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**EUROPEAN  
UNION**

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**MADELINE PREHM**



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## KEY TERMS

Brexit

Democratic deficit

Europhile

Eurosceptic

Lisbon Treaty

Referendum

Sovereignty

# INTRODUCTION

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# NOTES

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On 26 May this year the Eurosceptic UK Independence Party (UKIP) won a majority of votes in the UK elections for the European Parliament, the governing institution of the 28 member state European Union. UKIP's manifesto pledge was to withdraw the UK from the European Union entirely, with key campaign messages about the UK's control of legal matters and immigration policy [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. As highlighted in the Guardian newspaper, the UKIP victory caused a 'political earthquake' as this was the first time in modern British electoral history that neither the Conservative nor Labour parties had won a national poll [Ref: [Guardian](#)], leading some to react nervously to the electoral upset and argue that established mainstream parties need to: "...urgently reconsider" a referendum on continued membership of the EU to better reflect public concerns about the UK's relationship with it [Ref: [Huffington Post](#)]. UKIP's election victory reflected a broader trend across Europe as a whole which saw anti-EU parties gain support from their electorates, marking what some argue was a large-scale rejection of EU authority over national governments [Ref: [Financial Times](#)]. The prime minister has promised a referendum on the matter by 2017 [Ref: [Guardian](#)], and under the terms of the coalition government's European Union Act 2011: "...no British government will be able to agree a new Lisbon Treaty, or join the euro, or give up our border controls, or set up a European army...without first gaining the explicit agreement of the British people" by referendum [Ref: [Telegraph](#)]. So, is the EU anti-democratic and a threat to the UK's control of fiscal, legal and immigration policies as UKIP and many others argue? Or are our nation's interests best served as part of the broader European project with our role in Europe meaning we are: "...part of a much bigger entity with far-reaching international influence" [Ref: [Guardian](#)]?



### The European project: keeping the peace

The UK joined the forerunner of the European Union, the European Economic Community (EEC), in 1973, a decision later endorsed by referendum in 1975 [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. The EEC was forged in the aftermath of two world wars, and an influential blog argues: “For well over half a century, the various evolutions of European community have maintained unprecedented peace and stability on the continent. We should not take this happy situation, that is rooted in the EU, for granted” [Ref: [Left Foot Forward](#)]. The belief that the European Union provides a bulwark against European nationalist antagonisms underwrites many of its advocates’ arguments. Euroscepticism, they argue, is a means to legitimate ‘populist’ right-wing politicians promoting nationalistic ideas against fellow European nations. But others are not convinced and argue that warnings about: “...the dangers of populism speak to an elitist disdain for mass politics” [Ref: [spiked](#)]. Notable Eurosceptic John Redwood MP is equally critical of the belief that the EU is a source of peace, suggesting: “This is rather like arguing that we need to belong to the EU to keep horses and carts off our streets. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century our streets teemed with them, but since joining the EU they have disappeared” [Ref: [John Redwood](#)]. For those in favour of the UK’s continued membership of the EU, the combination of a common market and a transnational form of government has plenty to recommend it: “...in the political arenas like the G8 and G20, Britain has far greater heft because we are alongside other EU nations” [Ref: [Evening Standard](#)]. As one commentator put it: “...together we are more than the sum of our parts” [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. But for those calling for the

UK’s withdrawal, the loss of national sovereignty and economic self-governance is too high a price to pay. “Economic prosperity has allowed indulgence in self-destructive habits. Degenerate politics have perpetuated the sources of decline; the incessant draw of “ever closer union” has been a massive diversion from the objective of creating European success” argues a leading City economist [Ref: [Telegraph](#)].

### A failure of “solidarity among Member States”?

Much criticism of the European Union has recently focused on its attempts to maintain financial stability and credibility of the Euro on international markets in the light of the 2008 Eurozone crisis [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. The Eurozone is an economic and monetary union of 17 member states (excluding the UK) who share the common currency of the Euro under strict fiscal rules created by Eurozone leaders. The political consequence of these rules, some argue, highlights the anti-democratic nature of the EU as they allow Brussels to directly intervene in national economies, forcing countries such as Greece, Italy and Ireland to enact domestically unpopular austerity measures. In 2011 this led to the departure of Greece’s premier George Papandreou [Ref: [Guardian](#)] and Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. Critics of these events argue that both democratically elected prime ministers: “...found themselves being eased out of office at Europe’s behest and replaced by unelected technocrats...trusted within the EU to pass economic reforms deemed appropriate by policymakers in Berlin...and at EU headquarters in Brussels” [Ref: [Financial Times](#)]. But for some the Eurozone crisis has: “...arguably strengthened the original case for Europe – as a

means of keeping the peace: while conventional warfare on EU soil still feels unlikely” as one pro-EU commentator argues [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. One reaction to the Eurozone crisis, claim some commentators, has been the rise of new nationalistic parties across Europe, such as Golden Dawn in Greece who call for a rejection of EU-led austerity measures and have reacted angrily against economic migrants. EU supporters argue that the rise of such populist, nationalistic parties is a challenge to the whole European project, and that we need to: “...find a solution that brings stability while fulfilling the egalitarian principles the EU project aspires to. Otherwise, the future is one of angry, reactionary nationalisms [Ref: [New Statesman](#)]. So, with economic instability in the Eurozone, and the apparent rise of nationalist parties in response, has the European project ultimately failed in its original objective of: “...the promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity amongst Member States” [Ref: [European Union](#)]?

## A democratic deficit?

“...the weakness of the system is not about spending and how to promote growth, but about legitimacy” said a German official about the EU, as quoted in a European Council on Foreign Relations paper [Ref: [Economist](#)]. Those critical of the whole EU project argue that it has: “...taken decision-making away from national parliaments. On virtually everything that matters, from the economy to immigration, decisions are made elsewhere”, and that it operates in: “...a protected sphere, safe from the demands of voters and their representatives” [Ref: [Telegraph](#)]. One of UKIP’s election campaign messages was ‘Who really runs this

country? 75% of our laws are now made in Brussels?’ raising the issue of national sovereignty [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Critics demanding a UK exit highlight that the EU prohibits the UK from applying its own principles of law and is profoundly undemocratic as a result [Ref: [Telegraph](#)]. For any institution to be democratic, they argue, its people must have a voice in the legislative process – but with only the unelected European Commission and its President able to initiate new legislation [Ref: [European Commission](#)] it fails to be so. A Pew Research poll shows that majorities in seven European countries (the UK included) don’t think their voice counts in the EU [Ref: [Pew Research](#)], and although the European Parliament is elected by the people of Europe, just 34.19 % of UK voters cast their ballots this year [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. But supporters of the UK remaining in the EU argue that, even despite its flaws, we should remain in as: “The growth of euroscepticism across Europe means the elites won’t be able to bamboozle the people into agreeing more transfers of power to Brussels, as they have done in the past” and that: “There are no good alternatives to membership. We should stay in the EU and put our energy into reforming it” [Ref: [Independent](#)]. Others speak more positively of the EU as a guarantor of universal “social rights” [Ref: [Left Foot Forward](#)], with some suggesting that the EU’s treatment of human rights is: “second to none” [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. So what are the political issues at stake with the UK’s membership of the European Union? Should we: “...fix it, not nix it” [Ref: [Independent](#)]?

# ESSENTIAL READING

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NOTES

Britain and the EU: a long and rocky relationship

*BBC News* 1 April 2014

The EU: should Britain be in or out?

*Guardian* 18 January 2014

Britain and Europe: the essential guide

*Guardian* 18 January 2013

## FOR

Britain should leave the EU if Europe's judges trample on our basic protections

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard *Telegraph* 30 April 2014

There's a whole world out there outside the EU: its Britain's for the taking

Ian Mansfield *The Times* 13 April 2014

Europe is slowly strangling the life out of national democracy

Peter Osborne *Telegraph* 1 January 2014

The Eurozone crisis means the UK must now leave the EU

Patrick Minford *London School of Economics and Political Science* 17 September 2012

## AGAINST

Why staying in the EU is the rational decision

Sean McGovern *Lloyds* 28 May 2014

Why Britain should stay in the EU

Hugo Dixon *Independent* 25 March 2014

For Britain to leave the EU would be economic suicide

Tony Blair *Evening Standard* 9 September 2013

Four reasons Britain should remain in the EU

*Left Foot Forward* 12 June 2012

## IN DEPTH

National Governments are suffering a greater legitimacy problem than the EU

Besir Ceka *London School of Economics and Political Science* 29 October 2013

## ORGANISATIONS

European Commission

European Movement

European Union

Peoples Pledge

UKIP

## BACKGROUNDEERS

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NOTES

European federalism isn't what you've been told it is

Charles Kennedy *Guardian* 2 July 2014

The EU has a democratic surplus, not deficit

Robert Cooper *London School of Economics and Political Science*  
11 June 2014

The EU's democratic deficit is getting worse

Matt Ford *Atlantic* 23 May 2014

A fragile rebound for the EU's image

*Pew Research* 12 May 2014

The inability to neutralise UKIP can only be a good thing for democracy

Jeremy Seabrook *Guardian* 7 May 2014

Without reform, it would be best for the UK to leave the EU

Roger Bootle *Telegraph* 28 April 2014

The Eurozone crisis explained

*BBC News* 19 June 2012

Why do so many want to remain in the EU as it currently stands?

John Redwood *John Redwoods Diary* 4 June 2012

Beware the rise of EU anti-populists

Patrick Hayes *spiked* 28 May 2012

An ever deeper democratic deficit

*Economist* 24 May 2012

Ed Milliband stokes anti EU sentiment at his peril

Gaby Hinsliff *Guardian* 21 May 2012

Golden Dawn are not just Greece's problem

Daniel Trilling *New Statesman* 9 May 2012

Eurozone crisis: enter the technocrats

Lionel Barber *Financial Times* 11 November 2011

Now you can change EU changes via the referendum

William Hague *Telegraph* 16 July 2011

Is the UK still a sovereign state?

Phillip Johnston *Telegraph* 17 September 2009

The founding principles of The Union

*European Union*

UK European election results

*BBC News*

About The European Commission

*European Commission*

1975: the UK embraces Europe in a referendum

*BBC 'On this day'*



## IN THE NEWS

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## NOTES

Change the EU from within, urges manufacturing  
*Guardian* 3 July 2014

Eurosceptics make controversial return to Parliament  
*EurActiv* 2 July 2014

Ed Milliband must offer referendum says Unite Union  
*Huffington Post* 2 July 2014

Cameron denies being humiliated in EU Juncker vote loss  
*BBC News* 30 June 2014

Officials forced to approve EU mandates against their will, says former advisor  
*Telegraph* 30 June 2014

One step nearer an exit  
*The Times* 29 June 2014

UK referendum still scheduled for 2017, despite report  
*Wall Street Journal* 1 June 2014

UKIP wins election to set off a political earthquake  
*Guardian* 26 May 2014

Anti EU parties enjoy election success  
*Financial Times* 26 May 2014

UK could be plunged into crisis if it left the EU  
*Telegraph* 16 May 2014

Cameron: "I won't resign if UK votes to leave EU"  
*Guardian* 12 May 2014

EU benefits to trade 'imaginary'  
*Telegraph* 5 May 2014

Nigel Farage launches Ukip campaign amid criticism of 'racist' rhetoric

*Guardian* 22 April 2014

Cameron: "The EU is not working, and we will change it"  
*Telegraph* 15 March 2014

Britons back EU membership over leaving  
*Reuters* 11 March 2014

'Britain Should Not Leave EU' Norway's PM Erna Solberg Warns  
*Huffington Post* 15 January 2014

Italy crisis: Silvio Berlusconi resigns as PM  
*BBC News* 13 November 2011

Eurozone crisis: Greek PM George Papandreou to resign  
*Guardian* 6 November 2011

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