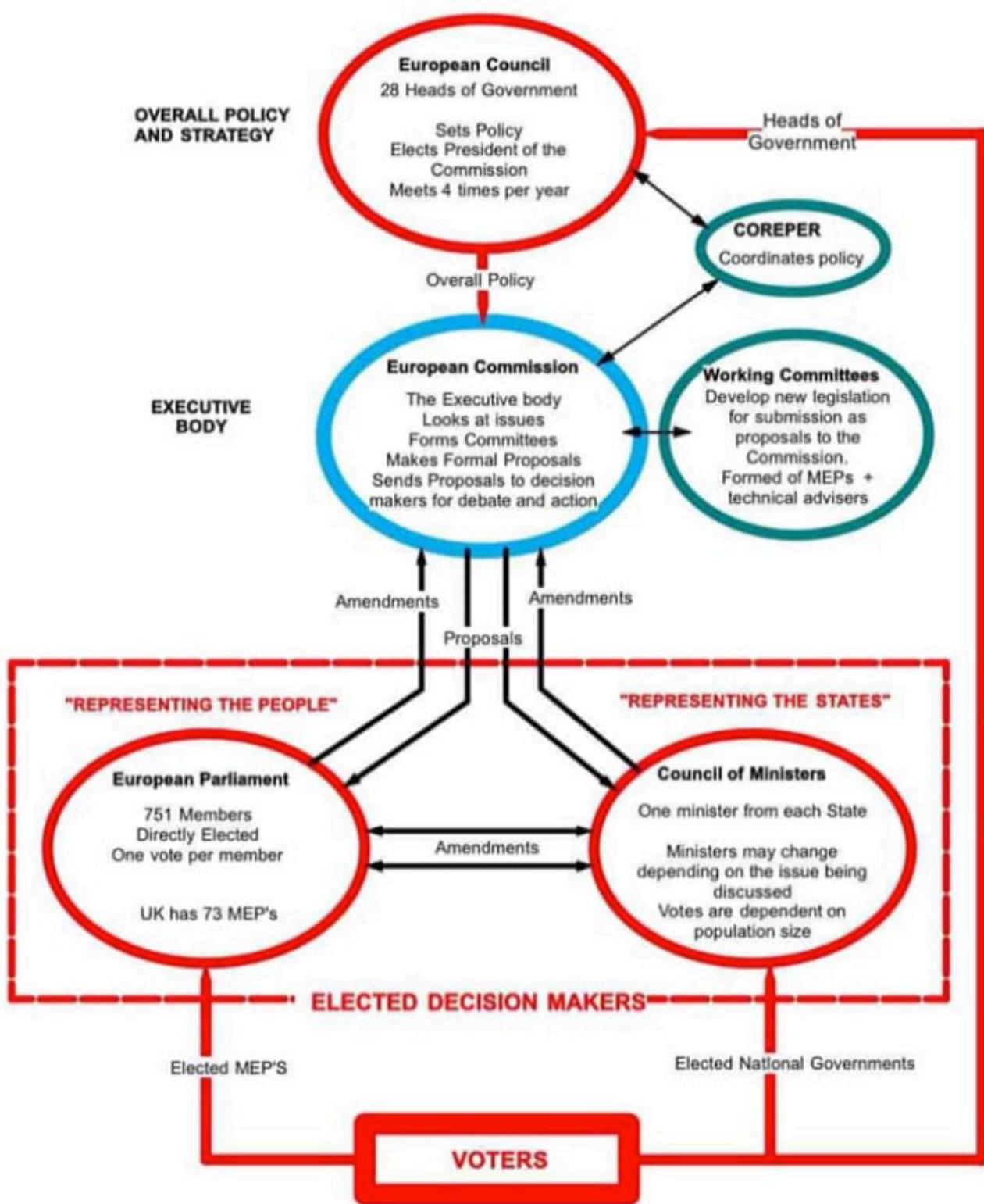
MEPs in the European Parliament are directly elected by their member states under a system of proportional representation. They scrutinise laws drafted by the Commission (in a similar committee system used by the House of Commons) as directed by the Council of the EU and then vote to approve or reject them.

European Commission

The Commission is the equivalent of the UK's civil service. Members of the Commission – the Executive body – are nominated by the governments of the member states and selected by the president of the Commission. The composition of the Commission has to be approved by the European Parliament, which also has the power to dismiss it. The role of the Commission is to draft, enforce and monitor the laws, but not to pass them – that is the job of elected MEPs.

For the vast majority of laws, consent from both the Council of the EU and the European Parliament is required before a law may be adopted. National parliaments also have a role. If one third of national parliaments oppose a draft law, this would force a vote in the European Parliament or the Council of the EU.

In brief: laws are made by the EU's directly elected governments and more often than not the European Parliament through the co-decision procedure. The EU isn't perfect and suffers in particular from low voter turnout but according to the Electoral Reform society, that democratic deficit can be tackled.



DEMOCRACY AND DECISION MAKING IN THE EU

Diagram by Richard Bird 2019



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