



HANSARD  
SOCIETY

HeadsUp Forum

[www.HeadsUp.org.uk](http://www.HeadsUp.org.uk)

## 'European Union... What is its future in your eyes?'

(February 28<sup>th</sup> – March 17<sup>th</sup> 2006)

An online platform providing young people with a secure and structured space to discuss their perspectives on the EU

The fervour and anticipation for this HeadsUp Forum started in earnest months before the debate actually started as the impressive list of key decision-makers taking part took shape.

Participating young people were passionate and highly articulate when debating the intricacies of a host of complex European issues. This debate gained momentum from a record number of relevant parliamentarians, including MEPs for the first time, from right across the political spectrum, taking part online. These included:

- **Douglas Alexander MP** - Minister of State for Europe
- **Graham Brady MP** - Shadow Minister of State for Europe
- **Nick Clegg MP\*** - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Foreign and Commonwealth office
- **Eluned Morgan MEP** - Labour MEP, Wales
- **Jean Lambert MEP\*** - Green MEP, London
- **Glenys Kinnock MEP\*** - Labour MEP, Wales
- **Tom Wise MEP** - UKIP MEP, Eastern Region
- **Robert Evans MEP** - Labour MEP, London
- **Christine Burton** - from the UK office of the European Parliament
- **Gisela Stuart MP\*** - Member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee

\* These parliamentarians provided a statement of support before the debate began and will be asked to respond to this report.

Historically on HeadsUp, any visitor wishing to follow the actual debates unfolding had to register and then subsequently login on every visit to the site. After gathering opinions on this process from the participants themselves we decided that we needed to make the debates more accessible by opening up the site. Now any visitor can view the deliberations without having to register.

From a long term perspective, the decision to open up this and future forums will benefit many young people, teachers and parliamentarians as they will now be able

to 'try before they buy' and observe the dynamic of the debates without being registered. Participants will still need to register or login to post comments.

**This EU debate** was the second Forum where young people could register themselves directly on HeadsUp, rather than go through their teacher or guardian. In a short space of time a large number of young people have registered with HeadsUp using this new direct process, instead of having to participate solely through their teacher.

**School and class involvement** during this EU debate was unfortunately kept to a minimum as some teachers informed us that their class time was being used to prepare for SAT examinations. This issue highlights the ongoing difficulty of planning future forums to fit into both the busy education and parliamentary calendars, trying to avoid exam periods and holidays.

**Both HeadsUp and young people**, who participate in the debates, continue to benefit from the involvement of such an impressive list of parliamentarians who have taken part in the last few Forums.

**Senior Ministers and MPs from all political parties now see HeadsUp as a must.** This welcome development can be seen after the HeadsUp team recently went to the very top of government, inviting the Minister of State for Europe, Douglas Alexander MP to take part in the EU debate. The Minister accepted this invitation without hesitation.

**In September 2004**, HeadsUp ran a Forum on the subject of the EU. The HeadsUp team felt that the time was now right to revisit this important issue as it remains so controversial for people across the UK and Europe as a whole.

**June 2004** saw a fresh round of elections for the European Parliament. 38.5% of UK voters used their vote - the highest level since 1979. What about young people not old enough to vote? What's the EU to them?

**In light of this information**, HeadsUp held a timely Forum to establish young people's perceptions of the EU and in which direction they thought Britain was heading.

**Students could visit the Forum** as often as they liked during the three weeks that the EU debate ran, with 35% of posts made out of school hours. Young people were given the opportunity to find out more about the issues and to discuss the impact the EU was having on society and their peers. They contributed their thoughts on whether they were for or against the Euro, plus how European they felt and whether opening up Europe was good thing. These young people were also best placed to assess the role the media has played in confusing the current situation.

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**The main goal of HeadsUp** is not only to enable peer-to-peer deliberation on hot political issues, policies or events but also to provide students with a means of informing themselves about the topic. In keeping with the youth participation agenda, a summary report outlining key findings and quotes is disseminated to interested parties, particularly parliamentarians and government, enabling young people's voices to be heard by key decision-makers.

**This EU Forum, like all previous HeadsUp debates,** was supported by structured, student-centred background notes that included an explanation of the key areas surrounding the current EU legalisation, an overview of the key issues around the EU, a comprehensive glossary and summaries of arguments for and against the EU. These and other relevant facts and figures were presented in a student-centred tone, with a deliberate effort to keep jargon to a minimum.

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**Students aged between 11 and 17 from secondary schools right across the UK** took part in this EU debate. Recent HeadsUp debates on gritty issues have led to a core group of students participating regularly in the Forums. Even more impressive is that HeadsUp still manages to attract new schools, teachers, and young people to register to take part in the debates. The participants made multiple visits over the three-week duration of the debate and there were **179 posts in total**.

**This summary report gives an account of the debate** that took place and includes key posts from students. Conclusions from the debate are to be found at the end of the report. Special care has been taken to ensure that the report is non-partisan and representative of the views expressed by the participants.

**Attempting to make a candid account of all HeadsUp debates** is a particularly difficult process, especially to summarise accurately the deliberations without taking young people's opinions out of context. We address this issue by attaching all the transcripts from the debate at the end of the longer version of the summary report.

**Both the young people who took part in this EU debate and the Hansard Society** would like to once again voice their thanks and appreciation to the decision-makers who took part in this hotly-debated Forum. We would also like to extend an invitation to interested parties, particularly parliamentarians and government, and interested NGOs to respond to the findings.

**Responses and requests** for further information should be directed to:

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**'European Union... What is its future in your eyes?'**

*Forum Summary*

## **The Euro – fan or foe?**

As the European Union is such a vast, complex area of the British political infrastructure we initially decided to split the debate into three different sections; on whether participants are in favour or against the Euro, an analysis of whether they feel they are European, and if they believe that opening up Europe is a good move. In particular, we asked young people if making it easier to travel and work in other European states and cities is a positive move, even asking which part of Europe they would like to work or travel in and why.

In addition, a week and a half into the debate an extra discussion space on law and order was started, asking for views on the fact that the EU accounts for 50% of all laws made in the UK.

HeadsUp participants were asked if the Government decided to join the Euro whether they thought it would be beneficial or harm the UK? This proved to be the most populated message space in the debate.

Inevitably, even though this discussion space was focused on the Euro, young people taking part gave due consideration to the European Union, before they then turned to the Euro. One participant gave a ringing endorsement of the EU as an important safety net across Europe:

**"I am glad an international organisation like the EU exists though. I think it important for our safety that there is something international that we are part of that can try to control countries that get out of hand (although the EU's power is limited as certain single nations are more powerful than it.) It does make me feel a little more secure and looked after. If there was no EU leaders of far away countries could do whatever they want."**

However, in contrast to this positive comment, others questioned Britain's continued role in the EU, and one used lamb imports as an example of binding EU legislation, irrespective of whether member states like it:

**"the EU does not benefit a large majority of people in Britain, so it makes u think why bother really- or is that just me?"**

**"I believe that the EU is not a good idea. The case over New Zealand lamb imports is one of many instances where EU rules have not proved beneficial (although I acknowledge that the EU rules will never suit everyone). The EU provides yet more legeslation that individual states are tied to abiding whether they like it or not. The EU, although a good idea, is perhaps more of a hinderence and a dream than a help and a reality."**

Others were clear that their main message for the decision-makers was a plea for stability and continuity of Britain in Europe, avoiding the controversial 'super power' road:

**“the EU is going well and will be comfortable for years to come if we stay as we are and do not keep looking for more and more power, and eventually trying to become a super power.”**

Focus on the EU turned to the religion of the member states, with a participant adamant that the EU is a so-called 'broad church' accommodating many diverse religions:

**“I think that the EU is not just a club for christian nations. For example, Turkey is looking to gain EU membership and a sticking point that continually arises in the case of Turkey is their human rights record. Now Turkey may not see this as a major issue and may interpret this as being rejected for not being a christian state.”**

Meanwhile, some participants attempted to understand and comment upon some of the more difficult issues concerning the EU. Insights included, why the EU will never work as a single state, and why we should avoid becoming the third country to reject the EU Constitution:

**“I think that the USE (United States of Europe) will never exist. Let alone become a power that wishes to confront the US. In the EU at the moment countries do not always see eye to eye - such as the issue concerning the British rebate or French agricultural subsidies. Each nation has its own traditions and aims; and some conflicts are rooted far back in history. In my opinion the EU will never function as a single state.”**

**“why must we accept a constitution that has failed in not one, but two hands! We should we become a third? England has always been detached from the other european, given the fact that we are an island and that we have always had strong links with America (by which I mean both Canada and the USA) Lets face it - we are not like the other european countries. We should keep our individuality, and move forward as a country- not a continent”**

Debate in this discussion space turned to one of the more controversial issues under the broad EU umbrella, namely the Euro. On the evidence of this Forum and the wider media coverage on the issue, the Euro seems to be the subject of a huge amount of confusion and outspoken opinions.

Graham Brady MP offered his critical perspective on the Euro for young people to digest and respond to. The Shadow Minister of State used his experience to highlight that the Euro works for some European nations, but not when incompatible economies are placed in the same currency zone:

**“The Euro is fine for some countries which are close to each other in economic and political terms. The problem is when you try to put very different economies into the same currency zone with the same interest rates. This is already a problem for example with Ireland (which has been booming) and Germany (which has been struggling in recent years). Britain has a different kind of economy again.”**

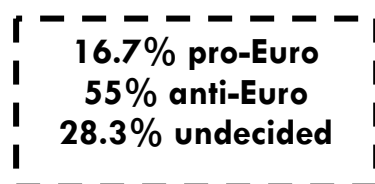
This critical analysis of the Euro was supported by another parliamentarian participating in the debate. Tom Wise MEP used Denmark as a shining example for Britain of a country whose economy has not collapsed, as predicted, after they decided against adopting the Euro:

**“There is nothing inevitable about Britain having to join the eurozone. When Denmark voted to stay out, there were predictions of doom that the Danish economy would collapse. Has it? No, of course not.”**

Douglas Alexander MP used the HeadsUp Forum to stress the Government’s position that now would not be the right time to join the Euro. If this situation changes he promised that the British people would be asked their opinion in a referendum before a decision is reached:

**“Britain will only join the euro if being a member would be good for British jobs and British prosperity and I think that is the right approach. The Treasury has set out five economic tests to judge whether the euro would be good for Britain but so far the government has come to the view that it would not be right to join now. If that changes then we would ask the people of Britain whether they want to join it in a referendum.”**

Picking up directly on these positional comments from parliamentarians, young people were split into three schools of thought about the Euro – those in favour, those against and those who remained undecided. When analysing the comments posted in this discussion, we found the following results:



Young people were not afraid to tackle the more complex parts of the single currency deliberations, with some arguing that the Euro was a means of advancing Britain in the world market. Other fans of the Euro pointed to the benefit of a shared mindset and outlook with other states who have already adopted the Euro, and another tried to assist their HeadsUp peers’ understanding of the issue by inventing a new dollar which this participant felt would isolate the trading ability of any nation:

**“I am a fan of the pound as well but i believe that in order for us to advance into a world business market, we should introduce the Euro”**

**“It would be a benefit because it would provide commonality with other members of the EU and move us closer to unity of everyone and remove the borders of countries and perhaps stop national wars. Create a clear and simple system that is followed by everyone and prevent misunderstandings.”**

**“In currency, I think being like everyone else is a pretty good idea. Being like everyone else it what makes currency useful for trading. If I decided to not be like everyone else and used the Levitian Dollar instead of the pound, I'd have a lot of trouble buying things”**

Similarly, these young people were in favour of the Euro because they felt that it would help improve trade and tourism, whilst one states that we would not lose our sovereignty if we changed to the single currency:

**"I can see why the euro would be so beneficial ect. for trading, tourism and all that but i think me, being so dippy and all, would just be SOO confused!"**

**"I dont see how the UK will lose its individual status if we use the euro! The country wil remain the same and people traveling in europ will find it much easier as they will not have to convert their money before leaving England!"**

The majority of comments posted were anti-Euro, but Forum participants largely moderated each other and were not afraid to voice their disagreement. These young people were quick to see the financial and moral stumbling blocks of such a big decision – with close attention paid to giving up our individuality and identity:

**"Euros (except the exchange rate) are no diferent to pounds. The only difference is they look different and they represent the countries in the EU. Should we really be fussing wether they are right for Britain?"**

**"we shouldn't use the euro! if we do we're giving up our individuality, we'll be just like everybody else! the UK has always be individual, why stp now?"**

**"I also feel that its important to keep England's identity alive. I feel that the £ is part of the identity. Personally, I don't find that it is that much trouble to change the money from pounds to euros when I go on holiday"**

**"joining euro stupid because you put more money in than you get out"**

Despite all the positive and negative comments from their peers some students remained undecided on whether Britain should adopt the Euro, mirroring the doubt voiced in different parts of Britain. Some cautiously praised the Euro as they felt it would help drive down prices, whilst other participants questioned if Britain could afford to be left behind the new EU states who have agreed to implement the Euro:

**"I'm not sure about the Euro. I don't think it will beneit most people much, the only benefit would be prices being a little lower on some goods."**

**"Im for and against the Euro. Im for because it should/will drop prices of all selling products and properties. On the other hand will the prices drop and can the english be bothered about changing currency."**

**"With the expansion of the EU to the east and new members committed to eventually joining the euro, could Britain risk becoming isolated from europe?"**

**"if the country's leading business people, economists, financiers, academics and the politicians from all parties cannot agree on this issue, how easy will it be for the undecided amongst the rest of us to make up our minds?"**

However, Tom Wise MEP turned the attention of the participants on the HeadsUp Forum to the importance of UK cooperation, where he argued that we should keep our options internationally, not just in the EU:

**“I welcome co-operation amongst friends, neighbours and like minded folk, wherever they may be! The UK is a friend to many across the globe, not just in a smallish part of the Eurasian landmass.”**

Young people picked up on what this parliamentarian had to say in the debate, and went further still by suggesting that, in terms of integration, some feel we are already incorporated sufficiently into the EU in order to have a flourishing open market:

**“Personally i feel that we are as far integrated as we should with the EU, we already have a successful "Open market" and it is unlikely there will be any further security problems that could lead to a war.”**



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*Forum Summary*

## **Are you European?**

In this part of the debate young people were asked to put their own identities under the microscope and assess whether they considered themselves European. The discussion started with young people positioning themselves in two broad camps, those who feel European and those who do not. In the first instance most participants indicated a lack of feeling European. These students succinctly summed up the diverse opinions on the issue for their peers to read and react to:

**"i'm British, the country i'm from is european but I'M British"**

**"I was born in Europe and I live in Europe, but Europe is a continent- NOT a country!"**

These passionate views helped kick off the debate, which were followed by several parliamentarians commenting to help enrich the discussions further. Interestingly, Douglas Alexander MP was quick to point out that the feeling of being European is an add-on to feeling British, not a replacement for it:

**"I am a Scot, as well as being British and European and we all have our own backgrounds which make up who we are. But while as we in Britain share a common identity within these islands, we also share a sense of European identity with the rest of the continent. Being European is in addition to our national identity and not an alternative to it."**

Furthermore, Robert Evans MEP provided another pro-European prospective building on what the Minister had to say:

**"The whole debate regarding are we "European" or "British" is a misnomer to my mind and rather over hyped. Working with our neighbours in a union of nation states does not require us to relinquish our identity. "European" doesn't replace "British". Just as "African" doesn't replace "Nigerian" nor "Asian", "Indonesian". We are part of a community that exists to make life safer and more economically stable for its citizens."**

However, Tom Wise MEP went further by saying that he does not feel European, but in fact British as highlighted in support for English sporting teams:

**"Am I European in the context of the EU? No, I do not see myself in those terms, despite the efforts of the "politically correct" brigade to persuade me. I am a British national, was born British and will die British. I am, if you really want to know, English and support English sports teams wherever they go"**

Picking up directly on these opinions from decision-makers was this student who obviously felt proudly Scottish, as well as European:

**“i am Scottish and very proud! I am also British and eqaully proud! I don't understand why people find it difficult to recognise that they can be both British and European, in the same way that we can be Scottish, Welsh or English and and British, but also European.”**

Elsewhere, some participants voiced their criticisms of the alien concept of feeling European. One highlights that if anyone from an EU state classified themselves as just European then they would lose or dilute their own identity. Whilst another young person commented that they do not feel proud to feel British or European, and that they did not pass a test to certify their Britishness – it is more a mindset. A third young person feels much restricted by being pigeon-holed as European:

**“I'm not sure if I consider myself european or not. Technically, being from a European country, I am classed as European, but I feel it important to hold on to my identity as a British person. If everyone in Europe classed themselves as simple 'European' then we would lose each county's induvidual character and identity.”**

**“I don't "feel" European, but I don't feel English or Irish either. I don't feel any connection between me and the place I happen to be born. It's not like a club. I didn't choose to be born here, and maybe I wouldn't have if I did have the choice. I'm not proud to be British, or European, it's not an achievement, I didn't pass a test to be British”**

**“I think that we are all citizens of the world - human beings. To me "European" means restrictions on the less economically developed world, it means subsidising farmers, it means a capitalist club. Sure they have done things like the social charter (or is it chapter?) but what benefit has that been to any other group outside the EU? Lets get rid of these ridiculous barriers and have a level playing field where we are all citizens for earth.”**

The media also comes in for some stern criticism and should be much more responsible for accurate and unbiased EU reporting, according to this HeadsUp commentator:

**“The media do only report bad things about Europe. Moany stories that are throwing blame on someone for something are printed a lot more than stories with no opinion in them that simply report something that has been achieved. The media don't think the positive, unbiased stories are interesting, and to be honest, they're probably not.”**

During the debate, the HeadsUp Moderators moved the discussion on by asking the participants whether they felt a closer affinity to the US or to Europe. There was a mixed reaction to this question with this individual claiming that they could see why people feel closer to the US as they share the same language, for example:

**“It's not surprising that people feel closer to the US. We speak the same language as people there, they are closely related to us (although I don't really think that matters,) we watch lots of American TV and films, and due to the common language many people here are friends with Americans on the internet.”**

The strength of feeling was highlighted by these young people who both took very different views to British people labelling themselves as European. The first felt we are so unique that we cannot legitimately claim to be European, whilst the second felt that

we have overlapping religions, climate, food and laws in common with EU member states:

**“The British are so unique that we could never really call ourselves European. Our cultures are so different from France, Germany etc. so...”**

**“our cultures are not completely different to the others in Europe, we still have many basic religions the only things different could be the climate, food and some of the laws. I think we should be allowed to make our own laws but it does make sense to consider what effects it will have on other countries nearby.”**

Once more, the key role played by the EU came into sharp focus, as occurred from beginning to end in this topic space. On the whole several participants reserved special praise for the institution which one felt had been of huge financial benefit to Europe. Others felt the strength of the EU lay in its ability to police governments or set trade and immigration levels:

**“I think we should consider how much we have benefitted from Europe economically. Because in my view, it is quite a lot!”**

**“we need an EU to police the governments, and to find out what each country is up to in monetary affairs...I do agree with you though that the EU can be a bit pointless”**

**“the EU helps us with trade and immigration and stuff like that. I think we should be a part of the EU, but that doesn't mean all countries in the EU have to be the same in everything, like the currency”**

The strength of the union, according to Robert Evans MEP, lies in its ability to pool a vast amount of collective resources, willpower and knowledge:

**“The EU is not about a separate entity “redoing” the things already done by member states. It is about member states coming together to pool their resources, their expertise and their ideas.”**

In contrast, Graham Brady MP offered reluctant praise for the EU, by saying that it helped open up travel, trade and democracy right across Europe. However, he argues that some of these achievements could have been secured by the cooperation of states with similar interests and democratic profiles:

**“The EU has brought some important benefits in breaking down trade barriers, opening travel and helping to entrench democracy in countries which have been ruled by dictators. Most of what is good about the EU can however be achieved through cooperation between free democracies with shared interests. We do not need a European Constitution and endless new EU legislation that is far too remote from the people.”**

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## **Is opening up Europe a good thing?**

The majority of young people commenting in this discussion space were in favour of opening up Europe as they recognised the main benefits of increased travel and work opportunities open to all, right across the EU. Eluned Morgan MEP indicates her support for opening up our borders across the EU by saying that we can open our eyes to diverse cultures. She also believes that we should be thankful to the EU for other reasons, including a range of day-to-day improvements made like food labelling and drinking water standards:

**"Far more people are able to take up cheap holidays because the EU has liberalised air travel. The water in all parts of the EU has to conform with common drinking water standards, there is compulsory labelling of food and there is a guarantee on electronic items which is valid anywhere in the EU. Through travelling abroad we can open our horizons and experience different cultures."**

These students shared and expanded upon the views expressed by Eluned Morgan MEP. The first young person used their message as a call to arms to the people of Britain to open their minds to different parts of Europe and not frown upon them. The second participant commented on the freedom that this decision would bring to people wanting to travel right across Europe, although they think this would be a minority group:

**"I think that the ease with which we can travel within the EU is great as it means that young people like myself can go to other countries to learn different languages and about different cultures. Everyone seems to complain about how ignorant Britain is as a country so to give people the opportunity to travel to other countries so freely should help this 'problem'. People would be able to see how people in other countries live and be able to see that different cultures are something we should try to embrace and learn about instead of frown upon them."**

**"I think the ability to travel to some other countries and work there easily is a good thing. It lets some people do what they want to do, and gives them more freedom. That's only a small number of people though, I don't think it really affects the rest of us."**

Christine Burton, from the UK office of the European Parliament, used her own first-hand experience to support the move to open up Europe. She described how she has benefited from working in the EU since the UK joined the EU, where as before this historic date she found it difficult to get a work permit to work in Spain:

**"Years ago, before the UK joined the EU I wanted to work in Spain but was restricted on what I would be allowed to do and work permits were not easy to**

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**come by. Since the UK joined I have enjoyed working in Luxembourg and Brussels."**

In slight contrast, Tom Wise MEP commented how he had experienced no problems travelling, as opposed to working, in Europe:

**"As a young man I travelled all across Europe without any problems at all. Sure, I had a passport. Guess what, I still have one as I need it to travel to and from Brussels and Strasbourg..."**

The HeadsUp moderators asked the participants which part of Europe they would like to work or travel in and why:

**"it sounds like a good idea. i think i would love to go to european countries in the east or north like sweden or poland."**

**"i think it would be a useful thing to be able to go to any citie's in the world and work is a good thing. i would like to go to paris, south africa ,japan."**

One HeadsUp participant used the Forum to question Tom Wise about his role as an MEP in more detail and in particular the travelling and cost involved in frequently going between Strasbourg, Brussels and the UK:

**"What about traveling between Parliaments I mean you only go to Strasbourg for Plenaries (however you spell it) and Luxembourg for something else? Doesnt that waste a great deal of EU money that could be spent on making a difference or decreasing the spiralling wealth divide?"**

Tom Wise responded directly and shared the young person's reservations about the cost and amount of travelling involved in being an MEP:

**"re the stupidity of moving my office to Strasbourg and back to Brussels every month is well made. It costs the EU taxpayers about £100 million every year, adds to road congestion, burns fossil fuels unnecessarily and as a venue, is most difficult to get to, except from other places in France!"**

As a consequence of opening up the EU the UK has been the beneficiary of Polish labour and plumbing expertise, according to this young person:

**"I heard that apparantly since Polan joined the EU, and loads and loads of Polish immigrants came to the UK, it has actually boosted our economy and consequently created more jobs. Surely that is a good point about being able to travel easier between EU member states."**

However, another participant was more guarded and called for a more rigid and robust immigration policy for the UK:

**"I think that you need some limitations on immigrations and at the moment they are to lax, its not as extreme as banning all movement between countries but definately tightening up the rules and regulations"**

The Minister of State for Europe, Douglas Alexander MP, highlighted that Britain was a leading exponent of EU enlargement especially during the year long presidency we

held. He finishes by stressing that in terms of numbers 460 million European citizens make up the EU, making it a very powerful single market:

**“The UK was one of the biggest advocates of enlargement and during our presidency of the EU talks were opened with Turkey and Croatia on becoming EU members. Bringing in new members doesn’t just give nationals from other countries the chance to come and work here, but it also opens up new markets for British industries to go and do business in. Enlarging Europe means that with 460 million European citizens the EU is now the largest single market in the world.”**

Furthermore, Moderators picked up on a Guardian news article which stated that Turkey was improving their human rights record, by banning the death penalty. Students were asked whether Turkey or the EU should be applauded for this long-overdue move. This comment was typical of the support for the EU’s tough stance on human rights, which they approved:

**“I think this proves that the EU is having some good effects. It has been able to bribe Turkey into dropping the death penalty. Although supporters of the death penalty wouldn’t see it this way, I think that it’s definitely a good thing.”**



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## **Law and order...**

A week and a half into this EU Forum we decided that the debate would be enhanced further, by the introduction of an additional topic for discussion.

We decided to ask the HeadsUp participants about law and order, in particular they were asked for their views on the fact that the EU is now said to account for 50% of all laws made in the UK. Throughout this discussion topic participants were not afraid to have their say on these important legal issues. Overall, the figure quoted was deemed to be high by the majority and that a line should be drawn to ensure we do not relinquish further law-making capabilities:

**"i think some of the laws are stupid because your so restricted"**

**"if Europe is affecting our law system, they don't know how our 'system' works and whether or not we have the same problems as them, so imposing rules on us could be detrimental to our system."**

**"i thikn that the influence that the EU already has over England is enough. The laws that we create in Britain should be stricly British, and I think that a 50% influence is more than enough. Great Britain will have different views to those in Europe. in France, for example, Horses are freely eaten. That is their culture. In England, it is unlikely that Horse willll actually be eaten, due to the copious amounts of animals activists and the unwillingness to eat it."**

Tom Wise MEP reiterated his position on the EU versus British law debate in very simple terms for all the young people taking part to digest:

**"EU law is now supreme. It overrides British law and when the UK tries to do something that is independent, the EU can and has told us not to."**

The HeadsUp moderators asked participants for their reaction to news that in 2005 Britain asked permission to increase the amount of carbon dioxide its industry was allowed to emit from 2005 to 2007, by 20 million tonnes. They were asked to consider if this story is a good example of the EU doing its job well, or over-stepping the mark. These young people agreed that the EU was performing a good policing role:

**"I think this is an example of the EU doing its job well, it's helping the environment, isn't it? For things like the environment there needs to be worldwide cooperation, if every country doesn't do its best then many countries will do nothing. Ideally I would like to see a worldwide organisation that would do the policing side of the EU's role (keeping the trading side to Europe) but without the**

**economic benefits countries will not join, so an EU as big as possible is probably the best option.”**

**“i think the figure is pretty high. that should give us more reason to become more involved with the eu. i think that england not being allowed to emmit more carbon dioxide is good cos it is affecting the planet so it should be restricted at least a little bit.”**



'European Union... What is its future in your eyes?'

## Conclusions

1. 55% say 'No' to the Euro
2. British first rather than European
3. Approved opening up Europe
4. Called for balanced EU reporting

**Deliberation and communication between all participants was impressive**, ranging from young people aged 11-18 to a host of decision-makers in the UK and EU Parliaments. Furthermore, another positive step for HeadsUp is the opened-up forum, which allows visitors to follow the debates without registering. These new students, like their peers on the site, were not afraid to get involved in the debate immediately, coming up with sound points, and keen questions.

**The young people in the EU Forum made four main pleas** to decision-makers and to society in general. The majority of students, 55%, pledged their support for the pound and did not want Britain to adopt a single European currency as some pointed out the financial problems being faced by EU states using the Euro. Very simply they felt a strong association with the pound and several voiced the well-known saying - 'if it's not broke, don't fix it'.

**In the first instance these students did not feel European** Many stated an allegiance to one of the home nations or Britain first, which was then followed by a diluted notion of feeling part of the EU in some cases. However, some pro-European participants called on their peers to embrace feeling European, which they argued was not a substitute for feeling British but an add-on.

**When analysing the impact of the decision to open up Europe**, participants were full of praise for the EU for taking this bold step and thought it was an excellent opportunity for a wide range of people to broaden their horizons.

**Participants made a direct plea to the media to report accurately** and fairly on all matters relating to the EU. However, some students were honest enough to appreciate that these more honest EU stories did have the potential to be boring and not help sell newspapers, for example.

**The EU debate contained some extremely passionate** and well-argued views on all sides of the EU debate. The fact that there is still such negative EU coverage in the media only highlights the dilemma that a lot of questions still remain unanswered around the Euro and young people not feeling European. However, these students astutely pointed out that the EU deserves recognition for a wide range of notable achievements including acting as a safety net around Europe, and improving Turkey's human rights record by making them stop executions.

**The range of enthusiastic and high profile decision-makers** taking part online during the second and third weeks, gave the debate added clarity, impetus and

17

parliamentary approval from the young people's collective viewpoint. The interaction between young people and decision-makers was a significant moment, in particular Ministers from all parties and MEPs, as it was more than likely one of their first ever interactions with a parliamentarian. It is also a significant step for HeadsUp, that so many relevant parliamentarians were active in the EU Forum space – an increase over the numbers who took part in the previous ASBO debate. This is a very welcome and healthy benchmark for future Forums. We are extremely grateful to all the decision-makers who dedicated their time to respond to young people's opinions in this EU debate.

**'European Union... What is its future in your eyes?'** was another gritty and controversial issue for a HeadsUp Forum and therefore one that was welcomed by young people who participated, other NGOs and MPs from across the political spectrum. It provided a secure, structured but non-sanitised platform for young people to voice their perspectives on the EU debate, coming so close after the UK held the EU presidency.

**HeadsUp tackles complex political problems** but is not designed to make set recommendations. Like adults, young people have a range of perspectives on political events, issues and policies, and often favour different solutions. This resource was established not to give the 'definitive line'; rather it is about providing a space for people to share their views, challenge those of others and, in turn, be challenged.



## Forum Topic Transcript

### European Union...

#### The Euro – fan or foe?

27/02/2006 09:00:00

justice

Welcome to the EU debate

Since its creation, the European Union has been the subject of a massive amount of media and political attention. Now, young people will get the opportunity to make their voices heard in this HeadsUp Forum. This forum has attracted online involvement from a record number of key decision-makers including relevant MPs and MEPs. For more information see [Who's listening? \(www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s101\\_1\)](http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s101_1)

Try and make sure that you BackUp ([www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home\\_EU%2006](http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home_EU%2006)) your opinions with facts where possible. There's lots of info for you to get your teeth stuck into in BackUp.

Are you a fan or foe of the Euro? (see jargon buster ([www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s102\\_1](http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s102_1) for explanation). If the Government decided we should join the Euro do you think this decision would benefit or harm the UK? Why do you think the EU receives such a bad press from the media? Something else, different to these concerns? What are the reasons behind your choice?

27/02/2006 13:17:00

masterzen

France and Holland send shockw

What do you think of what Eluned Morgan MEP said about the message sent across the EU by French and Dutch citizens?

"The rejection of the EU Constitution by France and the Netherlands in May and June last year was a strong message that EU citizens do not feel connected to Europe, that they do not feel adequately informed about the EU and its policies, and that they worry their views are not sufficiently reflected. I feel that the referendum results have brought the importance of listening to, communicating and connecting with citizens, into sharp focus.

Read her statement in full [www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s101\\_1](http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s101_1)

Do you agree with what she had to say - if so, explain why you have come to this decision...

27/02/2006 15:14:00

johnny

Euro is great

I think the euro is really great as i love the idea of not having to worry about changing money when I go away on holiday. What's all the fuss about anyway?

27/02/2006 16:51:00

boffinbabe12

um er um er

I dont really know.... I can see why the euro would be so beneficial ect. for trading, tourism and all that but i think me, being so dippy and all, would just be SOO confused! like one minute my bank balance would be £300, then the next it would be 467 euros and suddenly there would be millions more millionaires and the whole system which i thought i knew- how far 400 pounds can get you, how short a way 100 can get you (if that makes any sense) will just be confuddled! But i suppose after time it will all get used to it..... right?

27/02/2006 23:02:00

Levitica

EU

I don't think the EU really affects a lot of people in the UK. People say that the most important benefits are being able to trade easily with other members and being able to travel and work easily in other member countries. I guess it's probably useful for businesses who export and import a lot of things, but I don't think it affects the lives of many other people often.

People don't really have anything to complain about... They complain about the EU costing a lot of money and getting nothing back from it, but the government spends much more on worthless things in other areas. I suppose that doesn't make it better, but the EU is an odd thing to focus on. I am glad an international organisation like the EU exists though. I think it important for our safety that there is something international that we are part of that can try to control countries that get out of hand (although the EU's power is limited as certain single nations are more powerful than it.) It does make me feel a little more secure and looked after. If there was no EU leaders of far away countries could do whatever they want.

I'm not sure about the Euro. I don't think it will benefit most people much, the only benefit would be prices being a little lower on some goods. I think it would cost to get everything changed over though. As someone else said, it would just confuse everybody - I'd be really confused. No one would know what to pay for anything. Haven't people in other countries found problems with people taking the opportunity to put prices up or something? (I don't know where I heard this, it's possibly not true.)

27/02/2006 23:06:00

Levitica

Eluned Morgan statement

I agree with some of the things in this statement. Most people don't know about the EU and what it does - I know very little about it - and so they won't vote to be part of it.

28/02/2006 07:30:00

dipsy

euros arnt really any different to p

Euros (except the exchange rate) are no diferent to pounds. The only difference is they look different and they represent the countries in the EU. Should we really be fussing wether they are right for Britain?

28/02/2006 10:18:00

GrahamBradyMP

What's all the fuss about?

The Euro is fine for some countries which are close to each other in economic and political terms. The problem is when you try to put very different economies into the same currency zone with the same interest rates. This is already a problem for example with Ireland (which has been booming) and Germany (which has been struggling in recent years). Britain has a different kind of economy again. One important example of this is the huge number of British people who own houses and take out large mortgages to buy them. This means that a change in interest rates will have a very different effect on people's spending power in Britain or in Germany.

In short a single currency zone can work but needs a significant degree of harmonisation to do so. The 'fuss' therefore is about the extent to which we make decisions for ourselves as well as the important economic argument of whether you can fix an interest rate that is right for two, fifteen, or even twenty seven different economies.

28/02/2006 18:57:00

boffinbabe12

I agree EU gives reassurance

I agree with Letivica that the EU does reassure people that as long as other governments are somehow 'in other governments business' then we can avoid a major catastrophe like WW1/2 happening within Europe's borders, but do we REALLY need to be soooo involved? Like Letivica said, the EU does not benefit a large majority of people in Britain, so it makes u think why bother really- or is that just me? And as far as the Euro goes, that is an interesting way to think about it, with all the interest rates- probably the correct way as well- and apparantly France is going through a severe problem with unemployment at the present time, much like one England suffered before the Labour party were elected, so the interest rates would HAVE to be different from England or it would just be illogical.

01/03/2006 10:13:00

TomWiseMEP

The Euro .....comments on postin

Hello!

May I add my thoughts on the postings by (in no particular order) Johnny, Boffinbabe and Levitica. The Euro as a currency in your holiday destination is only relevant IF you go to one of the countries in the Eurozone! At this time, only 12 countries have the Euro, the other 200+ in the world do not! The Euro will be no good to you, for example, in Disneyland in Florida or anywhere else in the USA. Nor will it be much use in Malta, Turkey, Denmark, Africa or long haul destinations such as the Far East or Australasia.

As an MEP, I have to go to Brussels and Strasbourg regularly. To get the local currency - for small purchases such as cups of coffee - I go to an ATM and take out 100 euro at a time. All my hotel and restaurant bills are put on my credit card.

One of the main selling points of the euro, prior to its launch, was that it would introduce transparency and bring down prices by introducing competition - as if that did not exist before! Well, the price of a cup of coffee in the Strasbourg parliament building hasn't changed in the last two years, but it is still more expensive than in the Brussels parliament! Are we seriously to believe that we will go to another country for lunch, just because it might be cheaper? I think not.

Indeed since the introduction of the euro prices in some countries have risen dramatically. This is particularly evident in Italy, where there is now a growing movement to leave the eurozone! There is nothing inevitable about Britain having to join the eurozone. When Denmark voted to stay out, there were predictions of doom that the Danish economy would collapse. Has it? No, of course not. The only inevitability is that pressure from politically inspired change merchants will do all they can to dragoon us into it.

01/03/2006 17:13:00

chilli

EU cooperation

Do you think cooperation between EU member states is a good idea? (on what level – political/economic or both?)

02/03/2006 11:42:00

TomWiseMEP

Co-operation

I welcome co-operation amongst friends, neighbours and like minded folk, wherever they may be! The UK is a friend to many across the globe, not just in a smallish part of the Eurasian landmass. The EU is in essence, a Zollverien or closed customs union. It regulates trade into and out of it, imposing tariffs on things coming in that it decides would protect its producers. If the EU (in another guise) applied to join the EU - yes a strange concept- the EU would reject the application. It simply does not abide by its own rules! However, we are in it and have to abide by its rules. Believe me, we would be better off out!

03/03/2006 12:02:00

lvyp

wats the big deal

if the euro is fit for other europian countries then why isn't it good enough for britain? we are like every one else the euro shouldn't make any difference

03/03/2006 12:17:00

ar06

hmmm...

i think that valid point have been made by both sides, i understand that joining would prestant good oppertunities e.g. easier to work abroad, no money changing hassle and easier for trade but i also think that there isnt much point in joining an institute that basically does the same as the government i.e make important disisions and keep things in order. there is also the fuss about changing currency but my major issue is the fact that people who cannot afford to miss out on money have to pay about £3.50 a week to be apart of something which has little impact on their lives (apart from the change in currency) which doesnt seem like alot but makes a difference to those who have little money to live or even raise a family on, so i am undecided on the subject.

03/03/2006 12:20:00

osasno1

The Euro

Im for and against the Euro. Im for because it should/will drop prices of all selling products and properties. On the other hand will the prices drop and can the english be bothered about changing currency.

03/03/2006 12:21:00

lp17

Fan or Foe?

It would be a benefit because it would provide commonality with other members of the EU and move us closer to unity of everyone and remove the borders of countries and perhaps stop national wars. Create a clear and simple system that is followed by everyone and prevent misunderstandings.

03/03/2006 13:17:00

gruff

UK driving force in EU?

Plenty of food for thought as a result of this EU debate...

Do you think that the UK should be a leading driving force in the EU or adopt a smaller role? What are the implications of this course of action?

03/03/2006 13:34:00

shawridge

The Euro

In switching to the euro that will mean a huge loss of money for England due to the fact that the pound is such a strong currency, money that we will not get back. its all well and good that we wont have to convert currency when going on holiday but is it really worth losing that much economy?

03/03/2006 13:36:00

satchnick

The euro

I believe that the euro is a bad idea, I like my sterling, yip

03/03/2006 13:38:00

roxi

euro vs. pounds

we shouldn't use the euro! if we do we're giving up our individuality, we'll be just like everybody else! the UK has always be individual, why stop now?

if we switch to the euro not only will most people get confused and not know if things are good value for money for a while but at least with the £s we can control our own interest rates and stuff like that, if we accept the euro the interest rates will be the same as everybody else's with the euro!

if that happens we cant look after our country's economy unless it's in the same situation as everybody else, we cant make it better if the economy starts to fail!

THE EURO IS NOT GOOD FOR THE UK

03/03/2006 13:41:00

tinny\_10

the euro

the euro is rubbish. the pound is so much stronger so why change something that is as good as it gets. there is no point what so ever!!!

03/03/2006 13:43:00

pinkymp

??

I dont see how the UK will lose its individual status if we use the euro! The country will remain the same and people traveling in europe will find it much easier as they will not have to convert their money before leaving England!

03/03/2006 13:44:00

hallsam

stuff

I agree with tinny, even though he cant spell.

03/03/2006 13:44:00

pinkymp

??

I dont see how the UK will lose its individual status if we use the euro! The country will remain the same and people traveling in europe will find it much easier as they will not have to convert their money before leaving England!

03/03/2006 13:44:00

shawridge

The Euro

The pound is a sign of england heritage, we cant lose that.

03/03/2006 13:45:00

hotchocolate

the eu

is rubbish i think. what is the point?

03/03/2006 13:46:00

roxi

£

but £s are stronger too, its always been a strong currency and always will! unless we get rid of it, then we risk weakening our economy if the euro weakens

03/03/2006 13:48:00

lewis123

yeh

i agree, man



sterling is good  
I agree that the pound is better than the euro, all the other counitres with the euro suck, Look at france, Theres also all that other stuff about losing economy, yadayada.

03/03/2006 13:53:00  
satchnick  
yo! wats this about the eurovision,

03/03/2006 13:54:00  
pinkflower  
??  
Becuz the pounds 4 britain!!

03/03/2006 13:54:00  
emory1  
Euro Fan and Foe  
I believe that we should have the Euro, however, there are some points that i think need seriously considering before the Euro is introduced. I am a fan of the pound as well but i believe that in order for us to advance into a world business market, we should introduce the Euro

03/03/2006 13:56:00  
tinny\_10  
£  
i agree with pinyImp

03/03/2006 13:56:00  
adam10  
the dollar not the euro  
i think we should have the dollar so i can telll everyone i have lots of buck in my pocket.

03/03/2006 13:56:00  
hotchocolate  
Query  
How does Human Rights Watch respond to the argument that the opening up of foreign trade and investment inherent in membership of the WTO tends to encourage greater political liberty and democracy?

03/03/2006 13:57:00  
duane  
euro  
get the euro

03/03/2006 13:57:00  
pinkylmp  
??  
I can understand where your coming from why change something we know so well! but change can also be good dont forget!

03/03/2006 13:59:00  
satchnick  
yeeeah boy!  
i agree

03/03/2006 13:59:00  
roxi  
way i see it  
everybody in the uk hasaccepted £s and are used to it, why change from a system that everybody accepts to one which a lot people are against?

03/03/2006 14:00:00  
adam10  
hello  
The pound has risen to two-week highs against the euro and the dollar, after the European Central Bank decided to leave its interest rates untouched at 4.5%. Sterling initially pushed higher against the euro in early trading on Thursday, after Chancellor Gordon Brown effectively ruled out an early referendum on euro entry.

03/03/2006 14:00:00  
hallsam  
molvania  
I dont see the point of changing to the euro, Keeping the pound means im rich when I go abroad. Just look at what the euro did molvania, it ruined there economy and now theyre no longer an official country

03/03/2006 14:02:00  
adam10  
euro  
we shouldn't have the euro because i like the colour, the texture and the wieght of the pound. whereas the euro is rough and too hard.

03/03/2006 14:02:00  
pinkylmp

!!

But not everyone is against it!

03/03/2006 14:03:00

satchnick

ahoy euro go away

there are good points but they are not enough

05/03/2006 17:07:00

ellies

The Euro

I understand the benefits of having the Euro, but I also feel that its important to keep England's identity alive. I feel that the £ is part of the identity. Personally, I don't find that it is that much trouble to change the money from pounds to euros when I go on holiday - I tend to get up, go to the desk, ask for some euros in exchange for the pounds and sit down again. In less than 5 minutes. So I don't feel that that is enough reason to change from pounds to euros.

06/03/2006 12:33:00

biged

Week 1 issues

It has been a very interesting debate so far with some good deliberation amongst young people and parliamentarians. Just to recap here are a few of the main issues that have been covered in this section of the debate during week 1:

\* Young people felt that the EU was an important safety net around Britain and other member states.

\* Some young people were not sure about the benefits of adopting the Euro.

\* Some participants feel that a move towards the Euro would mean giving up our individuality and sovereignty.

\* One young person wondered whether Britain could risk becoming isolated from Europe, with the expansion of the EU to the east and new members committed to eventually joining the Euro.

<b>Are there any other points you would like to raise - now's the time as it's your Forum!! </b>

06/03/2006 14:48:00

harden

The EU

in my opinion the EU is going well and will be comfortable for years to come if we stay as we are and do not keep looking for more and more power, and eventually trying to become a super power. I do not think anyone can deny the work and many of the things that the EU has done are very good and have profited the countries within the EU, but again if the EU as a whole keep looking for power it will crumble, the EU is very good as it is, there is no need for its dramatic growth, it should stay in its safe and comfortable state as it is.

06/03/2006 14:51:00

harden

The EU

Personally I feel that we are as far integrated as we should with the EU, we already have a successful "Open market" and it is unlikely there will be any further security problems that could lead to a war. However I do not agree with the EU involvement into things such as working hours and immigration controls as we need some control over who can and cannot enter our country. As for the Euro and the EMU yeah ok it will save time converting money for holidays, but the fact is it hardly takes that much time and effort to do so once or twice a year, and the fact that the Pound is still going strong on an international level shows us we are not in need of change now, I'm not saying never to the Euro but not for the moment. Not only this but at least now if we were to leave the EU for whatever reason (too politicised and undermining of our government) at least then we have our own currency to fall back on

06/03/2006 14:51:00

harden

Crazy Conspiracies

Am I alone in thinking that perhaps Brussels could get too much power? Just like Rupert Murdoch being denied the right to buy any more media outlets due to the monopolies act (An EU act), Brussels, if all three stages are complete, would really, in a strange sense be in breach of this act. Technically this isn't 100% accurate, but even still, do we really want an entire continent under one sovereignty? Wouldn't this create an immense super power, capable of reigning political and military power over the whole of the world. The only power that could stop Brussels would be the USA, but that wouldn't be in their best interest, economically speaking. EU is one thing, single state, single currency, single power, well, that's what I call black future theory...

06/03/2006 14:52:00

harden

is the EU really such a good idea

originally the EU was set up to create peace between the countries after WW2. but I'm not sure by us all joining into one massive collection of countries peace will be insured for much longer. all we are going to do is make countries where there are non-Christian faiths feel more isolated and this will lead to conflict not us all getting along together. there are now 25 countries in the EU, how much bigger can it get? it seems to me that having such a big group of countries going under the same name might be us trying to look powerful in front of the USA (which everyone knows is the world's superpower) but will this lead to challenge of the USA? ok so this might be a long way off but in my opinion I want to avoid another war cuz in the age of nuclear weapons it could prove fatal for everyone!

06/03/2006 19:53:00

firefly

The EU - club, superpower and h

Firstly, I disagree; I think that the EU is not just a club for Christian nations. For example, Turkey is looking to gain EU membership and a sticking point that continually arises in the case of Turkey is their human rights record. Now Turkey may not see this as a major issue and may interpret this as being rejected for not being a Christian state. Secondly, I think that the USE (United States of Europe) will never exist. Let alone become a power that wishes to confront the US. In the EU at the moment countries do not always see eye to eye - such as the issue concerning the British rebate or French agricultural subsidies. Each nation has its own traditions and aims; and some conflicts are rooted far back in history. In my opinion the EU will never function as a single state. Finally, I believe that the EU is not a good idea. The case over New Zealand lamb imports is one of many instances where EU rules have not

proved beneficial (although I acknowledge that the EU rules will never suit everyone). The EU provides yet more legislation that individual states are tied to abiding whether they like it or not. The EU, although a good idea, is perhaps more of a hindrance and a dream than a help and a reality.

07/03/2006 10:55:00

DouglasAlexanderMP

The euro

Britain will only join the euro if being a member would be good for British jobs and British prosperity and I think that is the right approach. The Treasury has set out five economic tests to judge whether the euro would be good for Britain but so far the government has come to the view that it would not be right to join now. If that changes then we would ask the people of Britain whether they want to join it in a referendum. The people will have the ultimate say - and we will only join if it would be good for Britain.

07/03/2006 15:55:00

firefly

the euro

What is likely to happen is that the government will wait for the point where the pound and the euro are roughly similar. Then they will look for a referendum. Yet I think that we should not have the euro; the pound is a part of the British culture and identity. Everyone has grown up with it and sees it as something that identifies them as British and prices may well rise as confusion could arise in the currency change over.

07/03/2006 17:17:00

yp123

no euros

i think we should keep our originality!!

why would you want to be like everyone else! think we should be proud to be british and not use euros.

08/03/2006 12:29:00

Levitica

why would you want to be like eve

"why would you want to be like everyone else!"

In currency, I think being like everyone else is a pretty good idea. Being like everyone else is what makes currency useful for trading. If I decided to not be like everyone else and used the Leviticus Dollar instead of the pound, I'd have a lot of trouble buying things.

08/03/2006 19:16:00

littles

Pound Sterling

The pound sterling as a currency is what keeps us British. However, I can see a problem coming about if we don't accept the euro. However, if we do, a lot of our gold goes to Germany and kept there. If we fell out with them, we are well and truly stuck. Still, I think that we would be better off using the American Dollar, since they are one of our biggest exports and importers.

10/03/2006 10:26:00

chilli

EU Constitution :: Options, Option

On February 16 2006, Tony Blair warned that the issue of the rejected EU Constitution would not go away. He stressed that, despite the failure of the project at the hands of French and Dutch referendums last year, "we need institutional change in Europe". He added: "There is a period of reflection now in Europe about the Constitution. But at some point we will come back to the point that a Europe of 25, or 27, cannot work effectively (under the current rules) ... so we're going to have to come back to this." What is your reaction to the Prime Minister's recent statement on the EU Constitution? Do you agree with his assessment that it is an issue that must be revisited or do you think that the EU could work around this barrier? For more information on the next steps for the Constitution proposed by the EU leaders click here for an in depth summary (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4733750.stm>)

10/03/2006 15:09:00

littles

Why?

why must we accept a constitution that has failed in not one, but two hands! We should we become a third? England has always been detached from the other european, given the fact that we are an island and that we have always had strong links with America (by which I mean both Canada and the USA) Lets face it - we are not like the other european countries. We should keep our individuality, and move forward as a country- not a continent.

11/03/2006 17:48:00

Levitica

Pound keeps us british

How does the pound keep us British? If you go abroad on holiday and use Euros instead of pounds, are you not British? We are British because we live in Britain, that's it. If we switch to the Euro we'll still be living in Britain and therefore British, we're not going to wake up in Russia or somewhere.

13/03/2006 11:00:00

jadi

not sure

i dont really know im going to read into it more

13/03/2006 11:13:00

ejbtom

Think of the complications.

Introducing a new currency to England will just cause loads of problems, and most probably, when the currency is changed, the previous pound sterling prices will be rounded up and so technically everything will be more expensive. This would affect our economy. England has always been independent. It should stay this way.

13/03/2006 11:17:00

ahtom

Stay British, Keep the £

I think that we should keep the pound as we are the British and we have always stood alone on things like this. It also means that when they bring the euro (if they do) they can inflate the prices and we will not know the exact exchange rate.

13/03/2006 13:24:00

The Beast

Euro would raise prices

If the currency changed to the euro, the same thing would happen as what happened when currency was decimalised: prices go up. This is because shop keepers would use and abuse the confusion over the new system and raise prices on products within shops.

13/03/2006 19:15:00

danzo

boo to euro

the euro is a bad idea because then everyone would have to learn how to count euro's and that would confuse people

13/03/2006 22:16:00

ertom

the Euro

i don't think we should convert to the Euro. the currency we use now is part of what makes us British!

13/03/2006 22:19:00

ertom

keep the pound!

There is no real need for use to convert to the Euro. we should keep the pound as not only does it make life easier, but it is part of what makes us British!

14/03/2006 12:26:00

bluebell

forum

i think it is a good thing if we did joined the euro currency because it help's to not have to change the money every time we go to a foreign country and have some money left and have to pay so much to change it and it would be much easier to trade but they need to set a amount of what the euro is actually worth because at the moment they don't have a set amount for it and it dose change every moment witch can be very annoying if you had a lot of money say a million then your million would change every day and you could end up very poor.

14/03/2006 12:26:00

HotSoupMerangue

mem

i agree with boffin babe. it would be a little confusing to completely change a national currency that has spent years evolving, but we managed to change into metric etc, why stop progress??

14/03/2006 12:28:00

aragorn111

forum

I think it will be good if we join the euro because lots of other countries do and it will be easier to trade although people would lose a bit of money changing theirs depending on the cost. Every time anybody goes to a foreign country they won't have to change their money witch would narrow the money problem down a bit.

14/03/2006 13:28:00

danzo

yuk

joining eu stupid because you put more money in than you get out

14/03/2006 20:36:00

goat

EU

If we did join the EU it would probably affect us slightly. One possible side effect is that our economy will decrease slightly because the pound is worth considerably more than the euro. Yet I believe that in the future we will benefit a lot from the change. Firstly, it will make travelling around Europe a lot easier and this in turn could mean that tourism for Europe also increases. Also, there will also be better connections between countries in Europe and so better relationships between countries.

14/03/2006 20:55:00

goat

EU

i think it would be good to join the EU, its true, we would initially lose money. but it will make travelling around Europe a lot easier and maybe in the long term, tourism will improve because it is easier to travel around.

15/03/2006 09:34:00

masterzen

Euro language problem

Did any of you hear that Latvia has recently become involved in a language row with the EU? Latvia's main concern is how to spell the word 'euro' in their language which has no way to spell 'eu'. Latvia hopes to adopt the Euro in 2008 and is still waiting to hear if they can refer to the single currency as the 'eiro' (pronounced 'aero'). Malta (ewro) and Slovenia (evro) had also suggested their

own spellings of the single currency's name but both changed their minds. Greece is allowed to spell it evro - but only because it has a different alphabet from other EU members. What is your take on these sensitive language problems - are you surprised that the EU will not let Latvia refer to the single currency according to its own language (eiro)?

15/03/2006 22:00:00

Levitica

Language problems

I don't see why they have a problem with them saying it differently at all.

16/03/2006 09:29:00

TomWiseMEP

The euro

I must apologise to forum members for my absence over the last week, but I have been tied up in interminable meetings here in Strasbourg! Please remember that the currency is ONLY the visible part of "giving up the pound." To take that currency would mean accepting the third part of the plan for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) of all member states. It effectively gives control of the British economy to the European Central Bank who decide, amongst other things, the interest rates for the eurozone. Currently in Ireland they would like a higher rate to control their inflation, while in Germany & France they would opt for a lower rate. In the UK, outside the eurozone, we can decide what is right for us!

The folk in the ECB are unaccountable, meet in secret and produce reports on their discussions which are published 16 years after the meetings! May I offer a simple test, to see if it is such a good idea to give up your independence? Would you like to have what you spend - no matter what you have earned - decided by other folk on this forum. You have never met them, you do not know them and you cannot get rid of them. Would you trust them to do a good job for YOU?

16/03/2006 11:48:00

cltom

sterling or euro ?

which one do you prefer

16/03/2006 11:51:00

sdtom

independance

i think we should keep independant as much benifits as there are from joining the euro i think we should stick to the pound.

16/03/2006 11:54:00

rctom

the euro

as a child i don't think it would affect us at the moment. however i think that anybody who would like to go into a business, any business, would be affected. There are advantages and disadvantages to it however i dont think that it would have a bad impact on us as it would allow easier trade between other countries. It would be a big change for us, however other countries have managed it, so why cant we?

16/03/2006 11:58:00

prtom

The Euro

I don't like the idea of the euro because it takes away a country's identity, ok, it makes easier when it comes to going on holiday and makes us equal. I wouldn't like Britain to join the euro

16/03/2006 11:58:00

omtom

the euro

i think that the euro shouldn't be in britain i think that it should stay in other european countries. When the i euro came i thought it was a bad idea and if it was up to me we wouldn't of had it. I think that everyone should have a currency that is the same just not now and not until they is not so many problems in the world

16/03/2006 12:02:00

wntom

The Euro

I have lived in England for all my life and so have used the pound all my life. This means it is close to my heart. It has cultural history meaning and we should keep it. Will it increase the cost of items as 0.7 pounds = 1 euro so for simplicity items that would cost 1 pound would be converted to 1 euro? KEEP THE POUND

16/03/2006 12:03:00

ndtom

euro

the euro is good

16/03/2006 12:04:00

omtom

the euro is bad

the euro is good and bad on many levels the exchange rate is bad because the pound and the dollar is more than the euro so the pound is cooler

16/03/2006 12:06:00

cntom

against the euro

i think that if we change to euro it would confuse quite alot of people. as people have been taught how to use ponds and not euros. even though it would make trading and money problems easier I still think pounds make us an individual country. euros should not become our currency!!!!

16/03/2006 12:06:00

sdtom

RE: boo to euro

"the euro is a bad idea because then evryone would have to learn how to count euro's and that would confuse people ?" how would counting in the euro be different from counting in sterling? i agree that the euro would be a bad idea and would confuse people but counting?

16/03/2006 12:07:00

bctom

National Character

The Currency of a country is one of those things that give the country it's character. When we go aboard, it is not only the sights that make going on holiday interesting, it is the difference in currency as well. If we go to the Euro then we will be getting rid of part of the character of our country and uniforming ourselves with the rest of europe. We will become part of the 'United States of Europe' and fade into inobscurity within Europe. We are a developed country that has a unique heritage, the same situation that many other countries are in at this time and many of these countries are merging into the EU and fading into obscurity. We should not get rid of the Pound

as it would be the first step to fading away from the view of the world

16/03/2006 12:07:00

prtom

The Euro

I also believe that the euro shouldn't be introduced in England because people will take advantage of the different currency, especially shop owners .etc. as, like what the result was in the Republic of Ireland, prices will almost definently increase. However, i do understand why people would be FOR the change because it will be much easier and cheaper to exchange the sterling to euro for holidays/business .etc. But is it all worth it?

16/03/2006 12:09:00

mltom

pounds

i think that valid point have been made by both sides. If we go into euros it will confuse and it might upset alot of people because they know how to work out the pounds and we will lose alot of money and it makes the uk individual and you have to pay to change to money to eruo and back to pounds again. i would like to stay as pounds.

16/03/2006 20:24:00

goat

euro/pounds

i dont think that people will get too confused over the pound and euro, how many people here go to europe on holiday and even if you spend just a week or two there you get slightly used to the euro. so it won't be that bad. i think if we did change we would lose money and it is a big concern to have our rates controlled by a european bank but that is something that we will have to deal with.

17/03/2006 21:00:00

justice

Thank you...

It seems a shame to close this Forum but that's the way it goes unfortunately. What a debate it has been!

You should all be proud of yourselves. You made your points, used evidence, asked questions, tried different viewpoints and came up with practical solutions - all around a set of very difficult and controversial issues. That's no small achievement! Those parliamentarians who agreed to provide feedback afterwards have certainly got a lot to chew over. Watch this space! The next Forum is on the subject of PUBLIC TRANSPORT which begins on Monday April 24<sup>th</sup> . Hope to see you there.

## Forum Topic Transcript

### European Union...

#### Are you European?

27/02/2006 09:00:00

justice

Welcome to the EU debate

Since its creation, the European Union has been the subject of a massive amount of media and political attention. Now, young people will get the opportunity to make their voices heard in this HeadsUp Forum.

This forum has attracted online involvement from a record number of key decision-makers including relevant MPs and MEPs. For more information see Who's listening? [www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s101\\_1](http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s101_1)

Are you European? Where does being 'European' come up on your radar? Explain your response...

27/02/2006 14:01:00

chilli

Banana focus is misguided...

What do you think of what Robert Evans MEP had to say about the current European Union criticisms and his thoughts on bananas? "I find the constant Europe-bashing by those who have no real understanding of how the European Union works disappointing at best. How many times have you read in the media that we in Europe

have nothing better to do than make decisions on the correct shape and colour of the banana? What is said of our achievements in Europe, of the legislation brought about in direct response to our citizens' needs?

Higher standards on the environment, health and safety and for air travellers. That's just for starters, so isn't it time we demanded a more accurate picture all round?"

27/02/2006 15:11:00

johnny

Britain

I feel that Britain has already lost so much control over different areas - what next? I have nothing against european people but I believe that each country has the right to make its own decisions and nobody should interfere.

27/02/2006 16:23:00

boffinbabe12

YES!

I am european as far as it goes. I was born in Europe and I live in Europe, but Europe is a continent- NOT a country! Each country spends billions each year on various schemes to make their country better and to research stuff ect. so why do we need the European Union to just redo all the stuff single governments can do on their own! When France finds a perfect solution to global warming, I doubt very much that they would keep it to themselves and hide it away, but I am sure that they are researching it, as is the Eu and every other county- but why do we need to pay even more to tax to fund EU research and EU schemes when each country can do it independently?

27/02/2006 23:14:00

Levitica

Replies

I agree with the Robert Evans quote - the media do only report bad things about Europe. Moany stories that are throwing blame on someone for something are printed a lot more than stories with no opinion in them that simply report something that has been achieved. The media don't think the positive, unbiased stories are interesting, and to be honest, they're probably not. "I have nothing against european people but I believe that each country has the right to make its own decisions and nobody should interfere." Hi. I feel more secure because there are people who could interfere. If there was no one to watch and possibly interfere, country leaders could do anything to the people in their country, but the EU was set up to stop countries getting out of hand.

27/02/2006 23:18:00

Levitica

Am I European?

I don't "feel" European, but I don't feel English or Irish either. I don't feel any connection between me and the place I happen to be born. It's not like a club. I didn't choose to be born here, and maybe I wouldn't have if I did have the choice. I'm not proud to be British, or European, it's not an achievement, I didn't pass a test to be British. I don't think I'd ever have a reason to inform somebody that I was European. I think people know where England is, so I'd just tell them I was from England...

28/02/2006 09:51:00

ChristineBurton

European Institute of Technology

Talking about research, have you heard about proposals to set up a European Institute of Technology? If you put European Institute of Technology into [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk) you will see there are lots of different opinions about this. Do you think this is a good idea? (Christine works in the UK office of the European Parliament [www.europarl.org.uk/](http://www.europarl.org.uk/) developing educational resources so that young people can learn about the European Parliament and become active European citizens).

28/02/2006 10:22:00

GrahamBradyMP

Response to Johnny, boffinbabe1

Absolutely right. The EU has brought some important benefits in breaking down trade barriers, opening travel and helping to entrench democracy in countries which have been ruled by dictators. Most of what is good about the EU can however be achieved through cooperation between free democracies with shared interests. We do not need a European Constitution and endless new EU legislation that is far too remote from the people.

28/02/2006 17:03:00

tj91

wat i fink

i am a european and think we should all be appreciated for who we are

28/02/2006 17:05:00

masterzen

Hey tj91 and others...

Your positive comments on feeling european are very interesting. A question for everyone: When you think of your identity, where does 'European' come into it?

28/02/2006 19:08:00

boffinbabe12

I admire your way of thinking Letv

I really like the way you said about not making an achievement out of being British or European, it is a very admirable way of thinking, but I feel that a bit of patriotism/patrism or whatever is good, because if nobody felt anything for their country then we would have lost WW2/1 as nobody would have fought. I think, although I am not sure, that If Britain was connected to Europe physically then I might feel more European... but since everyone- i.e media always refers to it as the island of europe it does alter my perception- yes i know it shouldn't. But I am not really British, I am about one eighth British and the rest is like south american and french and southern Irish and stuff so I dont really say that I am 'from England' 100%... but it is my home land... OH I DON'T KNOW! I will go onto another forum that doesnt confuse me so much! arghh

01/03/2006 11:03:00

TomWiseMEP

Am I European - a confession!

Yes, I am European, in the sense that I am not African or Asian, Eskimo or Navaho! That is simply because my family - as far back as the records I have seen - would appear to have lived in the UK for generations. It is quite possible that my surname, Wise, is derived from Weiss or White, a description given to the colour of my skin. But then, that is a fairly recent thought used only to differentiate folk from those with a darker complexion. If you were to compare my skin colour to a sheet of white paper, you could not call me white! Am I European in the context of the EU? No, I do not see myself in those terms, despite the efforts of the

"politically correct" brigade to persuade me. I am a British national, was born British and will die British. I am, if you really want to know, English and support English sports teams wherever they go. I am gutted that we, England, lost to Scotland last Saturday at Murrayfield, but being British I do not go around in histrionics about it.

01/03/2006 13:33:00

j103

Economical Benefits

I am studying history at A Level, and have just finished British Foreign Policy. I had to do a short study on the integration and the cooperation with Europe... Within that I found that the roots of the European Union were meant for economic advantages, hence the original name, the European Economic Community. I think we should consider how much we have benefitted from Europe economically. because in my view, it is quite a lot!

01/03/2006 15:28:00

Levitica

BoffinBabe

"I really like the way you said about not making an achievement out of being British or European, it is a very admirable way of thinking, but I feel that a bit of patriotism/patrism or whatever is good, because if nobody felt anything for their country then we would have lost WW2/1 as nobody would have fought."

Thanks. If I was ever involved in a war, (It would take a lot to get me involved in a war) it wouldn't be because my country was in the war. If I was fighting I would see it as fighting for the cause, not for my country. If I was in WW2 and I was doing something for the war effort I would be doing it to stop Hitler, not to be loyal to my country. I don't want to be linked with my country and it's actions. I am from the UK, and the UK went to war in Iraq and killed loads of people. I'm not responsible for that, not in the slightest, so I don't appreciate being linked with mycountry, I just live here.

01/03/2006 20:02:00

tpyp

Human Being

I do not see myself as European, British or English. I believe that we should not consider nationality or ethnicity and that it gets in the way of progress and equality. I think that we are all citizens of the world - human beings. To me "European" means restrictions on the less economically developed world, it means subsidising farmers, it means a capitalist club. Sure they have done things like the social charter (or is it chapter?) but what benefit has that been to any other group outside the EU? Lets get rid of these ridiculous barriers and have a level playing field where we are all citizens for earth.

01/03/2006 20:27:00

HotSoupMerangue

to boffinbabe12

we need an eu to police the governments, and to find out what each country is up to in monetry affairs. i myself am not sure whether i find myself european, as how can i pin down a couple of characteristics of being european. i do agree with you though that the eu can be a bit pointless. In the eu itself are vast organisations of people checking the vast oraganisations of people who are in the first place checking vast organisations of people. There should be an easier way!

02/03/2006 15:13:00

TomWiseMEP

j103 - a response

The European Union project was started, initially as an economic grouping, based upon the heavy industries of the then member states. In so organising themselves and advertising that as the plan, you could reasonably expect folk to go along with it. As the plan progressed, folk in the then member states did become more prosperous and we were encouraged to join this prosperous club, "because of the trading implications." Up to that point, we actually traded at a profit with those countries. Since then, we have traded at a loss, currently a cumulative total of over £1.50 Billion. Indeed the trading bloc known as the EU is the only one with whom we trade at a loss! So, we leave. Do you stop going to Spain for your holiday? Do BMW stop selling their cars here? Can we no longer enjoy French wine or Italian cheese? Of course not. They need us more than we need them as trading partners, indeed we are often their best customers!

02/03/2006 17:50:00

j103

ok I didn't know that much

ok well I didn't know that much. point taken. this gives me more reason to not like the Euro!

03/03/2006 12:10:00

lp17

EU

I think that the Blairs do not want to lose control or power or the people behind them who do not want to lose money. Joining the EU would be a real benefit to the people and it is the blairs and others who are deciding whether it is beneficial to them or not.

03/03/2006 12:21:00

ar06

good idea

i think the EU is a very good idea keepin governments in check and making alot of things more convenient however i think that there are still afew things that make it unappealing

03/03/2006 13:48:00

emory1

Am i European?

I reckon i am a european because we are part of the europena union. Just because we do not have the pound, it doesn't mean that we are any less european.

03/03/2006 13:50:00

roxi

brit

i'm British, the country i'm from is european but I'M British

03/03/2006 13:52:00

tinny\_10

my way of thinking

i dont thinnk we should be apart of the eu. i think that we should become independant.i think the eu is piontless

03/03/2006 13:55:00

roxi

eu

the eu helps us with trade an immigration and stuff like that. i think we should be a part of the eu, but that doesnt mean all countries in the eu have to be the same in everything, like the currency

03/03/2006 13:58:00

mole

what is the difference?

I am Scottish and very proud! I am also British and eqaully proud! I don't understand why people find it difficult to recognise that they can be both British and European, in the same way that we can be Scottish, Welsh or English and and British, but also European.

03/03/2006 13:59:00

marshi

why?

Why did tony Blair make us part of the EU? -Is to make the mijority of people, like him and vote for him.

03/03/2006 14:01:00

shipley

Am i european?

Well obvist!! Are we part of the european union? thats answers the qeustion

03/03/2006 14:03:00

roxi

re: why

the eu does benefit the UK as it means that we can do more trade and things like that, it wasnt all for his benefit

03/03/2006 15:27:00

littles

The Eu

I don't consider myself European. Europe is not united like other continents. We despise each others countries in europe, we all speak different languages, and have different currency (at least the England Europe divide.) I feel closer to the american's than to the europeans, despite how close it is. Then agian there is the fact that we are wrapped up in our own worlds of an ex-empire and aren't willing to give this ideal up, and move on... itworks both ways.

03/03/2006 15:30:00

littles

ar06

I have to disagree... if things like the UN cannot stop Americans from entering Iraq, then I fail to see how much of a different influence that the EU will have in Britain, apart from taking all the gold from our country and storing it in Germany, leaving us unable to defend our side if need be.

06/03/2006 12:48:00

biced

Week 1 issues

It has been a very interesting debate so far with some good deliberation amongst young people and parliamentarians. Just to recap here are a few of the main issues that have been covered in this section of the debate during week 1:

\* Good mixture of comments on whether young people feel European – most do not. In the first instance they feel English or British, not necessarily European.

\* Young people were concerned that the media only report negative EU stories, as the media thinks this is the only type of story the readers are interested in.

\* Participants felt that we had benefited economically from the EU. In addition, the EU helps us to set and maintain trade and immigration criteria.

Are there any other points you would like to raise - now's the time as it's your Forum!!

06/03/2006 18:17:00

RobertEvansMEP

Reply to boffinbabe12

"Each country spends billions each year on various schemes to make their country better and to research stuff ect. so why do we need the European Union to just redo all the stuff single governments can do on their own! "

Well, there are several answers here... The EU is not about a seperate entity "redoing" the things already done by member states. It is about member states coming together to pool their resources, their expertise and their ideas. You talk of the money spent by individual governments; in many cases it does not make sound economic sense for member states to work in isolation. As you say, each country is spending billions each year doing "x"... so why not have a team of European specialists doing "x" in one central location. This eliminates overlap and saves many billions of tax payers money. Let's put this in terms of legislation using the case of a recent piece of EU legislation regarding the rights of disabled people to fly. This law, passed in December by the European Parliament, will ensure that a disabled passenger (or one with reduced mobility) receives seamless assistance from the moment they reach the airport in their home country to the moment they leave the airport at their destination. Without all EU member states working together, this law would simply not work. Let's never forget that each piece of legislation that leaves the EU is approved by a council made up of ministers from each EU country. I hope that helps.

06/03/2006 18:22:00

RobertEvansMEP

Reply to marshi

Britain was a part of the European Union long before Tony Blair became Prime Minister. (I won't bore you history here) Furthermore, given the negative media coverage of all matters Europe, such a move would hardly have been made to improve popularity!

06/03/2006 18:26:00

RobertEvansMEP

European Institute of Technology

There has been a great deal of negativity surrounding this idea. But in an age when not just the USA and Japan, but China, India and many other countries are investing heavily in the future, surely this proposed new venture should be welcomed? The opportunity to share good practice among 25 countries, complement skills and promote the best possible innovations should not be so quickly dismissed

Equally it isn't fanciful to suggest that the European Parliament's Strasbourg building could be a ready made venue, especially since the estimated £200 million a year saved by not dividing the work of the European Parliament between Brussels and Strasbourg would provide a healthy budget.

06/03/2006 18:35:00

RobertEvansMEP

to J103

Your original message and point of view was a strong one and a good one. You should have the conviction to stick to your opinion and not be persuaded by the political rhetoric of a politician who would have us completely isolated from Europe with no regard for the repercussions for the British people.

06/03/2006 18:49:00

RobertEvansMEP

reply to mole

I couldn't have put this better myself.

The whole debate regarding are we "European" or "British" is a misnomer to my mind and rather over hyped. Working with our neighbours in a union of nation states does not require us to relinquish our identity.

"European" doesn't replace "British". Just as "African" doesn't replace "Nigerian" nor "Asian", "Indonesian".

We are part of a community that exists to make life safer and more economically stable for its citizens.

06/03/2006 18:51:00

RobertEvansMEP

littles

You say "we despise each other in Europe" -- I am interested to hear if others agree with this sentiment.

06/03/2006 19:42:00

ellies

european?

I'm not sure if I consider myself european or not. Technically, being from a European country, I am classed as European, but I feel it important to hold on to my identity as a British person. If everyone in Europe classed themselves as simple 'European' then we would lose each country's individual character and identity.

07/03/2006 10:59:00

DouglasAlexanderMP

European Identity

I am a Scot, as well as being British and European and we all have our own backgrounds which make up who we are. But while as we in Britain share a common identity within these islands, we also share a sense of European identity with the rest of the continent. Being European is in addition to our national identity and not an alternative to it. Europe is made up of many countries who all share in their own particular ways European values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. That is our common heritage but at the same time we can still all enjoy our own traditions – and each others.

08/03/2006 12:33:00

Levitica

ellies

"I'm not sure if I consider myself european or not. Technically, being from a European country, I am classed as European, but I feel it important to hold on to my identity as a British person. If everyone in Europe classed themselves as simple 'European' then we would lose each country's individual character and identity." I don't really understand this point. People from different parts of the UK or Britain have their own individual common characteristics. Because we are joined together as the UK, that doesn't make the scots the same as the welsh, or the londoners the same as the people in Leeds, and because we're all citizens of the same country that doesn't mean we're all the same. We are in Europe, but that doesn't make the British the same as the Germans.

08/03/2006 12:47:00

Levitica

You say

"You say "we despise each other in Europe" -- I am interested to hear if others agree with this sentiment."

I don't agree with this. I don't think that we as a country despise any other countries. In the media and in what people say there is very little racism towards countries in other parts of Europe compared to what there is towards people in other parts of the world.

10/03/2006 11:37:00

gruff

Constrasting opinions on feeling

In September 2005, Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson, record breaking paralympic athlete, gave her positive outlook on Europe: "I'm genuinely in favour of Europe as I believe that, in terms of the way the world is going, we need

to do as much as possible to foster co-operation. There are things that I don't like about Europe but I believe that we have to be in it to change it. We also need to do more to make the EU better understood, especially to young people. At the moment it feels like an exclusive political club and this is not healthy. "

An alternative viewpoint was provided by Sarfraz Manzoor, filmmaker and writer, who shares the views of some of you who feel more closely associated with the US than with the EU. However, he is still open-minded about Europe...

"I don't feel very European but I would like to. Culturally I feel closer to the United States but politically I have more in common with Europe. It was always the US which inspired me in terms of its ideals as well as its popular culture but I feel alienated by its belief that the free market is king. The European model which suggests a greater role for state provision appeals to me far more. I would like to feel more European but I suspect that the reason I do not is because I am not sure what it means to be European. "

Are these reactions to the EU and feeling European pretty much as you expected or wide of the mark? Why do you think that some people feel closer to the US than EU and is this a worrying trend considering that the EU is on our doorstep (at least from a geographical perspective)?

10/03/2006 14:19:00

Levitica

Closer to the US

I think it's not surprising that people feel closer to the US. We speak the same language as people there, they are closely related to us (although I don't really think that matters,) we watch lots of American TV and films, and due to the common language many people here are friends with Americans on the internet. Because of a common language normal people have more to do with the US than they do with other European countries. Politically, the UK is becoming closer to the US, and the UK has been fighting with the US, not other European countries, in Iraq. Geographically is the other way we are closer to mainland Europe than the US.

10/03/2006 15:11:00

ellies

littles

I don't think all the european countries despise each other - going abroad I find all the people friendly. However going to the USA I found the welcome less friendly. I'm sure there are some people in every country that do not like other countries but it is not a fair assumption that all european countries despise each other.

10/03/2006 15:14:00

littles

The US

The US will always be closer to us the Europe, even if we did join the European union. We are almost part of the US. The first pilgrims there were American, and even, they seem to love our ways and traditions. However, europe does not respect these in the same way - I can't say I blame them - we are completely different, apart being geographically close to them which I don't can make much difference.

14/03/2006 12:16:00

Maisie

european union

we should be part of the European. And it is a good thing. We are part of the European Union and we will not loose the money or anything so I don't see what is wrong

14/03/2006 12:23:00

poshwolf4

european union

i think we should be part of the eu because we arnt very big and although we are quite a rich country my might need suport in other arias and its nice to know that we're not on your own in every thing and have suport in other arias. but im glad we dont use the euro as i just find it complicated and forren, when i think of brittain i dont think of euro. when i think of euro i think of france not that thats bad or anything.the pound is fine for me thankyou.

14/03/2006 12:23:00

Maisie

European Union

I believe there are several bad things in the European Union but if we are not included we will not be able to change them bad things are we? I also think we should be in the European Union because we are not exactly the biggest country are we?!!!! And if we are not included in the European Union then where else will we be included in.

There is the United States which I think are cool, but will they accept us as them or not?!? I think it would be a good idea if we stayed part of the European Unioin rather than being excluded and we should stay that way so we camn change the few bad things in the European Union.

14/03/2006 13:20:00

The Beast

No...

The British are so unique that we could never really call ourselves European. Our cultures are so different from France, Geramny etc. so...

14/03/2006 18:50:00

poshwolf4

EU

I think that we should be in the eu even though we're not technicaly in europe. well we need support in some arias and the word is ment to be together in things. actually i thought brittain was in europe so maybe other people do to and wont complain.

14/03/2006 18:56:00

poshwolf4

yes

i completely disagree wiv da beast yes we are unique but that is no reason to not be apart of da eu, cos if we have a war a war maybe they will help. and we feel like we have a neighbor

15/03/2006 16:14:00

goat  
eu

our cultures are not completely different to the others in europe, we still have many basic religions the only things different could be the climate, food and some of the laws. i think we should be allowed to make our own laws but it does make sense to consider what effects it will have on other countries nearby.

17/03/2006 21:00:00

justice

Thank you...

It seems a shame to close this Forum but that's the way it goes unfortunately. What a debate it has been!

You should all be proud of yourselves. You made your points, used evidence, asked questions, tried different viewpoints and came up with practical solutions - all around a set of very difficult and controversial issues. That's no small achievement! Those parliamentarians who agreed to provide feedback afterwards have certainly got a lot to chew over. Watch this space! The next Forum is on the subject of PUBLIC TRANSPORT which begins on Monday April 24th. Hope to see you there.

## Forum Topic Transcript

### European Union...

#### Opening up Europe

27/02/2006 09:00:00

justice

Welcome to the EU debate

Since its creation, the European Union has been the subject of a massive amount of media and political attention. Now, young people will get the opportunity to make their voices heard in this HeadsUp Forum. Do you think that making it easier to travel and work in other European states and cities is a good thing? Which parts of Europe would you like to work or travel in and why? Any other points you would like to raise - now's the time!

27/02/2006 13:24:00

gruff

EU challenges

What do you think of what Graham Brady MP had to say about the challenges facing the EU? "We must also respond to a rapidly changing world. The biggest challenges and opportunities in the modern world increasingly lie outside Europe. As young people are aware, some of the most exciting areas of economic growth in the world are China, India and Russia. This doesn't mean that we should turn our backs on our friends in the European Union but it does mean that a continuing move towards a centralised and over-regulated EU would be dangerous - we should look outwards and concentrate on becoming more competitive."

27/02/2006 15:17:00

johnny

Living in italy

I'm interested in learning italian and it would great to be able to live in italy to practise the language. Without the eu this would not happen.

27/02/2006 16:45:00

boffinbabe12

not neccesserrily johnny

u could still learn italian and potentially work in italy, except it would be WAY harder, but having said that- look how many people there are who just go and come from arabic countries! I know about 5 people who have gone to live in Dubai in the past year- that seems pretty easy so i wouldnt be too difficult i dont think. But also the ease in which the EU lets everything/one in and out of the countries makes it really easy for smugglers, drug dealers, illegal people to get in and out.

27/02/2006 23:21:00

Levitica

Good thing.

I think the ability to travel to some other countries and work there easily is a good thing. It lets some people (like Johnny) do what they want to do, and gives them more freedom. That's only a small number of people though, I don't think it really affects the rest of us.

28/02/2006 09:32:00

ChristineBurton

only a small number?

The EU stats page ([www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s102\\_5](http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s102_5)) says that 350,000 Brits live in other EU states so perhaps it affects more people than you think. Years ago, before the UK joined the EU I wanted to work in Spain but was restricted on what I would be allowed to do and work permits were not easy to come by. Since the UK joined I have enjoyed working in Luxembourg and Brussels.

28/02/2006 15:55:00

Levitica

Christine Burton

That is a large number of people, but the same thing could be achieved without an EU - countries could just make their work permits easier to come by from people from countries they approve of (or even for everyone.) Countries can only benefit from that by joining the EU. If the EU was split into different organisations and schemes for each thing, perhaps we would get more out of them. There are countries who are not allowed to join the EU or choose not to that may join an organisation of countries that let people move reasonably easily between them, meaning everyone would have more countries to go to. I'm not sure if this is a good idea or not, as I like that the EU is able to keep some countries in line, and at the moment it can offer benefits to countries who join who might not join otherwise.

28/02/2006 19:14:00

boffinbabe12

LOVELY

I am just really really really annoyed that they would not allow Danny Wallace's country of LOVELY into the EU! It is an official country, it has its own land- about 10ft squared- but almost all of its residents used to be British, it is technically in Europe, and despite his pleas, he was refused to be allowed in! And they refused his application to Eurovision! LONG LIVE KING DANNY!

01/03/2006 10:51:00

TomWiseMEP

Opening up Europe

It is interesting to see the posts on this, as if people had not been travelling around the world before we joined the EU!

(By the way, we have never joined the EU, nor were ever asked if we wanted to. In 1972 Edward Heath, the then British Prime Minister, signed the Treaty of Rome and Britain joined the "EEC" - European Economic Community - on January 1st 1973. In 1986, the EEC then changed its name to the "EC" - European Community. This changed again - in 1992 - as one of the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty when it became the "EU" - the European Union). The European Union is a political construct which, in the founding Treaty of Rome, commits its members to "Ever closer Union". Subsequent Treaties always confirm this.

That we now "enjoy" such freedoms - movement of people etc, is simply "claimed" by the EU as part of the justification of its existence. As a young man in 1963, (I am 57 now) I travelled all across Europe without any problems at all. Sure, I had a passport. Guess what, I still have one as I need it to travel to and from Brussels and Strasbourg. But it is no longer a British passport, but a European Union one! I am no longer a British subject, but a European citizen.

01/03/2006 17:27:00

biged

Questions, Questions, Questions.

Have you guys got any burning questions which you would like answered by the parliamentarians taking part in this debate? If so now's the time to ask whatever you like... Don't forget that there is a huge amount of expert knowledge about the EU shared amongst these parliamentarians, so if you have something you would like to ask an MEP or MP - perhaps more information on their roles, how much they travel or how you can become an MEP/MP...It's your forum!

02/03/2006 09:37:00

tpyp

TomWiseMEP

Is it not true however that if Britain had signed the Shengen treaty we would be able to travel between all European states, passport free? Like every other European Union nation? I believe that border restrictions only result in a wealth divide and one way to get around this would be to allow anyone to live anywhere they want. There's all this Daily Mail talk of Immigrants and Asylum seekers (they often confuse them), are they advocating segregation on wealth and race? Are national boundaries not just an excuse for an Apartheid?

02/03/2006 09:52:00

tpyp

TomWiseMEP

As an MEP do you get annoyed with UKIP who wish to destroy the EU? What about traveling between Parliaments I mean you only go to Strasbourg for Plenaries (however you spell it) and Luxembourg for something else? Doesn't that waste a great deal of EU money that could be spent on making a difference or decreasing the spiralling wealth divide?

02/03/2006 11:34:00

TomWiseMEP

Comments by tpyp

The Schengen agreement allows folk the freedom to travel around the EU. That is particularly relevant when you are crossing land borders, but not so when you arrive by sea. Arrive at any British (or Irish, Maltese or Cypriot) sea port, and you could literally have come from anywhere in the world. The new member states have had restrictions placed on movement and settling of their citizens by other EU countries, not Britain. When you fly anywhere these days, even Luton to Glasgow, you must have proof of identity. As far as immigration & asylum is concerned - which you raised, not me - please remember that we are a smallish, already overcrowded island. If total free movement of people were to be allowed, how about all 450 million of us EU citizens all move to Malta? As a point of reference, Malta is slightly bigger than the Isle of Wight. What would then happen to the infrastructure there? How would they cope? Your second posting on the stupidity of moving my office to Strasbourg and back to Brussels every month is well made. It costs the EU taxpayers about £100 million every year, adds to road congestion, burns fossil fuels unnecessarily and as a venue, is most difficult to get to, except from other places in France! Now, guess who wanted it? The French government insisted that it should be incorporated in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, signed by Tony Blair just after he was elected. To change it needs unanimity amongst ALL member states.

The French will never change their minds, despite over 600 MEPs complaining. You might guess who the majority of non-complainers were! The European parliament does not go to Luxembourg, but it is the base for most of the administrative functions. If you were starting from scratch, would you want offices so spread out?

02/03/2006 13:39:00

ElunedMorganMEP

easier to travel in the EU is a goo

When I was young it was only rich people who were able to travel to the continent. Today tens of millions of people from all over the UK travel to other parts of the EU. When people did go abroad they could not rely on the safety of the tap water, weren't sure of what was in the food they were being offered so that if they had allergies for example they would not know what foods to avoid, and if they bought an electronic item that was cheaper there, they could not replace the item if they found there was a problem with it when they returned home. All these problems have now been solved thanks to our involvement with the EU. Far more people are able to take up cheap holidays because the EU has liberalised air travel. The water in all parts of the EU has to conform with common drinking water standards, there is compulsory labelling of food and there is a guarantee on electronic items which is valid anywhere in the EU. Through travelling abroad we can open our horizons and experience different cultures.

02/03/2006 13:41:00

ElunedMorganMEP

easier to travel in the EU is a goo

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02/03/2006 13:56:00

chilli

Bird flu sweeps across Europe

Where does the increasing number of bird flu cases in EU member states and beyond, appear on your radar? Should the spread of this virus be managed by national governments, or collective bodies such as the EU or United Nations (UN)? If you want more information on the bird flu virus, click here for more information [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/world/2005/bird\\_flu/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2005/bird_flu/default.stm)

02/03/2006 20:26:00

jl03

Immigrants

I heard that apparently since Poland joined the EU, and loads and loads of Polish immigrants came to the UK, it has actually boosted our economy and consequently created more jobs. Surely that is a good point about being able to travel easier between EU member states.

03/03/2006 10:54:00

TomWiseMEP

J103 - update!

I have no problem with folk coming here to work, to help us. Indeed the influx of Polish plumbers is one of the many interesting consequences of the expansion of the EU in 2004. However, there are consequences. Most British plumbers are trained to CORGI (Council of Registered Gas Installers) standards and have sound training. Is this the case in Poland? And what happens to the demand for plumbers in Poland after all these folk have left? The government said that, as a result of the expansion of the EU, we could expect about 30,000 folk to move to the UK. The latest figures I have seen, which were for the 12 months to June 2005, the figure was at least 10 times that at nearly 350,000.

03/03/2006 13:52:00

shipley

Risks

America has recently increased airport security. If they feel the threat from terrorism is adequate to increase security then we should follow suit. Certainly not reduce it, that doesn't make sense!

03/03/2006 13:52:00

marshi

Question to Eluned Morgan

Do you think that know we (UK) belong to the EU that all problems have been solved?

03/03/2006 13:59:00

shawridge

Immigration

I think that you need some limitations on immigrations and at the moment they are too lax, it's not as extreme as banning all movement between countries but definitely tightening up the rules and regulations, for example I think that the form that you have to sign to get British citizenship should only be written in English, this would at least mean that people living in our country will at least speak English!

03/03/2006 14:02:00

hotchocolate

marsi

no I don't, to be honest we have a lot of problems on our hands and I think we should try talking about it maybe write letters to the government. What do you think?

03/03/2006 14:03:00

emory1

good thing

I think that allowing people from the EU to work in any other part of the EU is excellent for the European economy. It allows people to experience experiences that they would not have if we were a separate unit. Also, by having the ability to travel to anywhere in the EU and work there without a permit, it lets people who could not work in their country to apply for a job elsewhere.

06/03/2006 12:50:00

biged

Week 1 issues

It has been a very interesting debate so far with some good deliberation amongst young people and parliamentarians. Just to recap here are a few of the main issues that have been covered in this section of the debate during week 1:

\* The opening up of Europe, which allows for easier travel and work opportunities in other EU member states, is widely considered to be a positive move by the participants.

\* Participants felt that the opening up of Europe provides a huge boost to the EU economy, with the influx of visitors/workers from fellow member states.

\* Another young person mentioned that the influx of Polish immigrants in recent years has boosted our economy and created more jobs. This HeadsUp participant then received a direct response from Tom Wise MEP in the Forum...Are there any other points you would like to raise - now's the time as it's your Forum!!

06/03/2006 14:57:00

ElunedMorganMEP

Response to marshi

Of course by joining the EU all our problems are not solved, but we do need to understand that there are times when it makes sense to pool our resources and that sometimes means giving up a little bit of our national sovereignty in order to have a greater impact in the world. In the global age this is an issue which most people understand. Just take the current energy crisis and the fact that by 2010 more than 70% of the EU's gas will come from Russia. At the moment each individual EU country negotiates its own terms with Russia, if we were to pool our negotiating capacities we could probably get a much better deal from Russia.

07/03/2006 11:03:00

DouglasAlexanderMP

Opening up Europe

I don't agree with Harden (under 'the Euro - fan or foe?'). Allowing more countries to join the EU can be good for European prosperity and stability and it is not some attempt to rival the US as a superpower. It is about improving trade, building prosperity and extending democracy. The UK was one of the biggest advocates of enlargement and during our presidency of the EU talks were opened with Turkey and Croatia on becoming EU members. Bringing in new members doesn't just give nationals from other countries the chance to come and work here, but it also opens up new markets for British industries to go and do business in. Enlarging Europe means that with 460 million European citizens the EU is now the largest single market in the world.

07/03/2006 11:08:00

DouglasAlexanderMP

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08/03/2006 19:29:00

littles

WW1...learn from past mistakes

Wasn't WW1 started because of countries joining together with various treaties and then getting greedy for power, dragging many into the fold. Correct me if I'm wrong but it was France, England, Russia and Belgium against Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy. Who is saying that this won't develop into the same thing on a bigger scale.

10/03/2006 11:01:00

masterzen

Turkey :: an improving human rig

On March 3rd 2006, Turkey said it would shortly scrap the death penalty in times of war, bringing it into line with the EU, which it wants to join. Turkey abolished the death penalty in peacetime in August 2002 as part of a package of human rights reforms aimed at persuading the EU to open membership talks. The talks began in October 2005 but are expected to last many years. The policy will come into effect on June 1 2006. The EU is strongly opposed to the death penalty, though the US and Japan still carry out executions. Turkey has executed no one since 1984. Should Turkey be applauded for this move, or should the EU be watchful and cautious about Turkey's motives, or is it a move that is long overdue??

10/03/2006 14:23:00

Levitica

Littles

"Wasn't WW1 started because of countries joining together with various treaties and then getting greedy for power, dragging many into the fold. Correct me if I'm wrong but it was France, England, Russia and Belgium against Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy. Who is saying that this won't develop into the same thing on a bigger scale." It wasn't the countries joining together that started the war, it was their aggressive nature and how they were squaring up against each other. If the countries had not joined up, there still would have been a war - countries would still have joined in once the war kicked off as they thought what the other countries were doing was wrong.

10/03/2006 14:24:00

Levitica

Death Penalty

I think this proves that the EU is having some good effects. It has been able to bribe Turkey into dropping the death penalty. Although supporters of the death penalty wouldn't see it this way, I think that it's definitely a good thing.

10/03/2006 15:27:00

littles

FAO Levitica

If you look into history research, it is unlikely that WW1 would have happened if it weren't for the treaties bond created between the many countries. Germany advanced, with Italy and Austria/Hungary to take Belgium into its mini empire, and destroy it. However, Belgium being a neutral country, was forced to ask the French/English/Russian side to help, which they did willingly. It is unlikely therefore, that Germany or Austria/Hungary would have attacked if they were alone because they would have been unable to fight off the English/French/Russian forces. So you see, that the war could have been prevented if it weren't for the treaty, and that this EU development COULD develop into a scaled up version of this.

11/03/2006 18:10:00

Levitica

Reply

It was more countries being out for themselves that started the war. All the countries at this time were proud of their nation and wanted to become more powerful, having the most arms and the largest empire. These weren't countries that wanted to work together. The alliances were formed when all countries knew a war was going to start, and they formed the alliances to outgrow

37

the other side. There is no other side for the EU to beat, is there? The conflicts between the countries were the reasons for the alliances then, not the other way around. Germany had planned for war with France and Russia in 1897, before they made any formal alliance or treaties. Countries such as Britain and Germany were just involved because they wanted to beat the other, and just took the excuse. What you said isn't really right, it's just how Britain got involved, the war had started before Belgium was invaded, Russia, Germany, Austria, Serbia, France and whoever else were already involved. If no countries stood up for any other countries at all, war would not have been avoided, Austria would have taken Serbia, and, I believe, a war between Germany and France would have happened over something else.

14/03/2006 12:21:00

bluebell

forum

yes i think being able to travel in european state's is a god thing

14/03/2006 12:22:00

olivera

EU

I think that we should spend more money on the poor people and not so much on the eu. The EU should just give them a job or something like that.

15/03/2006 16:06:00

goat

travelling around europe

it sounds like a good idea. i think i would love to go to european countries in the east or north like sweden or poland.

15/03/2006 19:46:00

bluebell

forum

i think it would be a useful thing to be able to go to any citie's in the world and work is a good thing. i would like to go to paris, south africa ,japan.

16/03/2006 12:03:00

asyp

Britain's Ignorance...

I think that the ease with which we can travel within the EU is great as it means that young people like myself can go to other countries to learn different languages and about different cultures. Everyone seems to complain about how ignorant

Britain is as a country so to give people the opportunity to travel to other countries so freely should help this 'problem'. People would be able to see how people in other countries live and be able to see that different cultures are something we should try to embrace and learn about instead of frown upon them.

17/03/2006 21:00:00

justice

Thank you...

It seems a shame to close this Forum but that's the way it goes unfortunately. What a debate it has been! The next Forum is on the subject of PUBLIC TRANSPORT which begins on Monday April 24th. Hope to see you there.

## Forum Topic Transcript

### European Union...

#### Law and Order

09/03/2006 10:14:00

justice

Law and order discussion

Despite the media attention, the European Union is now said to account for 50% of all laws made in the UK. What is your reaction to this figure? Given this figure shouldn't this be a call for more rather than less involvement in the EU? What is your take on this stat - lower than expected or on the money? If you have any other points you would like to raise - now's the time as it's your forum... The HeadsUp team decided to open up this extra topic for discussion as the EU debate was going so well.

10/03/2006 10:41:00

biged

UK emissions

Did you know that last month Britain was denied the opportunity, by the European Commission, to raise the amount of pollution it can create under the EU emissions trading scheme? In 2005, Britain asked permission to increase the amount of carbon dioxide (the main gas blamed for global warming) its industry was allowed to emit from 2005 to 2007 by 20 million tonnes.

The emissions trading scheme is the EU's key instrument for fighting climate change and meeting commitments under the Kyoto environment treaty. What does this decision mean to you? A few of you have already stated that you feel safer and more secure knowing that the EU is there to keep a check on governments. Do you think that this story is a good example of the EU doing its job well, or over-stepping the mark?

10/03/2006 14:29:00

Levitica

Well

I think this is an example of the EU doing its job well, it's helping the environment, isn't it? For things like the environment there needs to be worldwide cooperation, if every country doesn't do its best then many countries will do nothing. Ideally I would like to see a worldwide organisation that would do the policing side of the EU's role (keeping the trading side to Europe) but without the economic benefits countries will not join, so an EU as big as possible is probably the best option.

10/03/2006 15:20:00

littles

Differenc ein Cultures

i thkn that the influence that the EU already has over England is enough. The laws that we create in Britain should be stricky British, and I think that a 50% influence is more than enough. Great Britain will have different views to those in Europe. in France, for example, Horses are freely eaten. That is their culture. In England, it is unlikely that Horse willl actually be eaten, due to the copious amounts of animals activists and the unwillingness to eat it. This is just and example of how our lives differ to those in Europe, and why it is not a good idea for them to influence our laws

14/03/2006 12:22:00

HotSoupMerangue

levitica

good point. without these laws that are passed we will never move forwards. if we cant make changes in our societies for the greater good of the populants we will become stagnant. but some of these laws are sometimes a little too fecicious(i think)

14/03/2006 12:29:00

bluebell

law and order

that is abit off it dos'nt make any sence at al and they need to make other rules in other country's not just the european euion.

14/03/2006 12:30:00

danzo

stupid

i think some of yhe laws are stupid because your so restricted

15/03/2006 16:10:00

goat

eu laws

i think the figure is pretty high. that should give us more reason to become more involved with the eu. i think that england not being allowed to emmit more carbon dioxide is good cos it is affecting the planet so it should be restricted at least a little bit.

16/03/2006 09:11:00

TomWiseMEP

LAW & ORDER

The figure of 50% of our laws now coming from Brussels, is on the low side. I have seen figures of over 80%!

There is a book of accumulated legislation (called by a Latin name) the 'Acquis Communautaire' which runs to over 85,000 laws that were passed in Brussels and now apply in all member states. This is what all new countries have to accept as part of their laws when they join. One thing is certain. EU law is now supreme. It overrides British law and when the UK tries to do something that is independent, the EU can and has told us not to. The classic example is the Merchant Shipping Law, passed in the late 1980's by the then Conservative government which tried to stop the plundering of fish stocks in the North Sea. The British government had to pay about £100 million in compensation.

16/03/2006 21:15:00

The Beast

Problems...

The trouble is that different countries have different cultures, and that the British culture can be very different from other European countries. Therefore, if Europe is affecting our law system, they don't know how our 'system' works and whether or not we have the same problems as them, so imposing rules on us could be detrimental to our system.

17/03/2006 13:07:00

firefly

Staggering!

I think that EU law is the start of the attempt to amalgamate the countries that are members of the EU into one closely tied block. The laws that are made in Brussels are not always suitable to all of the members and I believe that the EU should not be able to introduce so many laws into our society, when these laws are often not suited to our culture/country.

17/03/2006 17:07:00

j103

has the parliament got any suffici

this is a question aimed at the MEPs... I do Law at A-level, and we are currently studying the EU. I understand that the Council of Ministers have law making power and The Commission have a purpose in proposals and finalising directives and stuff, But other than the part it has in the dismissal of the Commission, should the occassion arrive, what real power does the European Parliament have?

17/03/2006 21:00:00

justice

Thank you...

It seems a shame to close this Forum but that's the way it goes unfortunately. What a debate it has been! The next Forum is on the subject of PUBLIC TRANSPORT which begins on Monday April 24th. Hope to see you there.